Doc. 300.3.1/1

Date: March 7, 2022

External Evaluation Report

(Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Name

- **Town: NICOSIA**

- **School/Faculty:** School/Faculty

- **Department: COMMUNICATIONS**

- **Programme(s) of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
Programme 1 – BA Digital Communications and Mass Media
In Greek:
Programme Name
In English:
 BA Digital Communications and Mass Media
Language(s) of instruction: English

Programme 2 – MA in Digital Media and Communications
In Greek:
Programme Name
In English:
 MA in Digital Media and Communications
Language(s) of instruction: English

Programme 3 – PhD Media and Communications
In Greek:
Programme Name
In English:
 PhD Media and Communications
Language(s) of instruction: English

A.   Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) would like to thank the CYQAA for the invitation to evaluate the following programs at the University of Nicosia:

- ***BA Digital Communications and Mass Media***
- ***MA in Digital Media and Communications, and***
- ***PhD Media and Communications***

The committee consisted of three academics with relevant disciplinary expertise and a student representative.

Given the current circumstances due to the on-going pandemic, the evaluation took place online. The committee had the opportunity to meet with the senior management of the University and the School, the academic faculty and administrative/support staff, and the students. During the online meetings, the committee had the chance to attend presentations related to the University, the Department and the programs and ask questions pertinent to the under-review programs. The EEC committee also had the chance to watch via live stream a lecture delivered for the UG module *Gender and Communication*. Overall, staff has been very open and responsive to all questions of the members of the evaluation committee. The committee also had the opportunity to review the physical infrastructure via the videos provided and examine the relevant documents provided by the Department of Communications.

The external evaluation committee would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the evaluation. The committee would also like to thank the CYQAA coordinator for managing the process both efficiently and effectively.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Christian Christensen	Professor	Stockholm University
Nikos Bakounakis	Professor	Panteion University
Anastasia Veneti	Associate Professor	Bournemouth University
Andriani Yiangou	Student Representative	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  (a) *sub-areas*
  (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
  (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

  ### Findings

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

  ### Strengths

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

  ### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding each 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*

- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *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:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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

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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?*

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Findings

The university has established quality assurance processes that are transparent and inclusive. Such processes and policies underpin the on-going review and development of all three programmes. Teaching and administrative staff were aware of the relevant policies and procedures. In addition to the formal mechanisms, the Committee noted evidence of informal mechanisms that supported staff in their endeavours to deliver quality teaching. While from the discussions with both staff and students, it has become apparent that respect to diversity and an inclusive approach is adopted, it is not clear whether there is a clear policy/clause on discrimination and/or harassment.

Overall, the Committee felt that the programmes featured appropriate learning objectives at the programme level (all programmes). When it came to the taught modules of the proposed BA and MA programmes, a good mixture of theoretical and practical modules is provided to the students. It is clear to the EEC committee that the programme developers have kept in touch with developments in the field of study.

ECTs are clearly defined signalling the corresponding student workload in all programmes. The practice around the definition of ECTs is along the expected lines.

The EEC notes evidence of internal programme development at both the module and programme level, aiming to ensure that the programme content remains up to date. The programs are also now supported by a recently renovated studio and relevant equipment keeping it in line with the latest developments. The Department has policies in place guarding against academic fraud.

Admissions criteria are in line with the EEC expectations. Moreover, it was clear from the discussions that the Department takes advantage of the good and productive relations that the staff maintains with external stakeholders.

Findings for BA
A solid and well-designed program of study with strong links to the media industry in Cyprus. There is course variety with emphasis on all three pathways (journalism, PR, film).

Findings for MA
Overall, the design of the programme, curriculum structure and assessments are stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and critical analytic skills. The programme is up-to -date incorporating modules that deal with the digital dimension and the way it has been transforming the study and the practice of Public Relations.The staff is extremely qualified to deliver this program on high standards.

In the academic design of the programme, the EEC committee would like to draw the attention on an area of concern related to the methodology course offering and the MA thesis. As things stand, the methods module and the MA thesis are electives. This is highly unusual compared to other relevant programmes in European and American universities. A taught module on methods is a necessary course that helps students familiarize themselves with the purpose and value and the ethics of research and goes on to address qualitative/quantitative research methods. In addition, it

seems imperative that students who wish to opt for writing a thesis should be acquainted with research methods. Since the Department also runs and aims to expand its PhD program, and the MA degree as stated in their application may well serve as a pool for perspective students, it only seems natural that these students should be well equipped to continue their studies on a doctoral level.

Moreover, there are unclear guidelines with regards to the PT delivery of the program. From the discussions with the teaching staff, the EEC committee understands that there is a system of extensions in place to facilitate students, but it is not clear whether this is a general policy or a PT delivery mode bespoke one.

Findings for PhD

At the time, this is a small programme with 3 PhD students. However, the department's aim is to further develop their PhD programme. A visual map of the key stages/dates of the student's PhD journey was presented to the EEC committee as well as the Code of Practice for this programme. The PhD program would also benefit from a more transparent outline of progression, as well as clearer guidelines regarding the allocation of points.

Strengths

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

Strengths for BA

Overall, this is a well-designed program that offers a good balance between theory and practice. The programme also benefits from staff who have a wealth of practical experience and expertise and can bring this into the classroom. It seems that there is a strong link with local/national media organisations, the industry and the society. The Department uses plagiarism prevention software to secure academic integrity.

Strengths for MA

An overall very well-designed curriculum (with the weaknesses mentioned above). Healthy cohorts consisted of both national and international students. The teaching staff is research active and students are presented with various opportunities to participate in various research activities (for e.g., conference attendance) and research-led teaching.

Strengths for PhD

The staff is highly qualified to supervise PhD students drawing on a variety of expertise. Appropriate training and student support services are in place.

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 would like to encourage the Department to introduce a clear policy/clause on discrimination and/or harassment.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA

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Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

The EEC committee urges the Department to rectify the deficiency in required methodology offering. The EEC strongly recommends that, even if an MA thesis is not a pre-requisite for MAs in Cyprus, that the Research Methods module become a pre-requisite for those students who wish to undertake writing a thesis. This should be clearly communicated to the students at the beginning of the program and also be clearly stated in the relevant module descriptors.

With regards to the PT mode of delivery of the programme: If this is a formal mode of delivery, then this needs to be formally communicated at all channels of communication, and there is also need for a well-designed plan of the sequence of modules for the Part Time program (modules/ECTS per semester).

Finally, the EEC would like to recommend the drafting of clearer and more formalized instructions and guidelines for the MA Thesis module (duration of oral presentation and structure, marking criteria etc).

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

As stated above, more transparency in the doctoral progression would improve the program. In addition, training workshops on research methods at this level of study are expected to be more advanced. The EEC noticed that there are some introductory to methods workshops. While these may be fine, the EEC encourages the program team to include more advanced research methods workshops as well.

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

Sub-area		_Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant_		
		BA	MA	PhD
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	COMPLIANT	PARTIALLY COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
1.3	Public information	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
1.4	Information management	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT

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

> **Sub-areas**
> **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
> **2.2 Practical training**
> **2.3 Student assessment**

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

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*

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- *The criteria for and method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

ΔΙΠΑΕ
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Findings

Findings for BA

The EEC found that the teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology for the BA program was of a good standard. Instructors were flexible on their use of available pedagogical technologies, there was a strong linkage of practical and theoretical components and student assessment criteria were transparent.

Findings for MA

The EEC found that the teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology for the BA program was of a good standard. Instructors were flexible on their use of available pedagogical technologies, there was a strong linkage of practical and theoretical components and student assessment criteria were transparent.

Findings for PhD

The teaching and student-centered element of the PhD program was somewhat difficult to ascertain, as the work process for PhD students was opaque. More clarity in the teaching and set-up of the PhD program (as mentioned in other sections) would be of benefit.

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

Strengths for BA

The integration of practical components in the BA program is particular strong point, and students made note of their appreciation of this element of the degree program. BA instructors showed a clear flexibility in their teaching when faced with COVID, adapting instruction to online without a major disruption or drop in student satisfaction.

Strengths for MA

MA instructors showed a clear flexibility in their teaching when faced with COVID, adapting instruction to online without a major disruption or drop in student satisfaction.

Strengths for PhD

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Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA
NA

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA

While teaching practices are good, as has been noted in other sections, the MA program needs to establish continuity for those choosing to write a thesis by making research methodologies (or similar) a requirement for thesis writing. The lack of such a requirement makes the learning outcomes for the MA thesis (related to research skill) difficult to reach.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD

More transparency in how doctoral students progress through their degree would add to the program.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant		
		BA	MA	PhD
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	COMPLIANT	PARTIALLY COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
2.2	Practical training	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
2.3	Student assessment	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development**
> **3.2. Teaching staff number and status**
> **3.3. Synergies of teaching and research**

3.1. Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2. Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3. Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings
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.

Findings for BA
An extremely healthy faculty and teaching staff environment.

Findings for MA
Based on discussions and meetings with faculty members and students, and on attending a graduate course on Gender and Communication we discovered well-trained, knowledgeable, and inspired academic staff.

Findings for PhD
Given the very small size of the Doctoral Studies (only 3 PhD students) the number of the faculty member is adequate to support the program.

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

Strengths for BA
We found a team spirit and attitude that helps student training and creates a collaborative peer atmosphere.

Strengths for MA

High efficacy of teaching, understanding of positive or negative results.

Strengths for PhD
Research oriented and high level publications within the Communication Sciences in peer reviewed journals and specialized publishing houses (e.g Routledge) by the supervisors of the PhD Program.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA
The process of engaging and integrating external teaching personnel (practitioners etc), rules of review and assessment of their performance need to be formalized.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA
Feedback given to faculty members by alumni (especially those who have strong bonds with the industry) and stakeholders regarding teaching and research results need to be analysed. Future graduate-level expansion of the department will likely mean the need for additional staff, and this increase needs to be accounted for in future planning and recruitment, as well as in economic forecasts for departmental budgeting.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD
Faculty members must show more active interest for advertising the Doctoral Studies program and developing synergies and research ties with national and internationals universities and institutions. Future graduate-level expansion of the department will likely mean the need for additional staff, and this increase needs to be accounted for in future planning and recruitment, as well as in economic forecasts for departmental budgeting.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*		
		BA	MA	PhD
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT

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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.

In general, student admission, progression, recognition and certification work smoothly for all three programs, and all the necessary mechanisms and procedures are in place. Admissions criteria, procedures relevant to Transfer students and Transfer credits were clearly stated in the applications, the relevant material that was sent for review to the EEC, and the online presentations.

Findings for BA
See above

Findings for MA
See above

Findings for PhD
See above

Strengths

University of Nicossia is an established institution in the higher education sector of Cyprus and its expertise is evidenced in its clear procedures for admission, progression, recognition, and certification. Additionally, the programme uses ECTS credits for each course, which demonstrates the commitment to European standards, and allows for recognition of attended courses outside Cyprus.

Strengths for BA
See above

Strengths for MA
See above

Strengths for PhD
See above

Areas of improvement and recommendations
NA

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA
Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA
Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*		
		BA	MA	PhD
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
4.2	Student progression	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
4.3	Student recognition	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
4.4	Student certification	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

> **Sub-areas**
>
> **5.1.Teaching and Learning resources**
> **5.2.Physical resources**
> **5.3.Human support resources**
> **5.4.Student support**

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

Findings for BA
The EEC found that the various levels of support for students, teaching resources, physical spaces and human resources support were of a high quality across all areas of the department.

Findings for MA
The EEC found that the various levels of support for students, teaching resources, physical spaces and human resources support were of a high quality across all areas of the department.

Findings for PhD
The EEC found that the various levels of support for students, teaching resources, physical spaces and human resources support were of a high quality across all areas of the department.

Strengths
A particular strength of the department was the availability of production studios where students could engage in practical work. This strength was amplified by the integration of this practical work with theoretical components.

Strengths for BA
Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for MA
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Strengths for PhD
Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations
NA

Areas of improvement and recommendations for BA
Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MA
Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for PhD
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

	Non-compliant/

Sub-area		*Partially Compliant/Compliant*		
		BA	MA	PhD
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
5.2	Physical resources	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
5.3	Human support resources	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT
5.4	Student support	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT	COMPLIANT

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

> ### Sub-areas
>
> **6.1. Selection criteria and requirements**
> **6.2. Proposal and dissertation**
> **6.3. Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

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

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

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

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6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings
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.

General policy, regulations, supporting guidance, guidelines for writing dissertations, supervising and teaching staff quality are excellent. But the EEC finds problems of academic and financial sustainability because of the small number of PhD students**.**

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

The program is in line with European and international PhD program standards taking into account all requirements that secure research originality, and theoretical, methodological and empirical quality.

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.

Department's research activity and output could be enhanced if PhD program was improved and expanded. The Doctoral Program needs to be developed. Asymmetry between undergraduate, graduate (as mentioned above) and PhD program needs to be addressed. Specifically, the MA program could be a useful in-house incubator for future students to the PhD program (creating a natural pool of applicants on an annual basis).

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

Sub-areas		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	COMPLIANT
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	COMPLIANT
6.3	Supervision and committees	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 each programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

General Comments

The task of the EEC was to evaluate the following programs in the Department of Communications at the University of Nicossia: (1) BA in Digital Communications and Mass Media; (2) MA in Digital Media and Communications, and (3) Ph.D. in Media and Communications. This Conclusions section will begin with general remarks on the overall impression of the EEC in relation to the program, and conclude with specific comments and recommendations for improvement and/or change.

The EEC considered the BA, MA and Ph.D. programs to be largely run in an organized, logical and pedagogically constructive fashion. The progression of courses and the learning outcomes were clear and for the BA and MA components there was an intellectually and pedagogically sound integration of what we might describe as "theory" and "practice" (while recognizing that this can be seen as a problematic or counter-productive distinction). The teaching staff are well-qualified for their positions, with production staff holding valuable professional experience and research staff demonstrating an ability to produce high-quality research at an international standard. The quality of teaching at all three levels – BA, MA and Ph.D. – is secured by a well-organized and transparent system of student evaluation, and the students interviewed expressed a clear satisfaction with the quality of the education, the interaction and feedback from staff and the university administration.

The overall impression of the EEC in relation to the three programs was that they (overall) held a good international standard, but that there were some issues at the graduate (MA) and post-graduate (Ph.D.) levels that need to be addressed, and that separated the BA program from the graduate programs. In addition, there were several issues that impacted the entire department where the EEC is offering suggestions/Recommendations. In the next section we will list out recommendations for all programs, as well as program-specific recommendations.

Recommendation for All Programs/General

Recommendation 1: The department should integrate a clear statement on a zero-tolerance policy in relation to all forms of discrimination (in relation to both students and staff).

Recommendation 2: Draft a clearer Short/Medium/Long term planning document, and do so with a particular eye toward the implications of an increase in student numbers on staffing levels and infrastructure needs, as well as the implications for department financing if there is an increase in the number of students at the MA and Ph.D. levels (with lower student numbers but higher workload per student).

Recommendation 3: Formalize the position of part-time (PT) students in the department beyond simply allocating them extra time to compete the degree. PT students should have a specific designation as such, and a concrete plan of study.

Recommendation 4: The Department should attempt to expand the material taken into consideration for promotion to include relevant and intellectually-substantiated "practical" work (outside of traditional academic publication).

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Recommendation 5: Staff should be offered greater opportunities to be given time (instead of teaching) for research, publication and relevant practical experience, as well as the possibility of a more extended sabbatical period for the same.

Recommendation for MA Program

Recommendation 1: The EEC considers it to be of particular importance that the MA program make it a REQUIREMENT that students take a preparatory Methods/Research Design course before writing an MA thesis. The lack of this requirement, at present, weakens the MA program, as research design and methodology is a central element of MA education.

Recommendation 2: While recognizing that a thesis isn't required by law, the EEC recommends that MA students be required to write an MA thesis in order to obtain an MA degree. A thesis is a standard international examination requirement and tool for measuring education quality, especially as MA degrees intended to add a clear research dimension above and beyond the BA level. And MA is also a stepping-stone to Ph.D. work, and without a thesis it is unclear how such a progression can be justified. Without a thesis, the EEC considers the MA programs to be weakened.

Recommendation 3: Students in the MA program should be given the opportunity to have practical experience factored into their degree program (such as internships accompanied by a rigorous written reflection upon the relationship between the practice and theoretical implications).

Recommendation for Ph.D. Program

Recommendation 1: The EEC asks that the Department of Communications provide a more transparent accounting of the Ph.D. program in relation to progression from intake to completion. In the current form, it is unclear how Ph.D. points are allocated and what standards are used to allocate such points. A more detailed breakdown of points, with points allocated bashed on dissertation milestones (chapters, papers, presentations) would greatly aid the department and avoid the appearance of a somewhat ad hoc program.

Recommendation 2: If the department intends to expand, it should begin to outline a clear strategy for attracting international Ph.D. students, in addition to a medium- and long-term planning document outlining how the expansion of doctoral education might impact departmental resources (given the labor-intensive nature of doctoral work).

E.   Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Christian Christensen	
Anastasia Veneti	
Andriani Yiangou	
Nikos Bakounakis	

Date: March 7, 2022