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

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Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 09/05/23

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Philips University**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): Economics & Management**

- **Department/ Sector: Business Administration**

- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

  Programme Name

  In English:

   Master of Business Administration (e-learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction: Greek**

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) comprised of 5 members, *Simos Chari* Associate Professor of Marketing Management & Strategy, *Christina Boutsouki* Professor in Marketing, *Louis Brennan* Professor in Business Studies, *Santi Caballé* Professor in Computer Sciences and Telecommunications, and Ms. *Ioanna Onisiforou* (student representative), was invited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) to assess the Master of Business Administration (distance learning) proposed by the Philips University, Nicosia. The evaluation took place at the premises of Philips University on the 9th of May 2023.

The EEC met with the president of the institution, the rector, the programme director, the head of the research centre, and the information technology experts responsible for supporting the distance learning format of the programme. In addition, the EEC had the opportunity to have constructive discussions with the members of teaching staff and administrative personnel, as well as with current students in e-learning and conventional programmes. The EEC also had a virtual tour of the University's infrastructure and facilities. Finally, the EEC had a demonstration of an e-learning class, using the latest version of moodle 4.1, for a typical week of a mock course unit. To facilitate the process of evaluation the Philips University have provided the EEC with additional evidence like the quality assurance policy and committee meeting minutes, staff CVs, hiring policies and promotion criteria, self-assessment report, rubrics for marking, and the study guide including weekly interactive activities.

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

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

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Simos Chari	Associate Professor of Marketing Management & Strategy	Alliance Manchester Business School
Christina Boutsouki	Professor of Marketing	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Louis Brennam	Professor in Business Studies	Trinity College Dublin
Santi Caballé	Professor of Computer Science & Telecommunications	Open University of Catalonia
Ioanna Onisiforou	Student representative	Open University of Cyprus

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA **ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ**
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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.

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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a new programme offered in an e-learning format by Philips University. The EEC expects that this programme will primarily attract interest from the Cypriot and Greek markets; however, considering that this is an e-learning programme the University could expand in the near future and offer the programme to Greek speaking candidates from other countries. The EEC believes that the qualification of MBA (distance learning) awarded by Philips meets the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

The EEC believes that the core content and structure of the programme is similar to other MBA programmes offered in Cyprus. The programme in its current format provides the necessary disciplinary knowledge and skills needed for professional development in Business Administration and Management. The EEC enquired about the programme's learning outcomes, teaching approaches, and assessment procedures. The programme coordinator and teaching team provided sufficient evidence of such information. As this is a new programme, pass rates and employment information was not available.

With regard to the structure and design of the programme, the EEC applauds the University and teaching staff for their efforts to develop a programme that is current and reflective of the recent business trends. However, the EEC deems the list of elective units offered on the programme to be small, niche (i.e., emphasis on medicine management), and not reflective of the market that this programme is designed to cater for. In addition to the structure and design of the programme, the EEC have identified some irregularities concerning the allocated ECTS credits to certain modules. Even though we were informed by the University that the ECTS units correspond with each module's: (a) expected student workload and (b) exams and assignments content, we were not provided any evidence that justify as to why a unit holds 5, 6, 7, or 12 ECTS units respectively.

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

In addition, the EEC has observed that there are mechanisms in place, such as the student course feedback, that can help shape future policies. Student feedback is actively sought through online anonymous surveys and on an on-going basis throughout course delivery. However, evidence of the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement and action plans taken by the university, were not provided during the evaluation.

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

- The programme under evaluation appears to have specific and realistic intended learning outcomes. It seems that it was designed with the vision of the school in mind.
- The addition of course units like Digital Business, Introduction to Sustainability, and Corporate Governance and Ethics are unique selling points for the programme.

- Information about the programme of study is clear, accurate, and readily accessible for prospective students and other stakeholders.
- An MBA is a programme of particular interest to individuals who are already working and would like to develop further. The flexible learning nature makes it possible to continue working while studying with potential positive spill-over effects during the period of study.
- The Distance Education Unit can provide feedback and guidelines for continuous improvements on the distance learning programmes.

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 identified that an overarching mapping report that demonstrates how each course unit feeds into the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the programme, is missing. The EEC recommends the teaching team of the programme to collectively consider how each unit supports the ILOs and prepare this report / map.
- It will be also a useful exercise to map assessments against each course unit's learning outcomes. This will help the programme team formulate a coherent assessment strategy that is suitable for a distance learning mode.
- Philips University and the head of programme need to review the current structure of the programme and reconsider its design; the programme needs an extensive list of elective units that reflect the changing needs of the Cypriot and Greek societies (i.e., the target audience of this programme) the economy of Cyprus and Greece, and the markets they cater for. It is important to incorporate elective course units that reflect the business environment the programme will operate in.
- The EEC recommends the University to reconsider the allocation of ECTS units per module and provide evidence that justify the discrepancies in allocation.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	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 nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme under evaluation.

The university's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is an e-class (Moodle 4.1) installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through MS Teams) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback and gamification mechanisms in order to assess students' knowledge while increasing the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. Even though, more

complex forms of e-assessment that evaluates diverse competences and skills (e.g., critical thinking and teamwork) are supported, these were not demonstrated during the evaluation of the programme. However, a hands-on demonstration of the platform was provided during the visit.

Each course has a minimum of 7 synchronous teleconference sessions between the lecturer and students. Collaboration among educators and students (and among peers) is conducted through the online forums of the subject course and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for specific purposes. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by project-based activities, though the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities was not detailed.

Formative assessment of the courses is based on two submitted essays with provision of personalised feedback during the course counting up to 20% of the final grade while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting up to 60% of the final grade. The assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of interactive quiz-based activities and formative exercises included in the weekly study guide; these are used to self-assess students' knowledge and skills relating the course. The interactive activities and formative exercises account for the remainder 20% of the final grade. Students receive feedback on these activities and a ranking system reflects their performance.

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

- The EEC considers the university's distance learning 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.
- Although evidence was not provided during the evaluation procedure, the provision of personalised feedback through submitted assignments and teleconference sessions, as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-assessment are considered best practices.
- Even though there was no evidence during the evaluation process, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students as promoted by the collaborative activities and discussions organised in online teams.
- The weekly study guides, is also a best practice as it allows the students to determine the work that needs to be done every week.

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 that the university's distance learning quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as EFQUEL, EADTU and QS Stars, and when possible, to become an active contributor to them.
- In addition, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are also encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.
- While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration between peers, we suggest the constant need for improvement and adaptation. For instance, online synchronous teleconferences and teamwork can become problematic, in the future, when the

programme expands and attracts a larger number of students across different time zones. When asked, the University was not clear how they plan to coordinate and support these collaborations among peers in the future.

- The EEC would like to draw attention to the issue that onsite final exams may not be fully in line with the mode of learning of online delivery. Maybe, the solution could be the use of more formative continuous assessments during the whole course of the unit.

- From the documentation provided and the information gathered in the meetings, it was not clear what strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement in e-class. Such innovations can be used to enhance the delivery of the program.

- The EEC recommends the university: (a) to keep using the weekly study guides; (b) to utilise the moodle 4.1 to its maximum capacities to support and encourage further interaction, engagement, and collaboration; (c) to continue to provide formative customised feedback; and (d) to properly apply gamification practices for assessing students. These strong elements of the distance learning model should be reinforced wherever and whenever possible.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
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 university has a Distance Education Unit that provides technical training and support of distance learning to the faculty members.

The University aims to create a supportive working environment that is conducive to individual development for both academic and professional support members of staff. This is a small University with the experience and support of larger well-established ones like the National Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA). Through its partnership with NKUA, Philips University has access to well-established academic processes, systems, and practices which provide a strong professional foundation for research activities and collaborations.

The University has invested in teaching resources to underpin the effective delivery of the program. All academic staff have experience and qualifications well-above the program on-offer with most of them being professors in the respective areas of teaching.

The EEC would like to note that it was not in receipt of a breakdown of the distribution of full-time versus part-time and adjunct staff.

Phillips University, at the moment, has a good research trajectory with active pursuit of research funding. Members of the teaching team have been engaged in relevant research activities that can inform teaching activities. Such spill overs can positively affect the student learning experience. Yet, there seems to be a deficit of current research that can offer more up-to-date insights into the areas that the program covers.

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

- There is evidence of a strong commitment to students by faculty and staff with an emphasis on personalisation and support of the student learning experience.

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 advises that the members of the Distance Education Unit should participate in training programs to increase their skills in conducting quality online teaching. These training programs should be certified by external bodies (e.g., EFQUL, EADTU) in terms of professional development relevant to distance learning.
- It was mentioned that the University has a detailed workload policy document. Still, its operationalisation could have been underpinned by a more structured and transparent system that allocates research time. It is important to see that the University recognises the efforts of staff and has an established process for managing research time for those engaged with research activities.
- Philips University should consider the age profile of the existing members of staff with respect to the sustainability and future development of the programme. The University should be cognisant of staff development and renewal considerations.
- Philips University should provide opportunities for early career academics initially by offering opportunities to build their teaching experience as visiting staff. Then, for those who are interested in a career in academia opportunities for full-time teaching roles could be afforded.
- 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.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
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*

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- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

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

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

The EEC is satisfied that the regulations and processes for admission, progression, recognition and certification are appropriate. Of particular note is that, where appropriate, these are tailored to distance education.

There are pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission in place which include the student admission requirements and provide for recognition of prior learning. The particular requirements for distance learning students are also specified. The EEC is satisfied that the access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.

There are pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression in place. The Department is responsible for informing students of the assessment requirements for the programme. The assessment policy and procedures for the programme are made known to students before they commence the programme.

There are suitable processes in place to collect, monitor and act on information relating to student progression. The EEC members were introduced to a complete assessment framework design, focusing on distance learning methodology that included clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination. The university's e-class (Moodle 4.1) 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 were not shown during the evaluation.

The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio (1:12) and student feedback is very positive.

The regulations regarding student recognition are in place. These are pre-defined and published. There is provision for the fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The institutional practice for recognition is in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. There is co-operation with other institutions, in particular with a number in Greece and the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

There are pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification in place. Students are given certification that explains the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes.

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

- The institution has a long history of engagement in higher education with finely tuned and robust regulations and processes in place, in regard to admission, progression, recognition and certification. These regulations are clear and comprehensive.
- The Distance Education Unit is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures, and services devoted to enhancing distance learning.
- The EEC believes that Distance Education Unit can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while offering a good ground to faculty members to face distance learning.

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

- Philips University should continue to fine tune its regulations and processes to reflect the distance education nature of this programme.
- The EEC notes that there are specific regulations in relation to students misbehaving, including plagiarism or academic misconduct. With the emergence of Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) generative systems, the EEC encourages further development of rules, and communicating them clearly to students, to prevent online (as well as offline) academic fraud while teaching about the opportunities to correctly using these new technologies in distance learning.
- 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 dropouts in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and the number of online students

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

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

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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.*
- *There are weekly interactive activities for the modules in the programme.*
- *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 proposed courses have a syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: summary, purpose, expected results, keywords, required bibliography (including lecturer's notes and slides) and (formative) self-assessment exercises.

The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment including simulations, problem solving scenarios, and formative assessment exercises.

The university's Distance Education Unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for designing, creating, implementing, and evaluating online courses. This Unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities, and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The Unit also provides a Faculty Handbook with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have even though it was not shown during the evaluation. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of the distance learning courses. As mentioned previously, the Unit includes a variety of training programs to faculty members for professional development relevant to distance learning.

The resources are adequate for changing circumstances. Notably, once students exceed fifteen in number, a new cohort is established for the programmme. The resources are fit for purpose.

There is evidence of student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching. This was evident from the set of students currently engaged in e-learning programmes within the institution.

The physical resources including the IT infrastructure are modern and very well maintained and are adequate to support the study programme. The human support resources are adequate to support the study programme. The EEC members were very impressed with the dedication of those human support resources. These resources are adequate for changing circumstances and are fit for purpose. The students are informed of the human support resources available to them.

The supports for students that are provided reflect the needs of the institution's diverse population. Students are familiar with these supports and expressed their satisfaction with them. There is evidence of student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching.

There is satisfaction among the students with the level and quality of support available to them. It is clear that the institution and its staff are very responsive to the needs and concerns of the students.

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

- A student friendly environment that strives to ensure the adequacy of supports to students and teaching staff.

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- The EEC was impressed with the dedication and commitment of all staff and particularly with Assistant Professor Pipyros Kosmas, and the IT staff Alvertos Constantinos and Constantinou Soteris for setting up, developing, maintaining, and supporting the distance learning mode of delivery.

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

- The institution is advised to ensure that it stays abreast of the latest e-leaning technologies and approaches and to ensure that these are maintained as current as possible.

- Based on the sample of the study guides provided, the EEC recommends adding the weekly estimation of study time and provide students with clearer messaging on the expected workload for each study unit. In addition, the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be usable and accessible for students by making them shorter, including the educator in all the videos providing non-verbal communication, and adding closed captions for accessibility.

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

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

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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.

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

The EEC report highlights the committee's key findings, the strengths of the programme and the University, and recommendations for improving the Master of Business Administration (distance learning) offered by Philips University. Overall, the EEC found the University, the programme along the expected national standards. The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study, including some strong elements that reinforce the university's distance learning model (i.e., the distance education unit, faculty handbook, ratio instructor/students and e-assessment procedures). However, the EEC would like to ensure that forms of interaction and collaboration through online synchronous teleconferences and real-time collaboration among students are sustainable in the future years if the programme expands while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support the evolution of the university.

The EEC believes that revisions based on the feedback provided would strengthen the program. We advise the faculty of Philips to take into consideration our recommendations and address all the suggestions. Once more we remain at the disposal of CYQAA for any clarification necessary.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Simos Chari	
Christina Boutsouki	
Louis Brennam	
Santi Caballé	
Ioanna Onisiforou	

Date: 11/05/2023