Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 17 November 2024

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:
  Philips University**

- **Town: Nicosia**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Education
  and Sciences**

- **Department/ Sector: Education**

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

  In Greek:

  Programme Name

  In English:

   Special and Inclusive Education 120ECTS/MA-DL

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

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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

A. Introduction

Site visit

The evaluation took place from 13th – 17th November 2024. The site visit took place on Wednesday, 13th of November. The visit included meetings at the main campus.

Meetings were held with the President, Rector, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, Director of the Research Centre, members of the internal quality committee, the Acting Dean of the School of Education and Sciences, course leader, program (co-)coordinators, Director, coordinator and members of the Distance Learning Unit, a delegation of the intended teachers, one external stakeholder, and students and graduates of <u>other</u> distance learning programs Philips University is currently offering and, finally, members of the administrative staff (i.e., the registrar, director international relations, librarian, director of the Student's Affairs Office, and the director and one consultant of the IT technology).

The Cyprus context and the strategy of Philips University

Philips University adopts a proactive and highly focused stakeholder engagement strategy. The university differentiates itself competitively through its academic programs, which align with Cyprus' broader political strategy to position the island as a prominent business and educational hub. Social accountability plays a pivotal role in Cyprus, and Philips University actively contributes to this ethos through its commitment to sustainable practices and community engagement.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Marian Jongmans	Professor of Special Education	Utrecht University, the Netherlands
Christian Ydesen	Professor of History of Education and Education Policy Analysis	University of Zurich, Switzerland
Markku Jahnukainen	Professor of Special Education	University of Helsinki, Finland
Denise Whitelock	Professor and Director Institute Educational Technology	The Open University UK
Stella Charalambous	Student member	Open University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

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

  ### *Findings*

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

  ### *Strengths*

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

  ### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

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

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

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- *The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.*

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
    - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
    - *is a part of the strategic management of the programme*
    - *focuses on the achievement of special goals related to the quality assurance of the study program.*
    - *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*
    - *is developed with input from industry leaders and other stakeholders (i.e. industry leaders, professional bodies/associations, social partners, NGO's, governmental agencies) to align with professional standards.*
    - *integrates employer surveys to adapt to evolving workplace demands.*
    - *regularly utilizes alumni feedback for long-term effectiveness assessment.*
    - *is published and implemented by all 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*
    - *Aligns course learning outcomes with student assessments using rubrics to ensure objectives are met.*
    - *Connects each course's aims and objectives with the programme's overall aims and objectives through mapping, aligning with the institutional strategy*
    - *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*
    - *collaborates with industry experts for curriculum development.*
    - *conducts joint reviews with external academic specialists to maintain academic rigor.*
    - *performs periodic assessments with external stakeholders to ensure continuous alignment with market needs.*
    - *establishes collaboration with international educational institutions or/& other relevant international bodies for a global perspective.*
    - *conducts regular feedback sessions with local community leaders for societal relevance.*

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*
In addition, the program has established mechanisms of transparency & communication to ensure that
o   *Professional bodies validate program descriptions and outcomes.*

o   *Community leaders actively participate in ensuring that the program's public information is relevant and resonates with the local and societal context.*

o   *External auditors review public information for accuracy & consistency vis-à-vis the actual implementation of the program.*

o   *Industry-specific & societal information is regularly updated with expert inputs.*

o   *Alumni testimonials are included for a realistic portrayal of program outcomes.*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed using specific indicators and data i.e:*
  - 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*
  - o *industry trend analysis.*
  - o *feedback mechanisms from external partners/stakeholders*
  - o *data exchanges with professional networks*
  - o *employer insights concerning career readiness*

- *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?
> - How and to what extent are external stakeholders involved in the quality assurance process of the program?
> - How is external stakeholder feedback gathered, analyzed and implemented?
> - In what ways do external stakeholders assist in making program information publicly available?
> - How do external stakeholders contribute to evaluating graduate success in the labor market and obtaining feedback on employment outcomes?

Findings

Philips University currently has approximately 1,400 students, including both online and offline learners, with 620 enrolled in online programs. The intended program (yet without further public information) is designed to admit 50 students.

The intended distance learning 'Master of Arts in Special and Inclusive Education' program is a 120 ECTS-credit course and forms part of the curriculum offered by the newly established 'School of Education and Sciences'.

During the onsite visit the committee was informed by the President, Rector and representatives of all staff groups and students on all elements of the intended program.

Strengths

Philips University maintains a student-to-professor ratio of 1:12 and boasts a 90% exam success rate, including resits, for other existing distance learning programs.

This intended program has a good market position in the area of inclusive and special education in Cyprus, because of the new legislation, which is having a pressure on inclusive solutions for students with special educational needs in the mainstream schools.

Philips University employs 17 administrative staff members, all of whom report a positive working environment and high job satisfaction. The administrative staff take pride in the university's growth and development, and they feel that their needs are generally well met by the management team.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Since the study program is based in a newly established school, the organizational structure supporting the program may present challenges in terms of defining areas of responsibility, establishing clear chains of command, and ensuring effective knowledge exchange. This requires attention to consolidating and further developing the program to ensure its robustness, as well as establishing transparent and strong quality assurance (actual) practices.

The introduction and presentation of the intended study program, as outlined in the submitted application, comes across as rather general and could easily apply to various other master programs in Education. To better capture attention of prospective students, a more specific, engaging, and compelling description of the program would be beneficial.

While Philips University's approach to international standards appears heavily influenced by the UK and USA, this focus may limit the broader scope of internationalization and global perspective. For instance, there is little mention of international frameworks or definitions, such as those from UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report on inclusive education, which could enrich the program's global outlook.

The academic content of the course seems primarily driven by a medical/psychometric model, where inclusion is framed around special education principles that often emphasize deficiency and defectiveness. This contrasts with more progressive, contextual, and barrier-removal models of inclusion. Sociological perspectives on inclusion are notably underrepresented, as evidenced by the fact that modules such as PDE 111 "Sociology of Education" and SPE 303 "Inclusion, its Implementation in Practice" are offered only as electives. A broader integration of sociological and critical approaches to inclusion would enhance the program's depth and relevance.

Additionally, there is a need for an update to the course literature, as some of it appears to be outdated and does not fully reflect current advancements in the field.

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	Partially compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Not applicable
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.*
- *Detailed schedules in course materials are included, explicitly stating the expected hours for lectures, self-study, and group projects, ensuring transparency in time allocation.*
- *A system is integrated where each learning activity is assigned a weight proportional to its importance and time requirement, aiding in balanced curriculum design.*

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.*
- *The expected hours for different components of practical training, such as lab work, fieldwork, and internships are clearly documented in the training manuals*
- *A weighting system is applied to various practical training elements, reflecting their significance in the overall learning outcomes and student workload.*

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.*
- *The time allocation for each assessment task is explicitly stated in course outlines, ensuring students are aware of the expected workload.*
- *A balanced assessment weighting strategy is implemented, considering the complexity and learning objectives of each task, to ensure fair evaluation of student performance.*

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

There is staff enthusiasm for this program, and all seem well aware of the task ahead of them. The committee was unable to judge the quality of the individual Assignment Guides as they were only offered in Greek.

Strengths

The students at Philips University which the committee met (online) appear highly content and satisfied with their academic distance learning programs. In addressing the potential mental health challenges often associated with distance learning, students highlight the availability of a psychological support service that operates without a waiting list. One of the key selling points of Philips University's programs is the strong and frequent interaction between students and faculty, with teachers trained specifically in online instruction. Philips University has a track record in successful, distance learning programs, which hopefully also applies to the intended program.

There is a strong and competent IT team who support the production of effective online materials using well evaluated Templates. All lectures are recorded which facilitates student access not only for revision purposes but also to clarify issues when meeting with their Professor - Counsellor twice a month. Formative and summative Assessment is offered to the students, together with self-assessment exercises to encourage self-regulated learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A constructivist pedagogical model lies at the hub of the student - centred online activities. However, the theories which support this model need to be made explicit in the relevant documentation.

One of the ways that the student voice is heard, is through an annual survey. It would be good to report back to the students any actions instantiated from the findings of these surveys, for example, through an online post entitled 'YOU SAID WE DID' or by incorporating the actions undertaken in course guide of the following academic year.

There is no Generative AI policy for use or non-use of these tools by staff or students. We recommend that such a policy is prepared and if Gen AI use is acceptable, then separate staff and student guidelines should be communicated clearly.

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	Partially compliant

2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

The teaching staff have previous experience of teaching in relevant e-learning programs. The committee was able to establish from the provided documents that certain staff have relevant academic profiles for sustaining the intended program (e.g., intercultural education, music education, language teaching).

Strengths

Teaching staff are experienced teachers, and they have previous experience of teaching these kinds of courses. There is a strong emphasis on investing in both facilities and staff, alongside a well-defined and rewarding recruitment strategy.

The university has implemented an effective tool for aligning university priorities with staff research activities through its "Annual Performance Evaluation System." This system requires each academic staff member to complete a comprehensive self-assessment document annually. It promotes transparency and measurability, particularly in relation to publications, conference participation, and funding, which are all valued components of the evaluation process.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The group of teachers could be strengthened with more colleagues dedicated specifically to special education and inclusive education aligning with the intended teaching modules. Although the committee got the impression that Philips University has indeed the intention to attract new, highly qualified staff, it is important to realise this aim in the near future in order for the intended program to start of well.

Regarding attracting new staff, there is no explicit focus on ensuring diversity within the composition of assessment and hiring committees. Additionally, the process for hiring junior staff appears to be quite bureaucratic, as it involves both the rector and the senate, which may slow down decision-making.

Although, the teaching staff seems to have relevant academic background, it seems that quite many people planned to teach in this new program have also other commitments in other educational institutions. It remains somewhat unclear what the employment level each staff member has with Philips University. This might be counterproductive in terms of the co-creation, knowledge sharing, alignment, synergies and development of the programme. It is not clear how the teaching is connected to the teaching.

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	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

> - *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*
>
> *You may also consider the following questions:*
>
> - *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
> - *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
> - *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

The admission criteria for students are appropriate. It is our understanding, that the graduates from this program will have that kind of certificate which gives them good position in getting employed according to the new legislative requirements.

Please note that since this program is still to be launched, the committee is unable to assess the process of student progression although examples provided during the interviews regarding existing distance learning programs seem satisfactory.

Strengths

The committee finds that the administrative procedures will lead to the appropriate candidates entering the intended program. The committee is, based on the provided documentation, satisfied that all points regarding student recognition and student certification will be fulfilled.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

In the provided documentation it says (page 24) that "*A Bachelor's degree from an accredited University …*" is needed to apply. The committee wanders whether this needs further specification (or not, if students who graduate from this intended program will hold a teacher qualification?). In addition, benefit of clarifying which bachelor's degree is appropriate to enter the program will help prospective students to engage sufficiently with the academic content of the intended program.

If most of the students will come from mainland Greece, the societal impact for developing the inclusive education in Cyprus may remain lower than expected.

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

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

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

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*
- *Students receive support in research-led teaching through engagement in research projects, mentorship from research-active faculty, and access to resources that enhance their research skills and critical engagement with current studies.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial*

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

Findings

The teaching and interactive materials leverage the pedagogical affordances of the digital ecosystem supplied by the Moodle and Teams platforms for example; student accessibility issues are ameliorated using Microsoft Plugins for Moodle. As referenced in Section 2 there is sufficient technological and pedagogical support to produce e-learning resources. Student -centred learning is central to the whole module. Plans are also in place to recruit more qualified Professor-Councillors if student numbers change, for the first presentation of this Postgraduate Music and Special Education Module.

The Universities physical resources are not relevant for this module as it is presented online. However, students will undertake practical work at different venues, and we assume these are adequate. Students are informed about the services available to them, but we did not receive evidence of research-led teaching for this module.

Strengths

There are clear set of learning activities which students can share in MOODLE (chat) accompanied by a range of Self-Assessment Exercises with added indicative answers. The practical component where students work with students in situ is the major strength of this module. The students we interviewed were content with the support they received. It was the regular Professor-Councillor contact that, for one student, became the main reason to study at Philips University.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

We did not receive evidence of a research-led curriculum and some of the researchers were noted as dated by the subject specialists in our Team. We recommend these are reviewed and the librarian informed in a timely manner so that digital copies are available at the start of the module.

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	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Not applicable
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

In conclusion, the evaluation of Philips University's proposed distance learning 'Master of Arts in Special and Inclusive Education' program revealed several strengths, potential areas for enhancement, and actionable recommendations to ensure the program's success and relevance in the field of inclusive education.

The committee is satisfied with the way the interviews were conducted (including most of the responses to our questions) and the documentation provided.
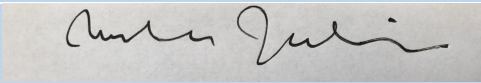
The university demonstrates a clear commitment to stakeholder engagement and has made significant strides in student-centered, online learning, supported by an experienced teaching staff and robust IT infrastructure. Philips University's focus on Cyprus' strategic role as an educational and business hub aligns well with its goal of fostering a learning environment that addresses both local and international educational demands.

Students currently enrolled in distance learning programs at Philips University express high satisfaction, with appreciation for accessible psychological support services and interactive online teaching practices. Additionally, a supportive environment for administrative staff contributes positively to program delivery.

Nonetheless, the evaluation highlighted several areas for improvement as outlined above. In particular, the (future) notion of inclusive education should be made more visible throughout all the courses as a guiding principle of the intended program.

By successfully addressing these areas for improvement, the university can ensure the program's appeal to prospective students and its impact on advancing inclusive education both locally and internationally.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Marian Jongmans	
Christian Ydesen	
Markku Jahnukainen	
Denise Whitelock	
Stella Charalambous	

Date: 17-11-2024