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Date: 05/06/2022

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Limassol International University (currently the Cyprus International Institute of Management (CIIM))
- **Town:** Limassol
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Technology and Innovation School
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Information Technologies
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Πτυχίο στην Πληροφορική και Επιχειρηματικές Τεχνολογίες

In English:

BSc in Computing & Business Technologies

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New



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].

- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The evaluation took place remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic over a two day period (1 & 2 June 2022). During this time, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) met with University and Faculty leadership teams, academic staff from across the department, with administrative staff as well as representatives from the library and with a broad cross-section of students.

We posed a wide range of questions which were answered promptly. Additional clarifications were made in the final wrap-up session and we were also provided with additional statistics where these were not included within the original documentation.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the support provided by the Cyprus Agency of quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor of Innovation and Enterprise	Newcastle University Business School
Christina Lioma	Professor in Computer Science	University of Copenhagen
Christina Boutsouki	Professor in Marketing	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
Pantelitsa Leonidou	Student Representative	Cyprus University of Technology

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**

Findings

The EEC finds that there is a quality assurance policy in place for this program of study, which has a formal status. Internal stakeholders develop and implement the quality assurance policy through structures and processes that are appropriate in their design. The program's teaching staff and students have the responsibility for decision-making and monitoring the implementation of the quality assurance policy. The quality assurance policy supports guarding against intolerance or discrimination against both students and staff and promotes academic integrity and freedom. Student evaluation and feedback is part of the quality assurance process.

The EEC further finds that the overall objectives of this program of study are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit learning outcomes. The program of study overall reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe. The program of study is designed so that it enables smooth student progression and is subject to a formal institutional approval process. The program of study results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated and is in line with the Framework for Qualification of the European Higher Education Area.

The assessment of student performance meets the standards of CYQAA, and the policies for handling plagiarism, academic ethics and grade disputes are effective. Adequate information related to the program of study is published by the department. Graduate employment information is also collected.

Information for the effective management of the program of study is collected, monitored and analysed.

Strengths

The department's management, administration and teaching staff are willing to improve their modus operandi with respect to quality assurance. There is a common culture of working together, learning from past mistakes, and improving practices. Such dynamics are a definite strength.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The minutes of the meetings of the quality assurance committee can be accessible upon request, but are not publicly available by default. The EEC recommends that this practice is amended, so

that the schedule of the planned meetings of the quality assurance committee and their respective minutes are posted on the institution’s intranet and made accessible to all internal stakeholders.

Minutes should be detailed and adhere to the usual standards. They form evidence of quality assurance. Such administrative practices should be exercised appropriately. The sample of minutes that the EEC saw were more reminiscent of extremely brief overviews, rather than proper minutes. External stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance process on an ad hoc basis. The EEC recommends that external stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance process in a structured and systematic way, not only on an ad hoc basis.

The EEC noted that, on few occasions, items that had gone through the quality assurance process, were incomplete (for instance, course descriptions without workload specifications) or substandard (for instance, listing “Object-Oriented Programming for Dummies” as the primary textbook for a bachelors programming course). The EEC recommends that the quality assurance process is carefully monitored, so that results meet CYQAA standards and so that a culture of quality is promoted.

Courses of 6 ECTS in this program of study can be offered over the course of two weeks, designed to have approximately 28 hours of lectures and a minimum of 150 hours of learning effort on behalf of the student. This model of offering 28 hours of lectures and expecting a minimum of 150 hours of personal learning effort practically means that students need to make, as a minimum, approximately 5 times as much effort by themselves than by interacting in the class with instructors. This ratio is not in line with international standards. Typically, the amount of hours spent in the class should be much higher than one fifth of the overall work load when measured in hours. This was also practically confirmed during the meeting between the EEC and students: when asked about the amount of time spent to study outside contact hours, none of the students used up five times more time that their lecture hours. The EEC recommends that the ratio of contact-hours versus non-contact hours becomes more balanced. Given that 1 ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of study (both contact and non-contact) approximately, a course of 6 ECTS should be designed to have more than 28 hours of lectures.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Partially 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**

Findings

A variety of teaching methods is used that overall support students' individual and social development. The process of teaching and learning is flexible and students are encouraged to take an active role. Teaching methods, tools and materials are overall up to date and effective, with few exceptions (see recommendations below).

Resources such as building facilities, library, theoretical and practical teaching rooms, technological infrastructure and broadly academic support and student welfare services are offered.

Student diversity is handled appropriately. Student mentoring is offered. Clear policies on authorship, intellectual property and handling student complaints are in place. Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected and support each other.

Student assessment is overall effective, transparent and consistent with CYQAA standards, with the exceptions (see recommendations below).

Strengths

The program is designed so that it can flexibly adapt to student needs.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Internal or external moderation of grades is not used.

The director of the program of study has the task to review all grades. This practice can result in a very increased workload for the program director during exam time, especially as the number of students increases. This can in turn compromise the amount of time that the program director can actually spend on each student exam. Overall, this practice is neither optimal, nor sustainable, as student numbers increase. The EEC recommends that some form of grade moderation is introduced.

The EEC was informed that it is possible for teaching staff to use students as teaching assistants in this program, and that such student teaching assistants could, for instance, handle the grading. The EEC recommends that this form of grading is moderated by the course instructor. The EEC also recommends that course learning objectives are closely mapped to the study programme objectives.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant

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**

Findings

All teaching staff have the appropriate qualifications for teaching on such a course and relevant expertise. Recruitment of teaching staff appears clear and transparent.

Currently, the institute is going through the process of becoming a university and of intensifying its focus on research, as opposed to mainly teaching. As a result of this, teaching staff is offered flexible options for doing more research, so that they can qualify for a tenure-track or tenured permanent position.

Visiting teaching staff also participates in teaching the program of study, but their number does not exceed that of the permanent staff.

There are initiatives to promote research and to strengthen its link to teaching.

Strengths

Current staff seem motivated and possess qualifications at a level sufficient to be involved in such a programme. The department's management and teaching staff are willing to improve how they work and have a common culture of working together, learning from past mistakes, and improving practices. Such dynamics are a definite strength.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There appears to be no pedagogical or didactic training for teaching staff. This should be prioritised by the institute and implemented as soon as possible. Activities within this area should be diverse (spanning compulsory and optional elements) and target all instructors of little to medium teaching experience.

Furthermore, the department's policy on the distribution of teaching and research load is not consistent with what staff members told the EEC during the visit. There is a discrepancy between the two. This should be amended.

The EEC was informed that a sabbatical policy is in place, but that no one has ever made use of it. The EEC was orally informed by faculty staff that there is currently a 7 year waiting period for it. According to the institute's documentation, sabbaticals are available after 7-10 years of successful

teaching. The EEC recommends that the sabbatical policy and its implementation are revised carefully, so that teaching staff have the opportunity to make use of it in practice, not only in principle. The EEC further recommends that the period of 7-10 years is shortened to, for instance ,6 years.

The number of teaching staff is sufficient for the current student intake, but not for the projected student intake. The EEC was informed that hirings have been planned and that no great difficulties are anticipated in recruiting faculty members. The EEC recommends that recruitment, development and retainment of staff is organised carefully.

The maximum number of students that can be supervised by teaching staff seems to be 15, which is quite high, given the goal of the institute to promote research. Teaching staff could potentially supervise even more than this maximum number of students. The EEC recommends that careful load balancing is adhered to, to safeguard research time.

Very recent publications of faculty members were not made available to the EEC. It is recommended that the institute streamlines its procedure for collecting this information, so that it can be readily accessible.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially 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**

Findings

Student admission is carried out according to predefined regulations. Criteria and access processes are consistent and transparent. Regulations about student progression are also predefined and in place. The collection and monitoring of information on student progression also appears to be in place. The same applies to regulations and processes for student recognition and certification, in line with the CYQAA standards.

Strengths

The recognition procedures are well documented, with student representation and participation across all levels of the reporting structure.

The EEC has observed that student progression from year to year in the degree program is appropriately monitored and supported by exams and other means of assessment so that students can move forward in their studies.

There is strong commitment from the university and faculty to providing a well-resourced teaching environment.

The committee has observed a high level of satisfaction among students, regarding the program and the support they receive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

It is not clear if students completing the program will receive recognition through the Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK), which is the engineering regulatory body in Cyprus. This point should be clarified.

There may be delays before teaching staff can get an overview of a student's progress "while all the marks are entered into the system". There are good practices in place for formative feedback but perhaps the central systems might be augmented by Department infrastructure to provide an early warning if someone is struggling across a number of different courses.

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

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

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

5.2 Physical resources

5.3 Human support resources

5.4 Student support

Findings

Video tours of the teaching labs were made available to the EEC. The labs are modern and up to date. The department has a dedicated budget for updating and replacing lab equipment. Computer labs are open to the students.

The department is waiting for the completion of the new building, which will enable further improvements in the teaching and study environment.

The department is happy with the level of administrative and systems support staff and feels that the budget from the university for support staff is sufficient.

Strengths

Teaching staff are in good contact with computer lab staff about the computer infrastructure that they need. This type of dialogue appears to be smooth. This is very encouraging.

In terms of research resources, there is also dedicated staff in place to help teaching staff with research applications. This is very positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are currently 20 computers in the computer lab in Nicosia, 5 computers in the library, and 10 computers in the computer lab in Limassol. This number of machines is low for the projected number of students. The EEC was informed of plans to increase the number of machines, however the neither the timeline for doing so, nor the number of machines to be bought was concrete. The EEC recommends that concrete, realistic plans are drafted and carried out.

In principle there is access to GPUs, but it is not clear how many GPUs this relates to. It is also not clear if anyone has ever made use of this yet. There does not seem to be any scheduling plan in place, in case GPU demand exceeds availability. The EEC recommends that this point is addressed, especially given the strategic decision of the department to intensify research efforts. GPUs relate to both research topics that are investigated by current staff members and also to teaching themes in the program of study.

Currently there is no access to Linux machines for students, even though operating systems is part of the curriculum. There is an intention to rectify this, however no plan was presented to the EEC. Different alternative ways of giving students access to linux machines were presented, but it was not clear which, if any, of these would be used, with what timeline and capacity. A concrete plan needs to be made and implemented as soon as possible, so that students starting on this program of study have exposure to different operating systems in a hands on way.

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

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

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

<p><u>Sub-areas</u></p> <p>6.1 Selection criteria and requirements</p> <p>6.2 Proposal and dissertation</p> <p>6.3 Supervision and committees</p>

Findings

N/A

Strengths

N/A

Areas of improvement and recommendations

N/A

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	N/A
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	N/A
6.3	Supervision and committees	N/A

C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC concludes that most of the standards of CYQAA are met by this program of study and that a few of the standards are partially met. This reports details and justifies the grounds of this assessment.

Overall, the program of study is placed in a phase of expansion of the institute. These are excellent conditions for helping this program grow and become successful.

D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	
Christina Lioma	
Christina Boutsouki	
Pantelitsa Leonidou	

Date: 05/06/2022