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Date: February 28, 2024

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

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

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων

In English:

Master in Business Administration

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English and 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

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The site visit at the University of Limassol took place on the 26th of February 2024. During the site visit the committee members had the opportunity to meet with a full range of institutional and school leaders, teaching staff, administrative staff, and current and former students. The work of the committee was supported by extensive documentation provided to the committee in advance. Additional documents were provided at the request of the committee and the institution was responsive in doing so. The documentation was helpful in assessing the MBA programme (distance learning) according to the criteria set by the agency. The committee members benefited from a number of informative presentations on the institution and the plans for the distance learning MBA. The committee found that all participants were very thoughtful and open during the discussion across the site visit. The committee also had a site tour of the current premises.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Kevin Orr	Professor	University of St Andrews
Patrick Mikalef	Professor	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Periklis Gogas	Professor	Democritus University of Thrace
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	Professor	University of London
Maria Ilia	Student Member	Cyprus University of Technology
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
 - (a) sub-areas*
 - (b) standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
 - (c) some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

- Variants of the MBA programme have been running for several decades. The MBA has been an important basis on which the previous CIIM built its reputation. The new programme

benefits from this institutional history and market reputation. This observation was also supported by the views of the students we spoke to during the site visit when explaining their decision to study an MBA at the University of Limassol. The MBA programme combines a focus on practice and an engagement with theory, including recent A-I related developments in the field of marketing. The teaching staff are enthusiastic about their involvement in the MBA. The learning and teaching technologies are adequate for supporting the programme, and the University is looking into enhancing these further with investments in additional interactive platforms.

- The programme will be delivered in English and Greek. The English-mode will make it accessible to international students in line with the internationalisation strategy of the university. The programme is commensurate with local and European standards and processes are in place for quality assurance, overseen by Academic Affairs.
- The Master of Business Administration (distance learning) aims: "... to prepare high caliber managers and leaders to lead and effectively manage their organizations by taking a holistic view of their stakeholders and the international environment, acting ethically, and exercising social responsibility." The programme combines core modules in accounting, finance, and economics; leadership and people skills; and strategic thinking.
- The programme is evaluated by student surveys, which have a relatively high response rate. The traditional MBA was re-accredited by the CYQAA in 2022 and provides the basis for the move to a distance learning version of the programme.

Strengths

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

- The University has well-established experience of managing and developing effective MBA provision in ways which meet demand in the market.
- The teaching staff are experienced in the core tenets and principles of an MBA.
- The University has placed a strategic emphasis on continuing to strengthen the research profile of staff in ways which should benefit the scope for research-led teaching on the programme.
- Student feedback feeds into wider quality assurance processes and is also incorporated into developmental conversations with teaching staff.
- There is a well-articulated statement of mission and purpose for the programme and a precise identification of the profile of students that it seeks to attract and develop. These include those targeting future careers in management; existing high potential managers; and specialists seeking a career change or shift in direction.
- There is a clear and extensive statement of the learning objectives, in line with the European qualifications framework. The Internal Quality and Evaluation Committee (IQEC) is the main body responsible for the implementation of standards internal quality assurance. Conversations with staff during the site visit indicate commitment to these standards.

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.

- Some of the alumni of the programme suggested there is scope for the University to play a more active role in enabling future job opportunities after the programme and exposure to companies and employees during the programme itself.
- The demands of converting existing course materials and pedagogical practices into e-learning environments is considerable. It is important that such conversion and translation processes are undertaken with care and thought and informed by best practices in the arena of distance taught provision.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

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

Standards

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

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

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

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The nature of the programme is compatible with e-learning delivery. The programme team have the experience and knowledge to successfully run a programme of this type using online delivery.

- All related initiatives are supported by the Distance Learning Unit, and approaches to pedagogy and implementation seem to be robust.
- Quality assurance mechanisms are in place, maintaining standards and providing a consistent approach to the design and delivery of online and distance learning programmes.

As the programme is new – albeit it builds on a track record of successful conventional provision - we did not see any examples of interaction between students or evidence of how peer learning or group learning is supported in the distance learning context. We observed a conventional class and this provided satisfactory evidence on teaching approaches and adequacy of teaching staff, however work needs to be done to ensure a successful translation into an e-learning context.

We were also given access to two courses on the VLE where there was evidence of a consistent structure to support student learning. Clearer signposting and some further explanations on the purpose of these resources and where they fit exactly within the student journey (and set of activities) would be helpful.

The EEC had the opportunity to meet a group of students from the MSC in Business Intelligence and Data Analytics and the MBA conventional programme (both alumni and current students) and canvas for views and feedback from their student experience:

- Students seemed to be satisfied with the MBA and the level of support they received (administrative and academic) in the programme.
- They appreciated the timeliness and quality of feedback they received, both on annotated student work and generic feedback, including contact with the tutors to discuss their assessed work. This approach should be easily replicated in the e-learning courses, including one to one discussions to close the feedback loop between tutors and students. We note the need to accommodate students from different time zones. This also extends to the capacity to access wider student support (e.g. ICT, welfare, online exams, and so on).
- Some of the students thought that the university should allow them further exposure to employment opportunities and placements. This is equally important for the distance learning students.
- The alumni received informal support from the programme team when they explored post study career opportunities and they found these helpful. However, they would have appreciated further support from the university careers service in terms of employment opportunities. Students expressed a desire for the university to link students with relevant job opportunities. This would be particularly important for distance learning students who are based in geographical locations outside Cyprus.
- Study guides

The EEC reviewed the programme documentation and study guides for all courses, inc. supplementary materials that related to the weekly activities. The study guides for the MBA were well written keeping the distance-learning audience in mind and offered appropriate levels of details and explanations. They also provided effective guidance week by week during the student journey.

The learning outcomes were appropriate and corresponded to the MBA requirements. Organising the LOs under themes according to international standards has been effective.

We reviewed a guide for staff teaching on the conventional delivery. There does not appear to be a guide for DL staff, and we suggest that producing one would now be particularly useful. In our discussions, the EEC was informed that a guide in electronic format was still in preparation. There are instructor resources

on Moodle, but we feel that these require some further development for the DL MBA. At present these seem to be focusing on technical support rather than the pedagogical development of MBA teaching staff.

Assessment

- The EEC had the opportunity to review sample exam papers from the conventional MBA programme. The sample exams papers were well designed.
- Exams are taking place online, using a proctoring system (Proctorio) which seems to be operating without any issues according to the team. We suggest that this system continues to be monitored in the e-learning context.
- The university does not seem to have a policy or guidance for the use of AI for members of staff and students. This is a key area in the current context of the proliferation of generative AI technologies (inc. ChatGPT). The implications of students using generative AI applications can be severe for assessment practice in the MBA. The programme team indicated they are using Turnitin to detect plagiarism offences. However, the current plugin developed by Turnitin to detect the use of AI generative technologies like ChatGPT can be erratic.
- Regarding the assessment framework for distance learning, we understand that distance learning special provisions, particularly in relation to enhanced assessment methodologies and policies for distance learning, are currently being finalised. We are told that it will be approved soon by the QA committee before being submitted to the senate.

Strengths

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

- A robust pedagogical approach to the design of online delivery.
- Student satisfaction with the conventional MBA programme is high. This is evidenced by student surveys and by our conversations with past and current MBA students. We also note that the university succeeds in generating a high response rate (70%) in its student evaluation surveys.
- There is significant support infrastructure supporting distance learning students, including those students with special needs.
- There is awareness of the need to develop robust training and induction opportunities in e-learning for both students and staff. Such activities should support learning and help students and staff to develop digital literacies and related skills.

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.

- Students need to receive clear institutional guidance and recommendations on the use of AI in assessment, linked directly to university policy/guidance on the use of AI.
- Staff should be supported dealing with academic offences originated by the use of generative AI technologies. Clear institutional guidance, including training on technologies and the redesign of assessments, is necessary.
- Building a student community would enhance the student experience and potentially have a positive impact on recruitment. We highlight this as an issue, as it was raised by the students we met from the conventional MBA programme. We note that this brings challenges when dealing with distance learning students. Nonetheless it is important for the University to address this in creative and supportive ways.
- Embedding tools such as simulations, serious games etc. should create incentives for students to use interactive tools during their MBA journey.
- Training seminars should be timetabled (and offered periodically during the academic year) to ensure that all staff should be able to attend. Similar provision should also be offered to MBA students in accessible ways.

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	Partially 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 EEC had the opportunity to meet with Paris Cleanthous, the MBA programme coordinator, and Chair of the Department of Management as well as twelve faculty members involved in teaching at this programme.
- After a short and interesting presentation that was given by the MBA coordinator, we had a fruitful discussion and exchange of ideas on the programme, the relevant market and the prospective Cypriot and international students and their placement in the market.

- The teaching staff we met and interviewed were open and very willing to help the EEC to gather all information necessary and displayed a high level of enthusiasm and motivation in participating in this programme.
- The teaching staff seem qualified to be teaching in this programme. They all have Ph.D. degrees in relevant subject areas.
- Most of the courses are taught by full time faculty members; only a few courses (2-3) are taught by external adjunct lecturers.
- The number of the full-time faculty seems adequate for carrying out the teaching load for the programme.
- The full-time faculty includes people at all levels of academic positions, from lecturers to full professors.
- The recruitment process is more or less standard for a university and it is organized and performed by the School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC).
- The MBA staff is not yet trained in delivering Distance Learning courses. The programme coordinator and the staff seem to realize that is necessary to get formal training in this area as distance learning presents challenges that are different to traditional teaching methods of delivering a course.

Strengths

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

- The full-time staff is well trained and holds degrees from recognized international universities.
- Especially the senior staff, seems to have an extensive experience in teaching.
- The staff seems committed to the program and very enthusiastic.
- Most faculty members have long and lasting relationship with the UoL (formerly CIIM).
- The specialization fields of the faculty members are reflected on the content of the programme and in their teaching roles.
- The teaching load is balanced, and the staff has the time to engage in research.
- Research funds are available for the staff to participate in conferences (€2000 per year), for software, databases, etc. (€1000 per year) and various research expenses (€2000 per year).
- There are agreements with 30 international universities for Erasmus mobility.
- The student to faculty ratio seems -at the moment- satisfactory.
- In addition to the permanent teaching staff, the presence of recognised guest teaching staff can further enrich the student teaching and learning experience. These visiting staff members can bring diverse perspectives and expertise from external institutions contributing to the learning experience of the students. The involvement of such external staff can enhance the international outlook of the proposed programme and provide students with exposure to different teaching styles and academic approaches. It can increase the visibility of both students and faculty of the UoL. Moreover, it can help establish relationships among the UoL and visiting staff creating positive spill-over effects in other areas such as research, recruiting of students, 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 feels that the faculty must be more active with respect to Erasmus+ activities. Faculty must be encouraged to participate in the mobility programs as theses enhance the building of research networks and collaborations in all academic aspects such as teaching, research, etc.
- Promotion criteria must be more transparent and achievable. There must be a clear guide to what are the time, teaching, and research expectations for advancing in their careers within the UoL.
- Although research was discussed a lot in our meeting as an important and integral part of the university activities, there is much that can be done to enhance and support research. For example, the university or the relevant departments can establish a series of weekly or monthly seminars where UoL's faculty and also researchers and business practitioners from other universities or businesses can present their research or case studies to the faculty and the students of the UoL. This will enhance the research environment within the UoL, strengthen the collaborations between the faculty members, create links and collaborations with other academic institutions from Cyprus and abroad or relevant businesses and government agencies involved with research. These seminar series can be either in person when the logistics allow it, or even be online. The UoL must encourage the participation of all faculty and graduate students.
- The committee wants to emphasize the importance and value of research-led teaching in a university setting especially in graduate courses. This can be reflected in the everyday practices, such as incorporating peer reviewed journal articles into the learning process and encouraging students to critically reflect on them.
- The teaching staff needs to be officially trained in Distance Learning. The EEC is aware that the Distance Learning unit within the UoL has arranged for relevant seminars to be provided to the teaching staff on a non-mandatory basis. Providing these seminars and all the support necessary for the Distance Learning courses is of course a significant task performed by the DL unit. Nonetheless, the EEC believes that the seminars provided by the DL unit may be mandatory for the staff that will teach DL courses. A relevant, concise online series of seminars may be offered by the DL unit that will lead to a DL certification for the successful participants. Additionally, the DL unit can circulate and set examples of good practices in DL from courses both internally and externally.
- The EEC believes that the School Faculty Selection Committee (SFSC) in the process of evaluating and selecting new staff members or in the case of promoting current staff members must include at least one -if not more- external to the UoL academics. This practice is widely used by most internationally recognized universities has many advantages:
 - a) External academics bring fresh perspectives and diverse experiences from other institutions, countries or fields.
 - b) External academics act as independent evaluators and, thus, their presence ensures transparency and fairness in the selection process enhancing the moral, loyalty and job satisfaction of the existing faculty. External academics with no personal connections to the UoL are more likely to assess candidates fairly, without biases or conflicts of interest. This is important and contributes to maintaining high standards of academic excellence and transparency of the whole selection and promotion processes.

- c) Involving external academics enhances networking opportunities or exchange programs and academic partnerships.
- d) The credibility and transparency of the processes of the institution are enhanced and aligned with international best practices and standards.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

- Clear regulations and admission criteria are in place and publicly available. The School benefits from extensive experience of delivering and managing an MBA programme.
- The admission requirements for the programme are appropriate and in line with sector and international standards.
- During the site visit, the Admissions team were asked about processes for assessing the prior education of international students. The team is aware of the need to maintain careful and thorough checks, especially as the university seeks to target new regional areas.
- The University of Limassol has pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression as well as processes and tools to collect and monitor student progression.

Strengths

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

- International Admissions and Marketing Admissions work closely together in an integrated way, in line with the strategy of the University.
- There is a good understanding of the need to maintain quality standards when recruiting students and to have robust checks in place to assess appropriate student qualifications.

- The Director of Academic Affairs has oversight of these processes and is a member of the senior management team.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- The committee understands that the need for prior employment experience as an entry requirement for the programme has been removed. (This followed from the withdrawal from the AMBA accreditation). There is a need to continue to assess the pedagogical and experiential impact (for students and faculty) of this policy given the traditional purpose of an MBA. Most often, students’ own professional or career experiences act as a source of reflection and focus of analysis during an MBA journey.
- There may be opportunities to involve MBA alumni in the programme or to introduce placements to provide experience and organisational reference points for students without prior professional or management experience.
- There is a need for robust management of recruitment agencies and to ensure that quality control is maintained.

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

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

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

5.2 Physical resources

5.3 Human support resources

5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The programme team provided a list of external software tools to be used for the distance learning MBA. These are:

- Python
- Jupyter Notebook
- R
- Orange Data Mining
- Microsoft Power BI
- Trello (Project Management)
- Microsoft SQL Server Developer Edition
- Microsoft SQL Server Management Studio (SSMS)
- MySQL Server
- Mongo DB (there are both desktop and cloud versions, both free of charge)
- STATA
- Excel
- SPSS

The students from the conventional MBA can benefit from access to computer labs during their studies. This raises the question of how best to replicate this for distance learning MBA students.

Strengths

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

- Weekly interactive activities per each course have been set and they are at an appropriate level for the MBA.
- There is a unit responsible for distance learning, which supports the development and delivery of e-learning programmes in accordance with international standards. We met with these staff members who appear to be supportive and committed to the MBA programme and the MBA students.
- The University offers extensive online library resources which are relevant to the MBA programme.
- The distance learning unit and student support teams explained to us the processes and facilities in place to support students with special needs, including those in distance learning cohorts.
- There is a good set of external software tools to be used for the MBA distance learning and these should benefit the distance learning MBA students.

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.

- An additional facility to support students outside Cyprus who require access to printed copies of books should be available via the university network of collaborations, when there are no digital copies

available. There may be potential to establish regional collaborations with libraries (outside of Cyprus) to support geographically dispersed MBA students.

- Training and induction for distance learning MBA students on the use of external software tools is needed. At the time of completing this report it was not clear to us how this would be done.
- There is a need to ensure parity of access to computer labs for distance learning MBA students.

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	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Partially 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 plans for the distance taught MBA are in line with the University's wider strategy of internationalisation and expansion. The plans are underpinned by significant recruitment of new senior faculty as well as supported by the longstanding institutional experience of running MBA provision in conventional modes. The University has a positive collaborative spirit among academics (including across the three Schools) and administrative staff. Alumni and current students are very positive about their experience of studying at the University of Limassol and/or the previous CIIM. On the whole, the institutional processes for managing quality assurance seem to be well developed. As the new programme develops (and expands, as per the plans) it is important to continue to audit these processes, especially as students will be more physically remote than has been the case in conventional modes. Equally, the work with recruitment agencies will need to be robustly managed to ensure the maintenance of quality as well as due diligence. Pedagogically the new programme brings opportunities as well as challenges. Here we highlight the need to: provide regular and frequent contact points for students; thoughtfully translate learning resources from the conventional mode of delivery into appropriate and enriching activities for distance learning students; and work to build a sense of student community and connections within the cohort even though the students may be physically dispersed across different locations outside of Cyprus and time zones. We add that careful supporting work needs to be undertaken to ensure that cross-cultural differences (e.g. in relation to team working and participatory activities) are addressed. The University has some ambitious plans for expansion (including the exciting development of a new campus) and there are also commercial expectations on the part of investors. The strategy of expansion should be managed with adequate support for academic and administrative staff, and with the robust maintenance of quality (e.g. in terms of student recruitment) in mind.



E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Kevin Orr	
Patrick Mikalef	
Periklis Gogas	
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	
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Date: February 28, 2024