Doc. 300.1.1

Date: 21/5/2024

External Evaluation Report
(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: University of Limassol**

- **Town:** Limassol

- **School/Faculty (if applicable**): UoL CIIM Business School

- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Management

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

  In Greek:

  Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (DBA)

  In English:

   Business Administration (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA))

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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

Following the invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had the opportunity to evaluate the Doctoral Business Administration (DBA) Programme offered by the University of Limassol (hereafter UOL) in Limassol.

The EEC consisted of three academics: Professor and Chair Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), the members Professor Kevin (University of St Andrews) and Professor Alessandra Ferrari (Loughborough University), and the student representative Ms Elena Onisillou (University of Cyprus).

The evaluation for the programme took place on the 20th of May 2024 at the UOL premises. Prior to the visit, the EEC was supplied with a comprehensive internal evaluation report and other relevant documentation.

On the day of the visit, the EEC met with the senior management team and academic faculty responsible for delivering the DBA programme, external stakeholders as well as the administrative and other support staff from UOL, and MBA graduates from UOL. In particular, during the visit, the EEC met: UOL Rector Theodore Panayotou, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Prof. Vasilis Polimenis, Dean of Technology & Innovation School Andreas Artemiou, Director of MBA and MPSM Paris Cleanthous, Vice-Rector of International Relations, Dean of CIIM Business School Howieson Brian, the PhD Programme Coordinator Doron Sonsino, the DBA Programme Coordinator Waldemar Pfoertsch, a number of professors (potentially supervisors of DBA candidates), 9 MBA graduates, the administrative staff, and a number of external stakeholders of the UOL.

In the morning sessions, the senior management team of UOL presented the University and the proposed DBA programme under review. In the afternoon sessions, the EEC met the external stakeholders, the faculty members, the administrative personnel, and a number of MBA students who shared their experiences during their studies in UOL. The discussion covered academic qualification, staff development, research, workload, assessment, and resources. After the presentations in each session, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further

information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the programme (e.g., learning objectives, programme structure, delivery, assessments of learning, quality of learning, infrastructure, and IT support, etc.), faculty, and the institution more broadly. Additional evidence was also provided (e.g., Quality Assurance (QA) process, example/s of student progress, information about support for students (software, etc.), and career orientation. The visit concluded with a meeting and general discussion with the senior management team for clarification questions from earlier sessions during the visit. The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative. As we detail below, we find that the programme is overall compliant with the stated criteria and standards. Given that it is a new programme, with the first students starting in September 2024, we offer suggestions to be considered by the University in the hope of further improvement.

The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the evaluation.

The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Dr Christiana Maki, the CYQAA coordinator, for her efficient way of organizing and managing the process.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Dionisis Philippas	Professor and Chair	ESSCA School of Management
Kevin Orr	Professor	University of St Andrews
Alessandra Ferrari	Professor	Loughborough University
Elena Onisillou	Student representative	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

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

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

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

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- o *qualification awarded*
- o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
- o *pass rates*
- o *learning opportunities available to the students*
- o *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?*

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- *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?*

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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 PhD programme is a 3-year, full-time programme, depending on prior graduate master's level studies. Exceptionally, the programme can stretch up to 6 years in duration. It requires 240 ECTS (60 ECTS come from MBA graduation) and covers various research topics ranging from Economics and Finance, Strategic and Marketing Management, Leadership, and Innovation and Technology Management. Initially, the programme is expected to start with 2 to 12 candidates (as the UOL estimates).

As a general view, the PhD programme offered is well structured, its objectives are in accordance with the overall strategy of UOL, and the intended learning outcomes stem from and are consistent with the content of the programme, with some room for improvement. The purpose, objectives, and learning outcomes have been communicated and justified. The expected learning outcomes of the programme should be communicated clearly to the candidates.

The admissions process is clear and structured. Admissions are based on a GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale or equivalent, and English language proficiency (IELTS 5.5+, preferably 6.5, or TOEFL equivalent). It is also specified that there should be 3 reference letters from professors familiar with the candidate. Applicants should also submit a preliminary structured research proposal of 1500 words. The final element is an interview by a committee of academics. The plans are for steady-state admissions of 3-12 per year.

Overall, the programme seeks to equip its doctoral graduates with analytical qualities that can prepare researchers and professionals for academic careers and professional promotion. In broad strokes, the programme is in line with international PhD programmes in that graduate-level training is initially offered, followed by opportunities for specialized research training (some with ECTS credit-bearing weight) before candidates begin working on their thesis.

There are regular checkpoints on progress, such as research proposal presentations and thesis progress. The programme does not mandate the submission/publication of scientific paper(s). There

are clear guidelines on the role of the supervisor, the Doctoral Advisor Committee, and the Doctoral Examination Committee. All these steps are noted as positive aspects of the programme. Importantly, the specialization of the supervisors overall maps onto the topics of the dissertations.

Quality assurance mechanisms are present and aligned with international standards. There are a number of quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies for the development and management of the programme of study.

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

In summary, the strengths of the program are as follows:

1. A very clear and well-described programme structure.
2. Quality assurance mechanisms in place.
3. Involvement of many stakeholders.
4. Management, faculty, and administrative staff appear committed to the programme.
5. The quality of the faculty staff.
6. A clear set of milestones and goals for the PhD and DBA dissertations.

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.

Please refer to section 6 of the report where we elaborate on aspects of the programme that can be improved. However, please find below some suggestions as food for thought:

1. The programme could have an international call and attract students from countries beyond Greece and Cyprus.
2. The programme should be clearer about what it offers in specific research topics aligned with the research expertise of the faculty.
3. While the EEC does not suggest mandatory publications before the PhD or DBA viva, there can be incentives to participate in conference with proceedings.

4. Doctoral supervision does not count explicitly towards faculty workload and promotion. Given the responsibilities that such supervision carries, the EEC recommends that doctoral supervision should receive explicit, quantified credit. It should also count for promotion.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

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

Standards

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

- *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 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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*

- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

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 met with some students and alumni who were particularly satisfied and pleased with their studies. Both students and academic staff noted that the close relationships built between them positively affected their studies, both during their academic tenure and in their development after completion.

Overall, the process of teaching and learning supports individual and research collaboration. The campus offers adequate opportunities for research socialization.

From the evidence gathered by the EEC, the process of teaching and learning (e.g., seminars, face-to-face meetings, pre-recorded webinars) seems to be quite flexible in accommodating students' individual characteristics and needs. There is good evidence that appropriate guidance and support from the teachers are in place.

Appropriate procedures for receiving student feedback and dealing with student complaints are in place, but we make further comments about this in Section 6. There is a comprehensive teaching methodology and mechanisms. Academic procedures involving the Programme Director, the teaching staff, and the students are well-documented.

The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear and well-communicated to the students. There is good evidence of structured and well-organized taught material, including lecture presentations and a good blending of foundational and contemporary research.

The University has modern educational technologies and good infrastructure in place.

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

A number of committees ensure the proper delivery of the programme and constitute an important means by which the University maintains consistent quality standards.

Through the Cyprus consortium library, students have the opportunity to access databases that would be difficult to access otherwise. This is particularly relevant when designing programs meant to offer key resources to students. The PhD and DBA candidates can use personalized advanced software like STATA.

In general, the EEC feels that the programme is fully managed by the academics in charge, while its relatively small size guarantees a friendly and collegiate environment between students and teaching/administrative staff.

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.

Please refer to section 6 of the report where we elaborate on aspects of the program that can improved.

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	Partially compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant

3. **Teaching staff** *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

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

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*

- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

The EEC noted that the DBA programme is supported by a well-qualified faculty, with all faculty members being PhD-qualified and experienced academics.

There is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise and the course units they deliver.

From the evidence gathered, the faculty appears to be involved in research activities, albeit at different levels across the faculty members.

During the visit, the teaching staff was praised by both students and stakeholders for the quality of teaching and the level of support received.

Based on the available evidence, the faculty is involved in research activities and is keen on further developing their research portfolios.

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

This is an ambitious programme underpinned by a clear strategic vision. It should help to elevate the research environment in the university and is a signal of the continuing maturing of the institution. The programme has been informed by, and will benefit from the clear support of, industry and external stakeholders.

Faculty members are experienced academics with doctorates from prestigious institutions and are enthusiastic about the new programme and its opportunities. Equally emerging faculty members are keen on the programme. There is confidence on the part of marketing and recruitment that the programme will be viable, and this sense was reinforced by the alumni we spoke to.

The criteria for promotions, budget allowances, and workload are established and clearly communicated to the faculty.

The faculty members involved in this programme appear to be committed to it. The specialization fields of the faculty members are well reflected in the programme's content and in their supervisory roles.

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.

It is not clear how the DAC and DEC will operate in the case of disagreement about assessment or student progress. Perhaps there is scope for one colleague to be identified as primus inter pares in such cases. It is unclear what routes students have open to them in any case where they have a problem with supervision, a supervisor, or a member of the DEC/ DAC. In general, there is a need to make clear and supportive plans for instances when supervision runs into problems. We suggest the need to codify and make explicit the expectations about the supervision process, including frequency of contact, feedback, and so on. There is scope to have an identified administrative member of staff dedicated to the PhD/ DBA programmes. It is unclear whether it is in the intention

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of the University/ School to resource supervision as part of the workload model. We suggest that is fair and equitable to do so, in order to endure that (especially junior) members of faculty are not expected to undertake supervision over and above their existing commitments.

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	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*

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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.

The EEC met with 9 MBA graduate students and asked them about their experiences, why they chose UOL, what they liked (or didn't like), as well as how the courses were delivered. In general, the EEC noted that students were very positive about their studies, the programmes they follow(ed), and the support they received.

The student admission requirements as well as the programme's outcomes seem to be clear to all students and in line with the criteria set by the Cypriot Higher Education framework. These are communicated by the University to prospective students.

As the students mentioned, the course tutors and administrative personnel were helpful and supportive of their needs. The students appear to be well-supported by the University in terms of teaching materials, IT support, and library access in their programmes.

The student selection process has an open approach, allowing applications from different fields in both the public and private sectors (particularly from Cypriots and Greeks). This increases the interdisciplinary focus of the programme.

Among the primary motivations of students in studying at UOL's programmes was the (CIIM) brand. However, when the students were asked about how they were informed about the new DBA programme, they expressed their willingness to enhance alumni communication and engagement. Strengthening ties with graduates could enhance the connection with society, the business sector, and the job market

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

The main strengths in this section are the following:

Based on existing programmes and the general UOL strategy, there are adequate processes for admission, monitoring, and certification of student progress and achievements.

The proposed programmes appear to be demand driven thanks to the strong links with industry.

Additionally, there are processes in place to foster the internationalization of the student body (e.g., Erasmus).

The students pointed out the flexibility of the programmes, which is a feature that gives an advantage to the new programme under review. The programme is focused on students' needs and market demand.

The students are well taken care of by the University in terms of material, academic support, IT support, library access, and other resources.

Scholarships or financial support are, in principle, available.

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

Areas of improvement are after below:

- The scholarships can be expanded by considering various criteria, such as economic factors and other criteria related to research, teaching, and incentives for publications. This approach would help UOL attract international students and ensure a high quality of their students' outputs (e.g., scientific papers). The criteria for awarding scholarships, incentives, and financial support should be clearer and publicly available.

- There is some concern that anonymity is compromised during the evaluation process. The programme should take action to introduce greater distance between students and the supervisory staff being evaluated to address this issue.

- The University should grow an alumni network for their graduates to maintain a connection with the university after completing their MBA and later DBA viva.

- There should be evidence of international research standards applicable to the programme for all students, specifying required deliverables such as exams, working/published papers, teaching assistance, and so on. There is a danger that student expectations in this regard are kept low.

- After the first year, there should be an exit strategy for students who do not wish to or are unable to pursue the remainder of the programme

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	Partially compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
5.2 Physical resources
5.3 Human support resources
5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

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

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*
- *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
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 visit the premises of UOL and see the facilities, physical and human support resources through discussions with the staff. Overall, the EEC believes that UOL offers satisfactory resources and a wide range of services to both students and teaching staff (e.g., access to library material, IT infrastructure, and administrative support) that feature a wide range of sources (e.g., books, e-books, interface open-source platform, and so on).

In terms of human capital support, the University and the Departments are performing well on that front as well; there is an adequate number of experienced and well-educated staff that support the smooth operations of the University and potentially the DBA programme under review.

Also, the University Rector has shown a preview of the new premises that are planned for the next two years.

It is worth mentioning that the University subscribes to the Refinitiv database.

Student admission, progression, learning resources and student support for PhD and DBA programmes are in place.

Finally, the UOL is a member of the Cypriot Library Consortium.

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

There are some strengths to be noted:

- The management and administration team are committed to providing the necessary support to teaching staff and students with the necessary resources needed to perform their duties.
- The available support extends to pastoral care in the form of state-of-the-art counselling services (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).
- The administrative personnel are well-trained, with the EEC noting the skilled administration staff that support academic staff and students.
- A quality framework is in place for controlling and supporting teachers and staff. Moreover, the EEC believes that the internal quality assurance process is good.

- The EEC appreciates the fact that the QA process has alternative ways to keep the student evaluation anonymous (for example, using a letter box for students to submit their reports anonymously).

- The EEC noted that the University is able to provide teaching, research webinars, and communication activities when needed. This can also lead to attracting an international body of potential students in the future.

- The library and IT support meet the expectations of an academic environment and serve the current needs of students and faculty.

- New eco-friendly facilities are on the way.

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 noted that over the 33-year life of the University, there has been substantial progress in facilities, physical, and human capital resources. Any additional development in the requirements for technology used for learning, databases, and premises would contribute not only to this under-review programme but also to a range of physical and distance learning programmes, as well as attracting more international students in the future.

The University should ensure that the adequacy of resources is maintained and updated in light of changing student numbers (especially if the year-on-year increases are realized) and in light of ongoing advances in academic knowledge and developments in professional practice.

The administrative staff are based over 2 campuses and would welcome more opportunities to meet together and to be supported to continue to develop as an integrated team. We were impressed by the quality and engagement of the administrative staff, but endorse the idea that given their strategic significance to the new programmes, investment of time and support for administrative staff is important.

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

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

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

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

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

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

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

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

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*

- o *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
- o *support for writing research papers*
- o *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Are the criteria reflected in dissertation samples?*

Findings

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

This is an ambitious programme underpinned by a clear strategic vision. It should help to elevate the research environment in the university and is a signal of the continuing maturing of the institution.

The programme has been informed by, and will benefit from the clear support of, industry and external stakeholders.

Faculty members are experienced academics with doctorates from prestigious institutions and are enthusiastic about the new programme and its opportunities. Equally emerging faculty members are keen on the programme.

There is confidence on the part of marketing and recruitment that the programme will be viable, and this sense was reinforced by the alumni we spoke to.

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

The milestones to be met by the students are well articulated and the first year in particular is highly structured, with regular points for feedback and development.

There is convincing evidence that new programme fulfils a market need and is in line with the strategy of the institutions.

There is evidence that the programme has been designed and developed with care and consideration.

This is a well-conceived programme with a good 'applied' emphasis. It carries enthusiastic support from external stakeholders and there is general confidence that there is a viable market for the programme. Equally, MBA alumni see the DBA as an attractive next step for professional development. There is a well-defined target market of senior managers who aspire to be senior leaders and/ or assume board-level positions.

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

Areas of improvement are below:

It is not clear how the DAC and DEC will operate in the case of disagreement about assessment or student progress. Perhaps there is scope for one colleague to be identified as primus inter pares in such cases.

It is unclear what routes students have open to them in any case where they have a problem with supervision, a supervisor, or a member of the DEC/ DAC. In general, there is a need to make clear and supportive plans for instances when supervision runs into problems.

We suggest the need to codify and make explicit the expectations about the supervision process, including frequency of contact, feedback, and so on.

There is scope to have an identified administrative member of staff dedicated to the PhD/ DBA programmes.

It is unclear whether it is in the intention of the University/ School to resource supervision as part of the workload model. We suggest that is fair and equitable to do so, in order to endure that (especially

junior) members of faculty are not expected to undertake supervision over and above their existing commitments.

There is scope to be inclusive (i.e. ensure involvement of more junior members of staff) in the future development of the programme.

The UOL should highlight the differences between the PhD and DBA programmes to prospective students.

We recognise the value of more experienced supervisors mentoring new or less experienced faculty members as part of co-supervision processes. We also think it is important (even for experienced faculty) to undertake regular training updates to ensure that skills are refreshed and in line with emergent sectoral norms. Usually, such training can identify the emergence of good practices, as well as address specific important issues such as diversity awareness, unconscious bias, and so on. There may be scope to have reflective workshops for UOL faculty and some of its partner institutions to share best practice or discuss supervision dilemmas.

For the DBA programme the EEC suggests developing closer links with the industry sector, for instance in the form of a potential third industry supervisor; and/or the more direct involvement of industry stakeholders in the programme via workshops or presentations.

The expectations about publications stemming from the DBA research are currently ambiguous and should be clarified, and then communicated to new students. We are not convinced that academic publications need to be a requirement or benchmark.

There is scope for industry stakeholders to help shape dissertation topics. In addition, external stakeholders expressed a willingness to give DBA (and PhD) students access to their organisations as possible sites for research. Doing so would be a great opportunity and a mark of distinctiveness for the programme.

The EEC shared some concerns about the admission and progression requirements, in particular the structure of the first year. While we appreciate the need to guarantee the quality level of the applicants, the EEC found the requirements a bit too stringent. We suggest the following: a lower

pass threshold for the exams; the use of an overall weighted average result; the possibility of resitting a failed module.

The ECC also found the qualifying examination too broadly defined an idea, potentially leading to inequality among applicants as well as excess workload on staff members. We suggest to remove it and to merge it instead with a structured dissertation proposal that covers literature review, research questions methodology etc. This should be now worth the overall 30 ECTS.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Partially compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	Partially 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 Doctoral Business Administration is a new programme offered by the University of Limassol. It has a 3- (up to 6-) years duration, with its content, design, and structure thoroughly developed. The EEC acknowledges the significant effort made in preparation for the launch of the new DBA programme. This included the development of the University in several ways, such as infrastructure, enrichment of faculty members, quality assessments, the design of the programme structure, and content that aligns with comparable international programmes. Support for the programme comes from the University's senior management team, external stakeholders, close ties with the business sector, and their administrative services.

Nevertheless, to establish the sustainability and competitive advantage of the new programme over the coming years, and considering recent developments and competition, the EEC has identified some areas of improvement. We have elaborated on these recommendations in each section above, highlighting where further development is recommended.

The EEC would like to thank all involved at the University of Limassol for their high engagement throughout the evaluation process and for providing a rich set of supporting documents and access to material before and during the site visit.

We also want to thank them for their great hospitality. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Christiana Maki for organizing and facilitating the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Dionisis Philippas	
Kevin Orr	
Alessandra Ferrari	
Elena Onisillou	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 21/5/2024