**Doc. 300.1.1/2**

**Date: 26/11/2025**

# External Evaluation Report

## (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Πανεπιστήμιο Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLan - Κύπρος)
- **Town: Larnaca**
- **School/Faculty:** School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics
- **Department:** Computing, Engineering and Mathematics
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
**In Greek:**

  **Ασφάλεια Κυβερνοχώρου (1 ακαδημαϊκό έτος, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ(MSc), Εξ Αποστάσεως)**
**In English:**

  **Cybersecurity (1 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master(MSc), E-Learning)**
- **Language(s) of instruction: English**
- **Programme's status: Currently Operating**
- **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 European Expert Committee (EEC) consisting of Prof. Gregory O'Hare, Prof. Tuomas Aura, Prof. Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos and chaired by Professor D K Arvind together with Mr Ioannis Zapatis and Mr Polydoros Skannavias as industry and student representatives, respectively, and accompanied by Ms Natasa Kazakaiou visited the campus of the University of Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus) on 24 – 25 November, 2025. The panel was first met by UCLan Cyprus's Rector Prof. Irene Polycarpou and her team consisting of Dr Cosmina Theodoulou, Director of Academic Quality and Compliance office, Prof. Nearchos Paspallis, Head of the Department of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics, Dr Demetres Christofides, Academic Staff specialised in Quality Assurance Processes, and Ms Stephanie Pilavaki, Academic and Quality Assurance Officer as an observer. The panel was impressed by the diligence, openness and responsiveness of all the members of the UCLan Cyprus team.

The Panel met the Head of Department (Prof Nearchos Paspallis), and the Co-ordination Committee of the two modes of delivery of MSc in Cybersecurity, together with Head of Library (Ms Chrystalla Filippou) and Head of IT (Mr. Yianis Kekkou). The delivery team of the MSc in Cybersecurity (Prof Nearchos Paspallis, Dr Christiana Ioannou, Dr Josephina Antoniou, and Dr Cosmina Theodoulou) explained the details of the course content and their delivery in both modes. The panel met a selection of Special Teaching Staff (Pantelina Ioannou, Konstantinos Senekkis) and two lecturers (Dr Andria Procopiou, and Dr Nikos Kasenides). Next a meeting with the members of the administrative staff, including the Director of Admissions and Recruitment (Mr Robert Georgiades), the Director of the Academic Quality and Compliance Office (Dr Cosmina Theodoulou), the Head of Marketing (Mr Yiannis Zezos), the Head of IT (Mr Yannis Kekkou), Head of Library (Ms Chrystalla Filippou), the Head of Schools Administration (Ms Helen Plaado), the Head of Student Support (Ms Margarita Manoli), and the Human Resources Officer (Ms Chrysovalanto Christoforou). A selection of students attending the two modes of the MSc degree – F2F (Sana Ghafoor, Abuzar Qureshi) and DL (Alexandros Neophytou, Altani Paraskevi Batoudaki) met the panel. The final meeting was with the external stakeholders: George Malekkos (online), Christos Ttiniozos, Michalis Omerou, Demetris Nisiotis and George Thrasyvoulou. The visit ended with an exit discussion with the Head of Department (Prof Nearchos Paspallis), Course Leaders of the degree programmes (Dr Andriani Piki, Dr Louis Nisiotis, Dr Josephina Antoniou, Dr Christiana Ioannou) and Director of Academic Quality and Compliance Office (Dr Cosmina Theodoulou).

We wish to thank Ms Natasa Kazakaiou at CYAQA for the excellent planning and arrangements for the EEC visits.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| *Name* | *Position* | *University* |
|---|---|---|
| D K Arvind | Professor | University of Edinburgh |
| Gregory O'Hare | Professor | Trinity College Dublin |
| Tuomas Aura | Professor | Aalto University |
| Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos | Professor | Uppsala University |
| Ioannis Zapitis | General Council Member | Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK) |
| Polydoros Skannavias | MSc student | Cyprus University of Technology |

## 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.*

UCLan Cyprus, established in 2012, is a for-profit private university, incorporated as a private limited company in Cyprus. The Board of Directors are equally represented from Cyprus and the University of Lancashire (previously named University of Central Lancashire). They offer double degrees to graduating students from UCLAN Cyprus and University of Lancashire. The UCLan Cyprus has had to undergo accreditation from both the Cypriot and UK agencies.

The University aims to be research-led and has collectively published 467 peer-reviewed publications in the last 5 years. They have had 86 externally-funded research projects since inception, amounting to a cumulative income of €4.6M, mainly from the EU. The university has a total staff of 252, with 62 full-time academic, 98 associate and visiting lecturers. The student strength is 1813 students, 44% of whom are female, and 34% have a scholarship. UCLan offers 16 UG and 16 PG programs across 5 departments. Students on the PhD programme at UCLan Cyprus work locally but are registered at the University of Lancashire and pay ”Home” UK student fees (rather than “Overseas” student fees).

The recently reorganised Department of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics offers 4 undergraduate and 5 postgraduate programmes. The teaching material for the courses is provided by the University of Lancashire, although the academics are able to tailor them to local requirements, e.g., the Bachelor’s programme in University of Lancashire is 3 years long, whereas it is 4 years in UCLan Cyprus. UCLan Cyprus have the freedom to propose and develop their own degree programmes, the MSc in Cybersecurity is a case in point, which has subsequently been “exported” to the University of Lancashire.

## *Strengths*

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

- The double-degree is an USP for UCLan Cyprus which operates in a competitive market with 12 universities in Cyprus. The majority of the students who were interviewed stated this as the primary reason for choosing to study at UCLan Cyprus.
- Degree programmes at UCLan Cyprus are accredited by the agencies in Cyprus and the UK every 5 years. This is a considerable overhead; however, the advantage is that UCLan Cyprus has refined the processes for delivering their courses to a high standard which satisfies both agencies.
- The MSc in Cybersecurity programme has recognition from the Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK), the statutory engineering organisation in Cyprus.
- The faculty members are encouraged to gain Fellowship of Higher Education Academy in UK (FHEA).
- The Department is part of Erasmus mobility schemes to encourage students to engage in summer internships.
- Members of the faculty participate in government bodies, e.g., advisory boards.
- The faculty members participate in community outreach such as delivering lectures in schools and involving the general public during research days.
- The faculty members organise research conferences, hackathons and ACM programming competitions.

- The individuals in the Department engage actively with a number of companies and government organisations, who provide internships for the students, and advice on the course content and ideas for joint student projects.

*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 Departmental website should display prominently the latest CYQAA report and letter of accreditation.
- We appreciate individual initiatives to have contacts with stakeholders in industry; however, the Department should formalise its interactions with the stakeholder community in the form of an annual minuted meeting of the *Industrial Advisory Forum* where stakeholders from industry, service companies, financial organisations and charities are invited to attend and discuss ideas for interaction and provide feedback on the Departmental teaching syllabus.

**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 | Compliant |
| **1.3** | Public information | Partially 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.*
- *For distance learning programs, the number of students in both undergraduate and Master's level postgraduate programs does not exceed **30** students per class.*

### 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 course uses a variety of teaching and learning methods.
- The degree of difficulty and the number of assessments seem appropriate for the level of qualification.
- Overall, the balance between theory and practical industry relevance seems to be appropriate.
- All modules include applied and hands-on components such as labs, tutorials and projects.
- The same course is offered as both face-to-face and distance-learning versions, and this version is based on online classes.
- Standard collaboration and e-learning platforms are used for synchronous and asynchronous activities.
- Teaching relies primarily on synchronous activities, with lectures delivered through Microsoft Teams. However, these lectures are recorded and made available asynchronously through Blackboard.

- Students can interact in their free time through online services offered by the university (e.g., games, clubs, virtual communities), though remote-learning student participation in these activities remains low.
- During lectures, students can ask questions and participate in discussions with the teacher and their peers. Student interaction is also encouraged during assignment presentations.

## *Strengths*

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

- The programme follows an educational philosophy based on student-centred learning.
- The hands-on learning methods provide skills needed in the intended career paths of the graduates. The methods also match the expectations of the industrial stakeholders, who are potential employers. Many students find an internship or part-time work during the studies. Students with special needs have access to various types of support from the university.
- The possibility to do the thesis project at an industry partner is an excellent opportunity for students to get work experience during the studies or to combine the master's studies with working on their existing job. This practice should be encouraged.
- The course and all modules have been planned and documented in great detail, and the instructions provided to the students are comprehensive and clear.
- The assessment processes, methods and criteria are carefully documented. The attention to the formal processes and documentation is at least in part a beneficial result of the course having to meet the requirements of two universities and two accreditation agencies.
- Student feedback is actively collected and used for improving the teaching.
- It is apparent that the module teachers care for the students, and the students value the expertise and support from the teachers.
- Diverse educational instruments have been adopted, including synchronous sessions to enable the distribution of tasks to individuals or groups; presentations of their work to the class, thus fostering discussion; group and individual discussions are also stimulated during lectures.
- The EEC notes, and recommends the retention of, the mandatory nature of the Master's thesis, which ensures development of independent research skills and demonstrates the high scientific quality of the programme.

## *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 believes it would be beneficial were students able to combine elements from both the face-to-face and distance-learning versions of the course, for example, to enable working during the studies. The EEC strongly encourages examination of this possibility.

- Policies pertaining to the use of Generative AI need to be consolidated. Indeed the position currently adopted by the institution and/or Department seem to be ill-considered.
- The general approach is largely based upon prohibition. This would seem not to be in keeping with approaches adopted more broadly within the educational landscape. Specifically, the EEC were of the opinion that:
    1. There needs to be a comprehensive institutional policy relating to the use of Generative AI;
    2. There needs to be a Departmental policy relating to the use of Generative AI;
    3. Module level descriptors need to explicitly state the permitted (if permitted) usage of Generative AI;
    4. Tools for the identification of plagiarism and use of generative AI are in place and routinely used; however, it is not clear that the current submission platform is the most appropriate tool for such purposes. Technical support staff are encouraged to undertake an assessment to inform software tool adoption for such purposes and furthermore to regularly undertake reviews of available tools given the velocity of change associated with Gen AI and LLMs;
    5. Where Generative AI is permitted for use, there needs to be clear instructions given as to how students can evidence the use, extent and specific inputs through, for example, the inclusion and referencing of prompts in assignment submission;
    6. Where software artefacts are developed as part of coursework, procedures around the consistent use of tools like Git should be provided. Specifically, they could enable the versioning of code bases such that the natural evolution of the code across time can be observed;
    7. Where students are suspected of the use of generative AI, in a manner similar to plagiarism, a clearly set out process of investigation is necessary.
- The EEC duly note the references to the use of AI within the Section E Quality Assurance (Application for Departmental Evaluation) and the Student Handbook. These references need to refer explicitly to policy documents whereby the students are empowered to determine appropriate usage.
- The EEC recognises the legitimacy of the adoption of a position of prohibition of Generative AI; however, a more finely-gained determination of usage at the module level would be more appropriate.

- Promoting interaction among remote-learning students is pedagogically crucial. In conventional and synchronous distance-learning courses this is common, but facilitating interaction in asynchronous activities is more challenging. Although time slots are reserved for questions and discussions, participation is voluntary rather than integrated into structured tasks. A more effective solution is to embed interaction directly into assignments—for example, through peer review or peer opposition during thesis presentations. This makes interaction a natural, meaningful, and necessary part of the learning process, increasing student engagement. The EEC recommends investigating solutions which enable this.
- Asynchronous activities are particularly important in distance-learning environments. Students often choose distance learning because of limited time due to work or other commitments, and therefore need flexibility in pacing and scheduling their studies. The EEC recommends designing the course structure around robust asynchronous components, which is essential for attracting and retaining students and supporting successful course completion.

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

| **Sub-area** | | ***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*** |
|---|---|---|
| **2.1** | Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology | Compliant |
| **2.2** | Practical training | Compliant |
| **2.3** | Student assessment | Partially compliant |
| **2.4** | Study guides structure, content and interactive activities | Compliant |

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

**Sub-areas**

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

### 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

*Standards*

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

### 3.2 Teaching staff number and status

*Standards*

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

### 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

*Standards*

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

- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

*Findings*

*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.*

- Mandatory training and continuous support are offered to staff for designing and delivering distance-learning courses.
- The faculty all had doctoral degrees in Computer Science and cognate disciplines.
- Recruitment processes seem appropriate and are resulting in a cohesive and informed cohort of staff both academic and professional.
- Feedback received from students interviewed confirmed the staff to be highly approachable, knowledgeable and supportive to their learning needs.
- The teaching load on staff is toward the higher end of acceptable. This is particularly so when staff applying for promotion are being assessed on teaching, administration *and* research.

Click or tap here to enter text.

*Strengths*

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

- Training and support are provided for the teachers to help them use technology effectively for solving pedagogical challenges. This enables staff to design effective distance-learning courses that take full advantage of technological possibilities.
- Teaching staff represent the most valuable resource to the University. They are almost without exception highly qualified, highly motivated, professional and highly informed and hard-working, delivering a student centred, up to date, industry informed appropriate learning experience.

- There is clear evidence of the willingness of staff to support learners on their educational journey. Staff were available in person and online, and students repeatedly commended them on their professionalism, knowledge and approachability.
- There is evidence of associate teaching staff being drawn from outside relevant HEIs and Industry.
- External industrial stakeholders were highly complementary as to the quality of graduates.
- Industry representatives commented that the gap between academic content taught and industry-need was somewhat smaller for UCLan Cyprus when compared to graduates from other HEIs. The balance between training and education is nevertheless finely balanced and must be monitored.
- Graduates were cited to be highly employable with one company stating that circa 20% of their new hires were drawn from UCLan Cyprus.
- Graduates were deemed to be able to contribute effectively in industry within 3 months and this was observed to be a faster mobilisation period than usual.

## *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.*

- While some evidence exists as to guest lectures being given from international HEIs, this is limited. The educational offering could be enhanced considerably with invited speakers from leading International Universities on short visits. Such individuals may have cause to be visiting Cyprus but may be willing to offer some lectures. The students would benefit from such i*nternationalisation* of the learning experience.
- The EEC noted that there was a clear effort to map teaching modules to those staff with expertise in the given area. However, the EEC were of the opinion that further effort could be made in this regard. It was noted that staff were often spread across a number of discrete subject areas. While this is sometimes inevitable with small student numbers and commensurate small staff numbers, the EEC would nevertheless urge intensification of efforts to map research experience of staff to curricula content.
- The EEC noted the Staff Student Ratios (SSRs) for Computing, Engineering and Mathematics. While these are not dissimilar to many comparable institutions the SSR for Computing is circa some 120% higher than that of Mathematics and Engineering within UCLan Cyprus. This imbalance ought to be addressed.
- The EEC also note the twin track appointments for *Teaching only* and *Teaching and Research*. This was found to be potentially divisive creating a two-tier promotional system.
- To ensure curricula content is informed by industry, it is recommended to establish an *Industrial Advisory Forum* that would meet formally on an annual basis and offer advise as to curricula content. Such advice, of course, ought only to be advisory and not mandatory for adoption. Recommendations and views ought to be minuted.
- The teaching load on staff is towards the higher end of acceptable. This is particularly so when staff applying for promotion are being assessed on teaching, administration *and* research. Further support is necessary for staff in terms of assisting, incentivising and facilitating their research. Specifically, the EEC would encourage:
  1. A significant increase to staff annual travel budget to support presentations at international fora;
  2. A fund to assist with Open access publication costs;
  3. Incentivise research by removing the existing cap of 2-3 hours teaching remission;
  4. Better access to GPU compute facilities and cloud storage for data intensive research;

5. Materially incentivise publications in the highest publication fora (*e.g.*, IEEE Transactions);

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

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

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

**Sub-areas**

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

### 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

*Standards*

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

### 4.2 Student progression

*Standards*

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

### 4.3 Student recognition

*Standards*

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

### 4.4 Student certification

*Standards*

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

- *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 processes for student admission, progression, recognition, and awards are well defined.

The formal requirement for student admission is a Bachelor's degree with lower-second class in Computing or a cognate discipline and English language proficiency at level C1. In addition to the prior educational achievement, the selection criteria include motivation and commitment. Interviews may be conducted to examine the academic background and/or industrial experience to ensure the applicant's fitness to the course.

## *Strengths*

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

- All those admitted to the MSc in Cybersecurity course have a Bachelor's degree and technical background. This is important to maximise their chances to progress in their studies.
- All students in the course are required to complete the master's thesis project. The thesis research and writing contribute significantly towards the learning objectives of the course. Having completed the thesis project also distinguishes the graduates from those with postgraduate qualifications that do not include a thesis and makes it easier to progress towards PhD studies.

## *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 urges that the Department adopts a transparent proforma for reporting and monitoring drop-out rates.

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

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

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

**Sub-areas**

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

**5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**

*Standards*

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

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

**5.2 Physical resources**

*Standards*

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

**5.3 Human support resources**

*Standards*

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

**5.4 Student support**

*Standards*

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

*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.*

- Students have remote access to the library's books, journals, and all relevant publications required for distance-learning programme.
- Students have access to state-of-art gym facilities.
- Quality on-campus housing provides students with easy access to the University.
- Games nights and other extra-curricular activities are available for students.
- The well-designed cafeteria has adequate seating spaces for the students.
- A quiet study room was available to students.

*Strengths*

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

- The EEC found the physical environment of the university provided a good ambience for study.
- The EEC found the quality of provision in the built environment to be of a high quality. The educational facilities are of appropriate quality and are well maintained. The study facilities, lecture rooms, and IT infrastructure are modern and sufficiently equipped to support the programme. All resources are appropriate for their intended use, and students are made aware of the available services. During the first week, an introductory session is provided to familiarise students with the university's facilities and software resources.
- Librarians provide support in developing information-seeking skills, including how to locate and access academic materials supplied by the university.
- Support for student well-being is in place. It was noted that the percentage of students registered with the counselling service was very low. Given the level of student, need the support seems appropriate. Such low percentages are however not in keeping with international norms, and growing demand can be expected.
- Computer laboratories were well equipped and well maintained. The number of workstations was more than appropriate for the student numbers.

- The audio-visual provision within teaching rooms was of a high standard supporting shared screen and student screen projection.

*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 Department should consider making Cloud computing resources available to the students on this course for projects and experimentation.
- If or when future student numbers grow, the extent of the physical environment may need to be reviewed with a view to possible extension.
- The extended cafeteria with the new coffee area offers valuable student and staff breakout space. Additional break out and social space dedicated exclusively for students would further improve the student experience. There is no student's union or comparable space available to students, thereby limiting student opportunity to commune and relax.
- Exterior sports facilities like astro turf pitches would also enhance the student experience and student cohesion and overall wellness.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

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

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

The e-Learning mode of delivery of the MSc Cybersecurity course is well-designed and taught by well-motivated teaching staff who are knowledgeable in the field. Students whom the EEC met commended the staff on their professionalism, responsiveness to questions and willingness to help.

The major individual project resulting in a dissertation is compulsory which was noted by the EEC. The examination papers and results are reviewed by an External Examiner which is a practice the EEC commends.

The external stakeholders who provide internships and collaborate on student projects were impressed with the quality of the graduates, and many of the students and alumni are employed by the companies.

Cybersecurity is a growth area in Europe, and the e-Learning mode of the course should benefit from this demand and grow its student numbers.

## E. Signatures of the EEC

| *Name* |
|---|
| **D K Arvind** |
| **Gregory O'Hare** |
| **Tuomas Aura** |
| **Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos** |
| **Ioannis Zapitis** |
| **Polydoros Skannavias** |

**Date:** 26/11/2025