

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 09.08.2019

Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:**

NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY

- **Town:** PAFOS

- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

In Greek: ΜΕΤΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΟ ΣΤΟ ΨΗΦΙΑΚΟ
ΜΑΡΚΕΤΙΝΓΚ (ΕΞ ΑΠΟΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ)/90 ECTS/18/12
ΜΗΝΕΣ

In English: MSc IN DIGITAL MARKETING
(DISTANCE LEARNING)/90 ECTS/18/12 MONTHS

- **Language of instruction:** Greek, English
- **Programme's status :** New programme

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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee’s (EEC’s) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
 - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI’s response must follow below the EEC’s comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Let us first express our satisfaction for the very positive comments of the EEC as well as the productive suggestions and recommendations. Though we, of course, recognize the fact that the ultimate decision is always taken by the CYQAA Board, we nevertheless emphasize the overall EEC's attitude to have the program accredited by stating at the conclusions that:

«The EEC feels that the University and its staff have the necessary experience and expertise to expand on this front and add new programmes to its portfolio. The MSc in Digital Marketing (Distant Learning) can be a valuable addition. The existing resources and processes ensure the smooth delivery of new programmes»

The above very positive comments are also reflected in the overall average of the program which is **8.76**.

Since it is our belief and principle that there is always room of improving the quality of the University and the said program, we hereby enclose our response **to FULLY satisfy the EEC** suggestions and recommendations, which we found very useful and productive.

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

1. Revise the programme objectives and learning outcomes to ensure that they consistently focus on digital marketing throughout the programme. This will ensure not only that student expectations when enrolling to a digital marketing programme are met, but also that students are prepared sufficiently for the future roles.

Answer: Done. We revised program objectives and learning outcomes to more consistently focus on Digital marketing. **See Annex 1, Revised Program Study Guide, Sections 2, 3.**

2. The revised programme objectives and learning outcomes will need to be reflected on a revised list of courses included in the programme specification. For example, courses like Information security (IS540) should be removed and replaced with more digital marketing specific courses (e.g. e-consumer behavior or branding online). Similarly, courses like big data and analytics (IS508) could be focused on digital marketing analytics (with both the title and content revised).

Answer: Done.

2a) We replaced the Course IS540 on “Information Security” with newly developed course “e-Consumer Behavior”, **See Annex1, Revised Program Study Guide, section 13 and “e-Consumer Behavior” Course Study Guide DM504, Annex 2.**

2b) We developed new course on “Big Data and Marketing Analytics” with the inclusion of weeks on pricing, forecasting, market segmentation, advertising etc., **See Annex 1 Revised program Study Guide, section 13 and “Big Data and Marketing Analytics” Course Study Guide DM 508, Annex2.**

3. Given that this is a conversion master that can potentially attract student who have no marketing background, it could be useful to include a comprehensive foundation course in the principles of marketing in the first term.

Answer: Done. Acceptance criteria have been modified. Prior basic knowledge on Marketing or related course as student acceptance criterion has been introduced. Students are expected to have a minimum prerequisite background in Marketing.

In cases of applications with inadequate Marketing background, students will have to sit on a pass/fail basis on an undergraduate class, such as Principles of Marketing (**BUSN104**), **see Annex1, revised Program Study guide, section 4.1**

4. With recommendations 1+2+3 implemented, it will be useful to review the sequence of the courses and how they inform one-another so that the overall programme becomes more coherent. For example, Digital marketing (DM515) could appear in the first semester, given its expected prominent place in the programme called MSc in Digital Marketing.

Answer: Done. Please see Annex 1, revised Study Guide, section 6.

5. Based on the nature of the programme, we recommend that the programme team, review the student assessment strategy both at the programme level, but also for each individual course. For example, embedding assessment within real life scenarios using digital technologies (e.g. social media) for mid-terms may help enhance student experience and provide them with valuable real-life exposure.

Answer: Done.

a) Assessment strategy for MBA583 changed and written assignment have been replaced by a crowdfunding video presentation of an innovative business. This practical element is widely used as assessment strategy in business schools across the world as it enables the students to take the role of the entrepreneur, **See Annex 2 Course DMBA583, Study Guide, section 16.**

b) Furthermore, the assessment strategy of DM515 was advanced with a business case study and students have to deliver a report of digital campaign with emphasis on social media for a real business. The students will take the role of an expert in the field and they will have the opportunity to better understand, familiarize and embrace the real life needs of an enterprise. **See Annex 2, Course DM515 Study Guide, section 16.**

c) Finally, DM504 on “e-Consumer Behavior” has been enhanced with many real-life scenarios, **See Annex2, Course DM515 Study Guide/Activities.**

6. Where appropriate teaching practice and assessment should be informed by current marketing practice and where possible feature industry sponsored assignments.

Answer: Done. See changes for comment 5 above. The aforementioned changes advance practical aspects of assessment strategy and assessments become market-oriented. By implementing these changes other teaching objectives will be served towards advancing real life skills, such as communication/presentation skills.

Furthermore, as the assessments demand market research and analysis, the research skills of the students will be advanced.

Last but not least, the weekly assignments of the students were advanced to become complex and more consistent with a postgraduate level. More specifically, following the international practices and Kolb’s experiential learning cycle, some of the activities demand the students to reflect on their personal experience and current knowledge towards enabling them to identify areas of improvement.

Moreover, the students are asked to make suggestions to an enterprise of their preference in digital marketing (DM515) by taking the role of digital marketing expert or innovation (MBA583) by taking the role of either the entrepreneur or innovation expert.

7. Although the Committee was informed that the Dissertation (DIS600) courses included research methods training, it will be more in line with current practice, if there is a more comprehensive training in the form of a separate course (that can replace Quantitative Business Analysis (MBA260)) that covers both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Answer: Done. MBA620 course is replaced with DM620 that includes weeks on qualitative and mixed methods, **See Annex 1, Revised Program Study Guide and Annex2, Course DM620 Study Guide, section 5.**

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3) Findings / Strengths

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. Although the EEC has seen evidence of formative feedback of related courses, a coherent policy can be implemented across the programme.

Answer: Done, a policy of formative feedback is already available and students are aware before the beginning of their courses, **see Annex 3, Policy on Feedback to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students**

2. Even though the EEC was pleased to see evidence of industry sponsored dissertation topics, we encourage the teaching team that this becomes a more widespread practice, where possible.

Answer: Done. The comment has been noted and the teaching team will be encouraged to incorporate industry sponsored dissertation topics.

3. Based on the nature of the programme, we recommend that the programme team, review the student assessment strategy both at the programme team but also for each individual course. For example, embedding assessment within real life scenarios using digital technologies (e.g. social media) for mid-terms may help enhance student experience and provide them with valuable real-life exposure.

Answer: Done, see relevant answer **comment 5, assessment area 1.**

4. Although the Committee was informed that the Dissertation (DIS600) courses included research methods training, it will be more in line with current practice, if there is a more comprehensive training in the form of a separate course (that can replace Quantitative Business Analysis (MBA260)) that covers both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Answer: Done, see relevant answer **comment 7, assessment area 1.**

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Overall, the teaching staff is adequate both in terms of their number and qualifications. The majority of courses are taught by permanent staff, ensuring the quality and consistency of the program. Nevertheless, partly as an implication of the student to teacher ratio, the teaching load of permanent teaching staff seems to be relatively high and this may impede the conduct of research and contribution to society. When it comes to training in teaching methods for teaching staff, there seems to be room for improvement regarding how to engage students further. Although the programme's coordinator is highly qualified and suitable for the coordinating role, the Department may want to consider appointing a coordinator who has marketing expertise.

Answer: Noted, Dr Andreas Masouras, an NUP Lecturer of Marketing is the Deputy Coordinator of the Program to further enhance the Marketing component.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. To reduce the teaching load for permanent teaching staff to enable more focus on research that can in turn be reflected on the programme's content.

Answer: Done, NUP has a Permanent Teaching Staff workload policy, see **Annex 4 Workload Policy for Full Time Academic Staff**, to ensure that teaching staff can also focus on research, among other tasks.

2. We would recommend that the pedagogic skills and practices of existing and future teaching staff are further developed (at the point of recruiting them, but also on an ongoing basis) to prepare them for their roles.

Answer: Done, the NUP Distance Learning Unit has institutionalize a concrete mentoring program for the existing and future staff to prepare them for their roles, see **Annex 5, Academic staff mentoring policy, Annex6, Interaction DL Working Methodology, Annex 7, NUP Teachers Training Manual**,

The mentoring program is both at the point of initial staff recruiting, but on an ongoing basis as well.

It includes:

- a) Principles of Distance Learning Education
- b) Formative Assessment
- c) Feedback to students
- d) Interactivity
- e) Research opportunities.

4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. To consider extending the opening hours of the library.

Answer: Done, following the above suggestions, we are extending Neapolis University library opening hours to cover all examination periods. More specific:

- A week prior to each semester's examination period, the opening hours are extended to cover week **days 8:00 – 22:00, Saturday 9:00 – 19:00 and Sunday 9:00 – 17:00.**
- An internal communication system has already been implemented via our learning management system (LMS) platform (Moodle) to provide students direct access to the library. This allows student access to all library relevant information such as news, announcements, events, frequently asked questions and support manuals. In addition, the LMS internal communication system allows students to interact directly (online chat) with library staff.
- Furthermore, **a dedicated e-ticketing system has also been implemented** in parallel to the LMS internal communication system, which enables library staff to handle and address all inquiries and requests.
- Access to online library databases is possible at all times (24/7) and has been enriched via **our virtual private network (VPN) solution.**
- Finally, **separate workstations have been placed outside the library** accessible at all times (24/7) which provide direct access to online library databases.

2. To clarify and standardize the admission requirements.

Answer: Done, the admission requirements and criteria have been clarified and standardized, **see Annex 1, Revised Study Guide, Section 4.1.**

3. Introduce an online seminar for students about time and stress management, e.g., as an extension to S.K.E.PS.I.S.

Answer: Done, this is a productive comment already consulted with S.K.E.PS.I.S to endorse an on line seminar about time and stress management as part of their induction in the program.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Despite the positive overall score in this section, the EEC feels that certain improvements can occur:

1. It has been mentioned several times during the visit to the university that the currently small number of the academic community (i.e., student population) and the ability to sustain close connections between students and teachers can help the university address issues related to psychological or pastoral support. However considering the new programmes will increase the student population), such support should be better structured and operationalized.

Answer: Done, the comment has been noted and upon a potential increase of student population, such support will be further structured and operationalized.

2. Improvement on resources relevant to qualitative methods could be possible, by extending, for example, the available software with the addition of tools such as nVivo.

Answer: Done, the University proceeded already in the provision of the proposed software tool, ***see Annex7, NUP NVivo Quote***

6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. Teaching in a class and teaching online requires a different set of skills. As such, regular and formal teacher training sessions should be organized to educate the new teaching staff in online pedagogies and inform the current teaching staff on new educational technologies. This goes beyond the technical manuals that exist on the Moodle platform. The teaching staff should have the opportunity to be educated/trained on collaborative learning, inquiry learning, and educational technology.

Answer: Done, the NUP Distance Learning Unit has institutionalized a concrete mentoring program for the existing and future staff to prepare them for their roles, see **Annex 5, Academic Staff Mentoring Policy, Annex6 INTERACTION DL Working Methodology, Annex 7, NUP Teachers Training Manual, Annex9 NUP Student Training Manual**

The mentoring program is both at the point of initial recruiting, but on an ongoing basis as well.

It includes:

- a) Principles of DLE
 - b) Formative Assessment
 - c) Feedback to students
 - d) Interactivity
 - e) Research opportunities.
2. It would also be an incentive for the teaching staff to receive a certificate of completion for the teacher training course in online education. In general, certificates on teacher training are established in several universities as an opportunity for professional development for the teaching staff. These certificates can also be taken into account during teaching staff evaluation.

Answer: Done, the comment has been noted and a certificate of completion for the teacher training course in online education will be issued.

3. Teaching abilities for online education are not explicitly mentioned during the recruitment process. Once again, the EEC would like to stress that distance education requires the application of different pedagogies than the ones typically applied in a classroom. A teacher with no prior training or distance education experience may have difficulties in designing and supporting distance learning.

Answer: Done, when recruiting academic staff to teach in DL NUP programmes, prior DL experience is required, see **Annex 8, Distance Learning Staff in Digital Marketing**, relevant call for interest expression regarding the require experience for new recruitment...

4. There is no concrete strategy or learning design that would ensure student engagement in the online activities. Peer collaboration should be presented as a necessary skill and the collaboration itself must be meaningful for the students. For example, an assignment that could be completed by a single student is not appropriate for group work. This comment refers back to the need for teacher training and pedagogy support for the teaching staff. Based on the expected audience (mature audience that pays tuition), the EEC recognizes that the expected dropout rate is much lower than other distance learning formats (e.g., open courses, MOOCs, etc.). However, it seems that student motivation is not adequately considered in the learning design. For example, it was not clear when and how a student is identified as disengaged. Monitoring students' online patterns and direct and regular teacher-student interaction could assist on this task.
5. Especially for collaborative activities online, students should be guided and scaffolding, not only on the technical aspects, but also on what it is expected of them. This means that learning resources that are made available to students should also include guides and examples of efficient collaboration. Self-management, self-organization, peer interaction, and role-identification and assumption may not happen spontaneously, especially amongst students that have not been taught how to work together. Since collaboration skills are essential for any professional, the learning material should include these kinds or resources. Especially since the collaborating students are going to work online.

Answer: Done, (the comments 4/5 are responded jointly). Tutors and students mentoring is part of the induction process that takes place before the academic year begins. Peer collaboration is presented as a necessary skill and the collaboration itself is meaningful for the students. Regular teacher/student interaction assists on this task. Especially for online collaborative activities, students are guided and scaffolding, not only on the technical aspects, but also on what it is expected of them. The above is part of the students induction to the programme, while it is also part of the tutors mentoring. See, relevant **Annexes on the materials provided to students and academic staff while mentoring: Annex 4, Academic Staff Mentoring Policy, Annex 5, INTERACTION Working Methodology, Annex 7, NUP Teachers Training Manual, Annex 9 NUP Student Training Manual**

6. Some examined appear to be easy or of a lower complexity and will not be adequate to engage students in deeper reflection of the weekly assignments.

Answer: Done. The weekly assignments have been greatly revised and additional activities have now been incorporated. Indicatively, see:

- DDM 505: Additional activities in Weeks 1,2,3
- DDM 515: Additional activities in Weeks 2 (with the use of audio material), 3 (with the use of open access software)

7. The procedure for providing feedback on students' assignments is not published.

Answer: Done. Feedback policy and procedure will be available to students before the beginning of the academic year.

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

9. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Neapolis University has a track record of providing distant learning online. The EEC feels that the University and its staff have the necessary experience and expertise to expand on this front and add new programmes to its portfolio. The MSc in Digital Marketing (Distant Learning) can be a valuable addition.

The existing resources and processes ensure the smooth delivery of new programmes.

Still the objectives, learning outcomes and courses will need to be carefully considered and the necessary changes made first.

The EEC would like to thank the University for its Cooperation and wish the teaching team all the success with this programme.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Sklias Pantelis	Rector	

Date: 09.8.2019