

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 19 May 2021

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
City Unity College

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

**In Greek:**

Μεταπτυχιακό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων  
(MBA) (18 μήνες, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ' αποστάσεως  
εκπαίδευση)

**In English:**

Master in Business Administration (MBA) (18 months, 90  
ECTS, Master Distance Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English and Greek
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**

**In Greek:** Δημόσια Διοίκηση, Δασμοί και Ειδικοί  
Φόροι Κατανάλωσης, Διαχείριση Φιλοξενίας και  
Γενικό MBA

**In English:** Public Administration, Customs and Excise  
Duties, Hospitality Management and General MBA

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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

## **1. Study programme and study programme's design and development**

*(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)*

### **Findings and Strengths**

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their positive and professional approach in evaluating our MBA distance learning programme of study.

More specifically, we have noted the committee's comments that the 'MBA teaching faculty is highly qualified - with expertise and years of experience in their respective fields' and that 'the academic staff adopts a student-centred learning approach for the delivery of the MBA programme'. We are happy that the committee has positively recognized the compulsory master thesis that we have included within the programme.

Moreover, the committee correctly identified, that the programme is oriented towards professionals with the aim of helping them to analyse and find solutions to business and management problems in their current and future roles'.

The proposed programme, concluded by the committee in this section, 'can benefit from the experience in the college of running the three additional pathways (public administration, taxes and excise, hospitality)'.

### **Areas of improvements and recommendations – City Unity College reply**

As far as the areas of improvements and recommendations in this section, we would like to reply as follows:

1. The programme's learning outcomes have been carefully designed so that they are applicable to the Distance learning mode of delivery. Taking into consideration that most of the distance learning students may never have the chance to meet face to face with their instructors, we have designed the Study Guides of each course in such a way, that weekly assignments, self-assessment exercises and in general a plethora of pedagogical tools are to be used, so as to facilitate the learning process and achievement of the learning outcomes.
2. The two (2) programmes, in terms of admissions, are clearly separated. Our main objective and target audience for our conventional programme are young graduates looking to forward their studies in enrolling in a master's programme (those who have completed 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of their studies).

Our current proposal to run a distance learning MBA programme is aimed at the working class, more mature individuals who because of their maturity and work experience can more easily adjust and benefit from a distance learning programme, that in principle places more workload on the students. As far as the workload of our academic, administrative and online support staff we assure the committee

that we will not hesitate (depending on the intake on both programmes), in employing additional staff should it be required, so as not to jeopardize the employment terms of our current staff members, nor their didactic and research outcomes.

3. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the programme are to be achieved through a variety of educational tools: coursework, assignments either individual and/or group, oral and written presentations, weekly comprehension activities, chat rooms, forums and exercises, a number of which will be obligatory and will count towards the final grade.
4. We have noted with thanks the suggestion of the committee in renaming MBA-513 Managing Change into MBA-513 a Leadership and Managing Change as the course also focuses on the Leadership aspect that the committee identified. Adhering to the instructions of committee we have renamed the course accordingly.
5. As far as the theses' topics are concerned, it is our intention to produce theses related to the programme's mission as well as the pathways objectives. We would like to thank the committee for complimenting the College for choosing to make the thesis course a compulsory one, emphasizing critical thinking allowing the students to conduct research.

## **2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment**

*(ESG 1.3)*

### **Findings and Strengths**

We thank the committee for acknowledging the College's applications of numerous processes and tools required to provide the students with an enriched e-learning environment', as well as in providing a variety of electronic sources/databases for students and academic staff. Furthermore, the committee correctly pointed out that we have created an excellent technical infrastructure in place managed by competent personnel and that 'The programme will benefit from the experience of the current running conventional programme, in terms of teaching material, staff implementation, practices, etc.'

### **Areas of improvements and recommendations – City Unity College reply**

1. We do agree and in fact we have provided in the design of the study guides, that communication and cooperation among students, including peer-reviewed methods, are to be employed, so as achieve maximum interaction and multi-way feedback among students. For example, in a large number of courses, forums and virtual chat-rooms, are planned and currently used, in which students will be required to express their views on a question or case study the instructor provides and students' views will be visible to all of them, so as to be able to interact and learn from each other.
2. Our lectures, as explained to the committee, are following the core instructions of DIPAE, which for distance learning programmes expect at least 6 synchronous lectures per semester, all of which are recorded so as to be available to students who, for professional and / or personal reasons and / or time difference, might not be able to attend them live. Yet, a number of asynchronous educational activities are also planned that include both instructor-student and student-student communication. We do place emphasis on a student – centered methodology. Asynchronous methods of teaching that are employed are forums, digital curriculum material, communication via electronic mail and distribution of readings and continuous assessments. Furthermore, we have incorporated into the study guides explicit instructions on student debate, peer-review and student negotiation simulations.

### **3. Teaching staff**

*(ESG 1.5)*

#### **Findings and Strengths**

We would like to thank the committee for mentioning that: 'The general sentiment among the members of the committee is that there is a positive and collegial environment at City Unity College', which indeed is reflecting the true environment in which we operate.

Moreover, the committee's comment that 'The process of teaching and learning follows the basic academic principles with an internationally perspective' is very positive and encouraging. Lastly, the College indeed, as the committee has mentioned, 'offers favourable working conditions for all its staff members and supports its staff professional and personal development'. 'The faculty met, expressed their overall satisfaction with the resources and time available to meet their personal goals and career objectives'.

#### **Areas of improvements and recommendations – City Unity College reply**

1. The College has a transparency policy, whereby our faculty handbook, uploaded on the DIPAE cloud, specifically makes reference to the progression and promotion policies. These policies are communicated to all newly hired staff members during the induction and training sessions offered to them upon and in the course of their employment. Our human resource department makes sure that the HR portal is updated on a weekly basis – keeping all employee policies and practises updated.
2. We do agree and have already planned, besides the initial basic training offered to our staff, to continue at set intervals, at least once per semester, to offer them the opportunity to evaluate and revisit the pedagogical outcomes and improve them in areas needed, as well as to undergo supplementary training on courses' delivery, distance learning pedagogical approaches, technical competences and tools. The College, to that effect has already introduced two seminars that all academic staff members have to undertake. The first, is a ten (10) hour in house seminar for academic staff to get acquainted with the Colleges' learning management system (eClass portal, Moodle platform). This is reinforced by a fourteen (14) hour seminar 'Train the Online Trainer' provided by MSP Business Coaching & More organisation approved by the Cyprus Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA).

#### **4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

*(ESG 1.4)*

##### **Findings and Strengths**

We would like to express our gratitude on the comment that: 'The committee identified that the College and the programme are professional/student oriented and that...From our discussions with currently enrolled students on the conventional programme, the committee observed that the students are overall satisfied with the programme itself, as well as that ...The students promoted the academic environment of the College and spoke positively about the teaching abilities of the academic staff, as well as that they (the students) said that the running conventional programme is aligned with their professional needs.

##### **Areas of improvements and recommendations – City Unity College reply**

We have as well identified that the shift to an online delivery due to the pandemic, has been well received by the majority of students of the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort enrolled on the conventional programme, therefore we are planning, to the extent that DIPAE encourages it, to adopt a blended / bi-modality mode of delivery, adopting as necessary the pedagogical approaches and resources required.

## **5. Learning resources and student support**

*(ESG 1.6)*

### **Findings and Strengths**

We feel very honored and pleased that the committee has identified in this section the following:

- 'The management and administration team of the College is committed in providing the necessary support to teaching staff and students with the necessary resources needed to perform their duties.
- The personnel are well trained, with the committee noticed the skilled IT technical staff that supports academic staff and students.
- A moderation model based on the EU quality framework is applied for quality control and support to teachers and staff. For the same purposes City Unity College cooperates with government authorities and external experts.
- The committee noted that, in terms of technical side, the College is able to transfer teaching activities online when circumstances related to the pandemic dictated so. This can also lead to ways of attracting an international body of potential students in the future.
- The library meets expectations in an academic environment and serves the current needs of students and faculty'.

### **Areas of improvements and recommendations – City Unity College reply**

1. The committee suggested an introduction of a special unit/team dedicated to the evaluation and pedagogy review of all e-learning programmes. We would like to inform the committee that we have created this new DL Unit (distance learning unit) of experienced and qualified members who will overlook all aspects of distance learning programmes. See Appendix I
2. The College has both Emerald and EBSCO subscriptions. Online resources have made an entire revolution in education, not only because they are convenient and accessible, but because they make the entire process of teaching and learning more interesting and memorable.
3. Should there be an increase of admissions/enrolment, the College has aside the appropriate measures and availability to employ suitable academic and administrative staff, so as not to disrupt College operations and functionality.



## 6. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

Not applicable

## 7. Eligibility (Joint programme)

(ALL ESG)

Not applicable

### A. Conclusions and final remarks

'The committee welcomes the introduction of the new MBA - distance learning programme as it holds the potential of allowing the college to expand its provision to new markets, nationally and internationally. The programme will be supported by expert and motivated faculty, knowledgeable and efficient administrative staff, and appropriate level of capital, library, and IT resources'.

We are indebted to the above final conclusion of the committee that has given us the necessary encouragement to continue our efforts in improving our College's academic performance and social responsibility.

The five (5) main recommendations have been individually addressed under the relative sections above.

### B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Academic Director	Constantinos Charalambous	<i>C. Charalambous</i>
Academic Programmes' Director	John Violaris	<i>John Violaris</i>
Quality Assurance Officer	Polina Nikolaou	<i>Polina Nikolaou</i>
Head of Programme MBA	Zanete Garanti	<i>Zanete Garanti</i>
Head of Business Department	Georgia Mouzoura	<i>Georgia Mouzoura</i>
Head of Hospitality Department	George Markatos	<i>George Markatos</i>

Date: 19 May 2021

