Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 13 May 2021

External Evaluation Report

(E-learning programme of study)

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

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School/Faculty

- **Department/ Sector:** Business

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

  In Greek:

  Μεταπτυχιακό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων

  In English:

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

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

- **Programme's status: New**

- **Concentrations (if any):** Public Administration; Customs and Excise Duties; Hospitality Management

  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 Master of Business Administration (MBA) program with e-distance learning way, offered by the City Unity College in Cyprus, based in Nicosia.

The EEC consisted of four academics (i.e., Professor Yannis Georgellis, Professor Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos, Associate Professor Christos Kolympiris, and Associate Professor Dionisis Philippas) and a student representative (Mr. Giorgos Christodoulou).

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the evaluation for the program took place online on 11th May 2021. Prior to the visit, the EEC was supplied with a comprehensive internal evaluation report and other relevant documentation. On the day of the online visit, the EEC met with the senior management team of the College, academic faculty responsible for delivering the MBA, administrative and other support staff, and students.

In the morning, the senior management team of City Unity College presented the institution and the MBA e-learning program under review. After the presentations, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the program (e.g., its 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., the internal Quality Assurance committee) as requested.

In the afternoon, the EEC met members of the teaching staff. The discussion covered academic qualification, staff development, research, workloads, assessment, and resources. Then, the EEC met with MBA students who shared their experiences during the course. This was followed by a meeting with members of the administrative team.

The visit concluded with a meeting and general discussion with the senior management team and the programme co-ordinator for clarification questions from earlier sessions during the online visit. The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative.

The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the online evaluation. The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Mr. Costas Constantinou, the CYQAA coordinator, for his efficient way of managing the process.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Yannis Georgellis (Chair)	Professor	University of Kent, UK
Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos	Professor	Uppsala University, Sweden
Dionisis Philippas	Associate Professor	ESSCA School of Management (France)
Christos Kolympiris	Associate Professor	University of Warwick , UK
Giorgos Christodoulou	Student representative	Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus

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*

- o *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*
- o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- o *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*
- o *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:*
  - o *selection criteria*
  - o *intended learning outcomes*
  - o *qualification awarded*
  - o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - o *pass rates*
  - o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - 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*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
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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.

First, the College informed the EEC that there is a conventional program currently running, with the same content as the proposed e-learning program. The EEC agreed that the existing conventional MBA program is well designed to achieve the intended program learning outcomes. The EEC received information regarding entry criteria of the proposed MBA –Distance learning program, its learning outcomes, the student-centred learning approach of City Unity College, the delivery of course units, assessment procedures, and pass rates. The College explained the admission online process and demonstrated the main features of the online learning environment. In addition, the EEC had the opportunity to watch a video illustrating how a potential student can register and access the e-learning platform of the proposed MBA distance learning program. The EEC found the admission criteria to be adequate and in line with those required from the Cypriot public authority.

The program aims to provide students with the required the theoretical and practical knowledge in various business-related areas. The program focuses on developing the students' problem-solving skills as well as decision-making by equipping them with tools for addressing real-life business problems, achieving career goals and assuming managerial responsibilities in the private sector, public sector, or running their own business.

The proposed program (in line with the conventional program) consists of ten core courses (5 courses per semester) and a thesis (last semester) and requires a minimum of 90 ECTS credits to graduate. The program is structured as follows. The first semester consists of 5 core courses; the second semester consists of 5 core courses selected from four different paths (Generic, Public Administration, Customs and Excise Duties, and Hospitality Management; the last semester is devoted to the completion of the thesis. The ECTS are equally distributed among the semesters. The expected student workload in ECTS and years of completion (i.e., 1.5 years) are clearly defined and communicated.

The EEC identified that there are internal policies and procedures in place to assure the quality of the program under evaluation. Evidence of quality assurance meetings, as part of an ongoing review and development, were provided by the College. Moreover, the College's policies are mentioned about the standards across all aspects of the program (e.g., curriculum development, assessment policies, ECTS credits, etc).

The EEC believes that the intended learning outcomes and objectives of the program are outlined and well communicated to prospective students.

Strengths

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

Based on the internal report, the discussion during the online visit and the evidence presented, the MBA teaching faculty are highly qualified - with expertise and years of experience in their respective fields.

The faculty adopts a student-centered learning approach for the delivery of the MBA program.

A compulsory master thesis.

The program 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 program can benefit from the experience in the college of running the three additional pathways (public administration, taxes and excise, hospitality).

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.

In order to strengthen the MBA-Distance Learning program, the EEC recommends:

1. The conventional and proposed distance learning program are similar. Therefore, it is important to consider how the two programs can be differentiated, in ways other than the delivery mode and approach.
2. Consider and monitor how the new distance learning MBA will affect admission to the existing conventional mode MBA program. The potential change in admission patterns will have implications for faculty and administrative staff workloads as well as implications for library and IT resources.
3. Monitor and reflect on how the intended learning outcomes can be achieved in the distance learning mode of the MBA program.
4. Consider the titles and content of some of the modules to ensure that there is clear alignment. For example, leadership, which is a core element of any MBA program, does not feature in the existing titles, but aspects of it is likely to covered in HRM or Managing change.
5. Consider restricting the topics of theses to fields central to the program mission, and the pathways offered. Moreover, adjustments should be considered in advance for unbalanced number of master theses with regards to number of the professors' availability.

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	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

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

Standards

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

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

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

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

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

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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.

City Unity College uses an appropriate e-learning methodology for delivering the program using a number of interactive tools (synchronous and asynchronous) to provide a student-centred teaching and learning environment. A proper quality assurance and assessment is in place.

Students and teaching staff are introduced to the online learning community through a 10-hour seminar and supplementary online resources.

The criteria for student assessment are well-described and follow international standards.

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

The College applies a number of processes and tools to provide the students with a rich e-learning environment.

Many electronic sources for students and faculty are available in the library.

There is an excellent technical infrastructure in place managed by competent personnel.

The program will benefit from the experience of the current running conventional program, in terms of teaching material, staff, practices, and so on.

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.

To ensure that the program learning outcomes of the distance learning MBA program are achieved, the EEC provide the following suggestions regarding the pedagogical approach to be adopted:

1. Communication and cooperation among students. The model of the proposed Distance Learning program is very much affected by the onsite/traditional philosophy of education, i.e. instructor-student communication by lectures and individual or group assignments. For example, the introduction of the peer-reviewing method between individual students or between groups, would allow for student-to-student "teaching". This method makes continuous communication among them necessary and it takes place in a natural way, which needs to be embedded in teaching and learning processes.
2. Focus more or exclusively on asynchronous activities. Not only recorded lectures but also assignments and tasks as well as discussions. Progressing peer-reviewing tasks are asynchronous and demand student-to-student communication. Consider incorporating such interactive activities more explicitly in the study guides.

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	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	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.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

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

The EEC noted that the MBA program is supported by a well-qualified faculty (i.e., majority of faculty members and adjunct teaching lectures, are PhD qualified or PhD candidates). It is evident that there is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver. A discussion with the faculty showed that there is a clear workload policy on teaching allocation, research support, and promotions.

From the evidence gathered, it is apparent that the faculty is also involved with some research activities (e.g., research and conference presentations). The EEC identified that there is a synergy between teaching and research. Such teaching and research spill-overs can enhance the students' learning experience.

The EEC also observed that members of staff have experience in their field for several years.

CUC provides satisfactory training and support to faculty.

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

The EEC had an open and honest discussion about the working conditions and how the faculty feels about their working environment. The general sentiment among the members of the committee is that there is a positive and collegial environment at City Unity College.

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The process of teaching and learning follows the basic academic principles with an internationally perspective.

The college offers favorable working conditions for its members and supports staff for 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 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.

Overall, the EEC is satisfied with the academic staff supporting the program. One suggestion that the EEC would like to make for further improvement, is to revisit the progression and promotion policies by setting clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that faculty need to meet.

The move towards distance learning provision has been dominated by technical aspects of the process, often at the expense of the pedagogy of distance learning. A suggestion is to focus more on pedagogical aspects, opportunities and risks of education technology rather on technical use aspects, regarding training and support offered to teachers. This should be a continuous process of evaluation and revision of pedagogical outcomes of the distance learning program.

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*

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> *essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
> - *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
>   - o *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
>   - o *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 student admission requirements have been found to be clear and in line with the criteria set by the national HE framework. These are clearly communicated by the College to prospective students.

The EEC observed that the College (as well as for the specific proposed MBA program) have policies and mechanisms in place to ensure development of students. Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are also in place.

Strengths

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

The EEC identified that the College and the program are professional/student oriented. From our discussions with currently enrolled students on the conventional program, the ECC observed that the students are overall satisfied with the program itself. The students promoted the academic environment of the College and spoke positively about the

teaching abilities of the academic staff. They said that the running conventional program is aligned with their professional needs.

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 students were 100% professionals (working mostly in the public sector) and they emphasized the benefits of the online courses provided by the College due to Covid-19 pandemic. Although they had initially chosen the conventional program, which started this last year, this shift to online courses was a huge benefit for them as they have professional careers, families, and so on. Hence, an online nature of the running conventional program would benefit them or any future student with the same (similar profile). They also pointed out that a potential bi-modality version (some meetings in the premises or some face-to-face courses would also benefit them to strength their relationships and work as group. For example, the final exams can be held with physical presence. However, they noted that if they have to choose which version of the MBA program (conventional or distanced e-learning program) would fit them most, they would prefer the e-learning one. This reinforces the need for reconsidering the EEC's earlier recommendation regarding the change in admissions patterns and their pedagogical and resource implications.

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

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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

- *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.?*

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> - *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.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the EEC did not have the opportunity to visit the premises of City Unity. The view of the EEC related to facilities, physical and human support resources is primarily based on the internal report and the discussions with College's staff. Overall, the EEC believes that College 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). This especially applies to the IT 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 College is performing well on that front as well; there is an adequate number of experienced and well-educated staff that supports the smooth operations of the College and the MBA program.

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

There are several strengths to be noted:

The management and admin 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 EEC 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 CUC cooperates with government authorities and external experts.

The EEC 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 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.

CUC needs to establish a special unit responsible for the pedagogy of e-learning, for planning and running teacher training, formulating and revising DL strategies, and developing the requirements for the technology used for e-learning.

CUC should also join the E-library system of Cypriot Universities.

Consider the teaching and learning resource implications of running the two modes (conventional and e-learning) of the MBA program and the increased number of students.

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	Partially 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 design and structure of proposed MBA – Distance Learning program at City Unity College is based on the existing, conventional MBA program, which runs successfully. The EEC welcomes the introduction of the new MBA-Distance learning as it holds the potential of allowing the college to expand its provision to new markets, nationally and internationally. The program will be supported by expert and motivated faculty, knowledgeable and efficient administrative staff, and appropriate level of capital, library, and IT resources. To ensure the quality and long-term success of the program, the EEC makes the following recommendations:

1. Establish a formal Distance Learning Unit to oversee technical and pedagogical (especially e-learning) aspects of the program and to warrant that program-level learning outcomes are achieved.
2. Consider revising the titles and/or content of the program modules to ensure that they are aligned with the program aims, objectives and learning outcomes (see e.g., leadership content)
3. Consider the resource and pedagogical implications of running the two programs (i.e., existing conventional MBA and the proposed Distance Learning MBA) simultaneously.

The committee would like to express its gratitude to the staff and managers of the College for their support and their professionalism during the online visit.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Yannis Georgellis (Chair)	
Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos	
Dionisis Philippas	
Christos Kolympiris	
Giorgos Christodoulou	

Date: 13 May 2021