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Date: 26/11/2021

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus)

- **Town: Larnaca**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Business and Management**

- **Department/ Sector:** Department/Sector

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

  In Greek:

  Programme Name

  In English:

   MA Educational Leadership (I year 90ECTS)

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

- **Programme's status:** Choose status

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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

On Wednesday 17th November 2021 the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) was briefed in a Zoom Meeting by Dr Loucia Constantinou and Mr George Aletraris from the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the evaluation of the MA in Educational Leadership offered by the School of Business & Management at the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus was conducted remotely via a Zoom meeting on Tuesday 23rd November 2021. Prior to the meeting, we were submitted all relevant documents such as the Application for Evaluation-Accreditation of the MA in Educational Leadership (Distance Learning), the Academic Regulations, and documents that include analytical information about the faculty, the infrastructure, the quality assurance mechanisms, study guides, and the teaching and research procedures.

The EEC was welcomed by the Rector of the university, Professor Panikkos Poutziouris, along with several members of the university, namely:
Dr. Loukas Glyptis, Head and ASQAC Chair of School of Business and Management,
Dr. Christos Anagnostopoulos, Deputy Head and ASQAC Member at the School of Business and Management
Dr. Ioanna Stylianou, Deputy Head and ASQAC Member at the School of Business and Management
Dr. Anthi Avloniti, Member of the University and School of Business and Management ASQAC
Dr. Cosmina Theodoulou, Director of Quality Assurance and Compliance and Chair of the University ASQAC (Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee)
Dr. Loukas Glyptis, Head and ASQAC Chair of School of Business and Management
Dr. Ioanna Stylianou, Deputy Head and ASQAC Member at the School of Business and Management
Dr. Maria Zeniou, Course Leader of MA Education Leadership
Dr. Irina Lokhtina, Lecturer in Human Resources Management
Dr. Erasmia Leonidou, Lecturer in Strategic Leadership
Dr. Christiana Anaxagorou, Lecturer in Economics and Statistics
Dr. Marianna Kyriacou, Lecturer in Curriculum Development & Linguistics
Dr. Marilena Antoniadou, Lecturer in Education
Dr. Nearchos Paspallis, Chair of the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee
Furthermore, the Committee met a number of MA students, administrative personnel related to admissions, registration, library facilities, IT and other administrative support. We were also given a virtual tour of the university premises. More specifically, we visited the library, computer labs, lecture rooms, open areas and research facilities.

During the meetings two officials from CYQAA, Mrs Emily Mouskou and Mrs Emily Alexandridou, were also present.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) feels that a **Preamble** to this Report is warranted. It is warranted given that the MA in Educational Leadership programme we have been asked to accredit is not currently running and has not been since academic year 2019-2020. Whilst acknowledging that the Application had been submitted in March of 2020 the EEC is quite disturbed that we were not informed that the programme was not currently being offered because of a lack of applicants. This goes against the spirit of the content within the Application and also a lot of what was shared during the Virtual Meeting during which we were made to understand that this course is considered as a pillar by the School of Business and Management; that

there is a great demand for this particular course, and that the University wants to expand even further in the area by offering a Distance Learning option. The EEC feels that this should have been made clear in the Application and the formal introductions during the Virtual Meeting.

A thorough evaluation, even the ones conducted by the University's own internal evaluation, the evaluators from UCLan UK and potentially external evaluators of the programme would have shown the existing deficiencies of the programme and a plan of how to address them. The recommendation to go for a DL course shows much of the same problems encountered in the conventional programme.

Furthermore, whilst we appreciate the warm welcome made by the Rector, Professor Panikkos Poutziouris and all members of staff, the EEC were given the impression that all is well with the course as it is; that there are no concerns with its design, any of the content, and pedagogies of learning being used. At no stage was there any critical engagement with the points that the EEC raised during the presentations/discussions. To a large extent, the EEC feels that the suggestions, points of view presented were met with indifference and a highly defensive attitude. This is most disturbing because the points raised by the EEC, which is composed of academics that have a track record in the area of educational leadership on an international scale, was intended to help the university teaching staff to review and improve their programme. Ultimately, that is the intent and spirit in which external evaluations are carried out.

What is also worthy of note is that the DL programme is built round the conventional programme and it presents only one major change. This course offers prospective students the option of choosing one of two elective study units, that is either the study unit entitled *The Reflective Professional* or else *Management Coaching Skills*.

Our comments and critique that apply to the conventional programme apply to this one.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Professor Christopher Bezzina	Chairperson	University of Malta
Professor Tony Bush	Member	University of Nottingham, UK
Professor Daniel Nordholm	Member	Uppsala University, Sweden
Professor Rob Koper	Member	Open University of The Netherlands.
Ms Victoria Michaelidou	Member	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

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CYQAA

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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.

The proposed Masters programme in Educational Leadership through Distance Learning (DL) is practically a replica of a similar programme that used to follow the conventional model but has not been running for the past two years. The University wishes to reintroduce the conventional programme as well as this 'new' one.

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

The MA in Educational Leadership is a 1 calendar year full-time programme or a two-year part-time programme developed round 90 ECTS. Given the unique legal status that UCLan Cyprus enjoys it builds round the quality assurance provision of the UK. In fact, UCLan Cyprus offers to all its graduates a double-awarded degree – a degree from UCLan UK and a degree from UCL Cyprus, both accredited by the UK Quality Assurance Agency and by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

As described on page14ff of the Application, and as we were told during our online visit, a Quality Assurance Policy is in place. There are a number of quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies in place for the development, management and review of the programme of study. Teaching staff and administrative staff are assigned with the responsibilities of quality assurance. Students are also encouraged to review each study unit through an online survey. The programme ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud, guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students or staff. This section is well developed.

The support of critical friends to help gain a fresh outlook to the academic side of the programme should be explored. This together with the involvement of educational stakeholders (e.g. potential employers, the education authorities) to ensure that the programme keeps up to date by providing study units that directly address the needs of school leadership.

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review
This masters programme in Educational Leadership is well designed in so far as it is well structured, and in accordance with the strategy of the University of Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLan UK). The programme is designed round 5 modules of 10 ECTS each; the opportunity to choose one elective from two study units each of 10 ECTS; and the allocation of 30 ECTS for conducting a Triple Research Project. This programme of studies 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. According to the Application "the programme's purpose and objectives are formulated in terms of expected learning outcomes as any British Higher Education programme does in response to the academic quality requirements of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This is achieved by way of a validated process by the UCLan UK Academic Quality and Compliance Unit Programme Specification, which stipulates, amongst others, not only the programmes structure but also its purposes, learning aims and expected learning outcomes …" (p.144).

The EEC expresses serious concern that this programme of studies no longer exists in UCLan UK and therefore we cannot understand how this programme is on offer in UCLan Cyprus and has actually gone through the UCLan UK quality assurance process. More so, when a double-degree is awarded. We do acknowledge that a degree of independence is allowed and necessary but we are deeply concerned as to the level of depth and engagement that students experience. The EEC also expresses concern regarding the way the actual study units have been developed and the intellectual input across a number of study units given that there is no expertise in the areas. The teaching team may have expertise in relation to some of the modules but the modules themselves are inappropriate for a MA in Educational Leadership. In relation to this, we were also told during the online visit that the design and content of the courses was developed by

external "experts", but we received no clear answers regarding who they were and what expertise they possessed, only that they were UK-based researchers.

It is not clear whether this is a full-time or part-time course. This is articulated in some Study Unit descriptions. However, this must be clarified and presented in the introductory Profile and on the University website. Only staff and students seemed to indicate that there is both a FT and PT programme that can be pursued.

The Chair of the School of Business and Management and the Programme Co-ordinator of this course note that the move towards an online programme could be more attractive to students given both the pandemic and the opportunity to study from home.

The *Application for Evaluation - Accreditation* notes that the university has set up internal quality assurance mechanisms – regulations and procedures (see pages 15-16 of the Application) - to ensure that self-evaluations are conducted. Three main procedures are mentioned, namely Continuous Enhancement Process, Periodic Course Review (this also includes external examiners reports), and Annual Monitoring (see page 19 of Application) There are no reports annexed to this report to attest to this. One document that has been presented presents Student Feedback. According to this document, 'students are encouraged to respond to the Module Feedback Questionnaire (MQF) twice a year whilst making sure that student anonymity and transparency is respected. Items covered in the MQF Teaching Experience, Assessment Feedback, Module Organisation and Learning Resources.

Concerns raised for the accreditation of the conventional programme apply here given that no reviews have been undertaken to make substantive changes to the course proposal. Three of the EEC members who teach and research educational leadership are fully in agreement that the programme content does not reflect the field's latest research, and in this respect, the course programme is not up-to-date. This may also be due to the limited expertise of the teaching staff in the areas of educational leadership and management. This is a point we will come to later. Furthermore, whilst the aims and objectives of the course are clearly articulated, and the learning outcomes respect the various course outlines and developments, we feel that they are overly ambitious and cannot be developed within such a short span of time. The course study units are indeed quite comprehensive and we are not so confident that such work can be covered within the time limits set, also because many of the students have regular jobs and undertake their studies late afternoon or in the evening. Given that this course is DL it will allow for students to engage with the programme at their own pace. We also note that the Learning Outcomes of two study units, namely *Strategic Leadership in Education* and *Leading People and Teams in Education* are identical.

1.3   Public information

The programme of study presents clear, accurate, up to date and readily accessible information that is published. The objectives, intended learning outcomes, qualification award, teaching and learning assessment procedures are clearly articulated and presented. The admission requirements are too broad and do not actually point out that it is intended only for educators. There are then conflicting messages in other parts of the document. This needs to be clarified.

The course "is designed for those practitioners working or intended to work in education and who seek an educational leadership position …." (p. 25). Whereas the Admission Requirements state that "Participants in this masters level programme will have demonstrated an ability to cope with masters level study either through APEL or previous qualifications, e.g. PG Diploma and have an IELTS score of a minimum 6.5" (p.10).

In the Application it is further stated that "the programme is specifically designed for graduate students who are looking to pursue a career in education leadership or to advance their careers within these fields …" (p. 28). Therefore, this course can be offered to candidates who may not come from a teaching background or have experience in the field of education.

The EEC sees a contradiction between the content aims and objectives of the course and the potential students that may enrol or are eligible to enrol for this study programme.

During the meetings it was stated that the course is open to anyone coming from any discipline and wants to move into the field of education. A person who has no background of the education field just cannot engage with the context of education unless the course engages at the superficial level and expects the candidate to address the contextual issues on his/her own. The level of depth of critique will not happen if people enrolled in the course (and teaching in the course) do not have an educational background. We were told that some participants work in business or banking. When we asked about whether this is appropriate, we were told that this was OK because the companies were 'learning organisations'. We do not accept that it is appropriate to recruit candidates from outside education for a specialist MA in Educational Leadership.

The Study Guides are well thought out, highly structured and well developed. They help to introduce and guide the student as an active participant in the learning process. It is evident that a lot of thought, research and work has been put into the compilation of these guides. Good work. The EECs main concern is that each session requires a weekly commitment of an average of 20 hours. A person who is studying full-time should be able to commit her/himself to such an engagement. As noted above, someone studying on a part-time basis would find this quite demanding. It is only in our deliberations with the students that it was stated that students opting for a part-time course would be engaged for two years and not one calendar year. This needs to be clearly presented in the course information.

Another matter that needs to be addressed are the references. There are more recent publications that can be cited for a number of areas. Whilst a certain element of duplication is evident and to be expected then more focus will need to be given to the reading assignments. For example, with reference to educational leadership and management theories the text by Professor Tony Bush entitled *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management* (5th edn) is a must. This text is cited in another Study Guide which does not really tackle the theoretical dimension of the course.

The Study Guide EH4112 *Triple Research Project* is estimated to be covered in 36 weeks. How are students actually coping? Another 16 weeks are dedicated to ED4995 *Designing and Planning Your Research Project*. We are not sure where the time is found to cover this in one calendar year? Again, those following a part-time course would have more time.

Another study unit – MD4061 *Management Coaching Skills* is a study unit that does not seem to have any reference to the educational context. This unit should be focused specifically on coaching by and for educational leaders, with relevant education-specific literature. Consideration should be given to also including mentoring for school leaders.

1.4 Information management

The Application and the complementary documents describe key indicators that provide knowledge of the programme and its various components. Regarding the student profile, the Application together with the online visit gives us a (general) picture of the current student group and how they complete the courses.

However, it may be worth noting (once again) that the programme has not been running since 2019 and that up-to-date data are therefore missing. We also believe that there is a system for analysing throughput and dropouts, even if they are rare. The same applies to student satisfaction, learning resources, and to career opportunities, both during and after the programme has been completed. However, we have a somewhat vague image whether the students, after completing this programme, are applying leadership assignments in, for example, schools and preschools. We also consider that it is unclear if or how teachers and students are involved in the systematic quality work, for example in the analysis of the data collected and in the design of revisions that are made.

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

The programme of study is designed so that it enables smooth student progression. In summary the main strengths or the programme are the following:

1. The full-time staff are PhD holders and well experienced in their respective fields but no one has a qualification in educational leadership and management.
2. The structure of the programme follows the European Credit Transfer System.
3. The modules are well designed at a structural level (even though we feel that, in places, their content needs to be updated).
4. The information related to the programme of study is publicly available. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated in advance to students.
5. The course outline and course content clearly present the learning outcomes, the teaching and learning approaches and the methods of assessment.

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.

1. The MA in Educational Leadership is not built on an established programme prepared by UCLan UK. If it is a double-award then this matter has to be clarified.
2. There is no full-time member of staff who comes from the education ranks and no one is in possession of a postgraduate degree in educational leadership. This is then reflected in the course delivery and the courses actually being taught. The video lesson that we were presented reinforces our concerns on a number of levels. The content, for example, did not have any reference to education and at no stage were examples cited from the educational context. This is actually reinforced by the Study Guide that speaks about coaching in a generic sense. Another concern relates to the pedagogy used. A rather clinical approach was adopted with the lecturer merely going through a series of slides. No attempt was made to get feedback or interact with the participants.
3. Whilst certain information is readily available not all information is cited or updated. For example, we do not see any reference to duration of the course and the options available re full-time or part-time studies. Nor are we informed that the course is currently not on offer.
4. The Admission Criteria need to be reviewed. The university should consider ways and means of attracting foreign students given that the programme is taught in English. It should also be clear that the target audience comprises education professionals.

5. The various study units seem to be taught by one or two persons. With programmes running for 10 ECTS this is far from healthy and more adjunct staff should be sought. Practitioners in the field of education will help bring out the link between theory and practice which is one of the main objectives stated by this course.

6. We propose study units that address the following areas: Instructional leadership, distributed leadership, leadership and/for school improvement, leadership and gender, leadership preparation. These should replace the current modules that are not focused on educational leadership.

7. There is no international dimension to a programme that is taught in English. To enrich the programme the EEC recommends that the School of Business and Management invites visiting professors to give input in particular study units.

8. It is not clear how the skills identified by employers are all related to the role of school leaders (see page 27 of Application).

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	Non-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.*

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.*

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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 various documents made available show that a lot of consideration is put into establishing clear guidelines and support structures for students. The university is committed to the wellbeing of the student and aims to ensure that they are adequately supported both prior and during their engagement with the course. Suffice to mention that a lot of support is given to potential students who may wish to follow the APL system that allows potential candidates approval of their previous learning experiences. This is a demanding process and this is a well explained and a detailed part of the Application. Students remark that teaching staff are accessible and spoke of meaningful relationships being established throughout the whole course. This was identified as the best feature of the course.

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Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?

Support systems within the University exist to facilitate student use of a range of ICT supported learning opportunities including: VLE, Blackboard, Library Platforms, and Asynchronous discussion platforms. However, the DL programme has not been developed as a specific DL programme: it is similar to the regular programme with the addition that you can follow the course through digital media. This is similar to the strategy many schools and universities have taken to bring their regular programs online during the COVID lock-downs. Most universities and students have experienced that this approach is suboptimal, e.g., sitting behind a computer to follow lectures is very tiring and not motivating. Collaborating with peers is hard. DL universities have learned in the past that the delivery of DL courses should follow a specific designed and support. In this programme the video lecture provided was – not only from a content perspective – not adequate in its didactic design to attract students' attention, to promote active participation and to build in sufficient variance in delivery to prevent cognitive overload and concentration concerns.

As a panel we could not assess current work in the learning environment. As stated before, is became clear to us later the courses were not running at all since 2019, so it was impossible to see current work and discussions in the platform. This also makes it impossible to assess how online curriculum, the online material, the ICT facilities, the assessments, the feedback and the digital pedagogy guidelines together safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff and students and the material in the DL programme.

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).

The documentation reviewed, including the background information provided that make up each study unit description, indicate an awareness of the need to link teaching and assessment methods with the overall programme objectives and learning outcomes. Throughout the various study unit descriptions one can see the emphasis on the link between what is being learnt and what is then assessed. The link between theory and practice is sought. This desired link helps the student, or prospective student, to see what and how the course will unfold. The emphasis throughout is to provide adequate personalised support to the students as they engage with the various components of the course. This aspect of the course can happen when course participants are actually engaged as educators. Assuming that the course can be attractive to anyone coming from any background shows a lack of understanding of the field as a discipline and thus engagement can remain at a very superficial level rather than going into the theoretical underpinning of educational development.

Naturally, one of the challenges here is to ensure that the skills that the course candidates are addressing are actually achieved. Whilst there tends to be a focus on student/peer engagement as parts of the course unfold there is limited to no mention of group presentations for which students would be expected to engage, research, reflect and present together. With a focus on skills development, especially team work skills, this would be expected. There is too much emphasis on examinations. At this level one can question the role and validity of holding examinations. More so, in an area like leadership the EEC would argue that contact between students is paramount and should be encouraged, for example through seminars held as the course unfolds.

How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?

The documentation provided suggests an awareness of the need to tailor the teaching and learning activities to the diverse range of experiences brought by an experienced student body undertaking this master's programme. The EEC acknowledges the intent of the programme designers/implementers to promote

learning experiences and assessments that allow participants to integrate their personal and professional experiences into their engagement with the theory and practice within the respective modules. This is reinforced by the Research module that focuses on exemplars from practice and depends on the research interests of the students.

The general pedagogic structure appears to take account of the particular needs of a diverse student body with a commitment to a relatively small cohort (10 students) supported by a designated staff member is laudable. In addition, the regular engagements between staff and students focusing on assessment activities, structured feedback and what might be described as a 'student at risk' policy focusing on contact in the event of students failing to engage appears to be important in this context. It shows the University's commitment to providing ongoing support, and different forms of support when needed.

The formal support structure, consisting as it does of academic and peer elements, indicates an understanding of the need to create an environment that takes account of the needs of a diverse student population at postgraduate level. This commitment was noted by student representatives with staff representatives also highlighting support and communication as being key features of the programmes under discussion.

How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?

The programme at its core, as described in the documentation and by the staff in the course of the evaluation discussions, views itself as having an applied, professional development focus. Each of the study units is intended to examine a different aspect of the professional reality of school leaders working in a range of educational settings. As such, the activities, assessments and content are designed to enhance the participants' capacity to deal with an evolving organisational landscape by focusing on the development of a number of key competencies.

The additional work undertaken in the Research Project is explicitly linked to the enhancement of research and practice competences. Whilst The Triple Research Project reinforces the commitment of the School of Business and Management to ensure that the course participants engage in action research and hence approach their research project from a very practical angle, the EEC recommends that one needs to see if candidates who wish to eventually pursue further studies (i.e. doctoral studies) may be able to proceed with this research background.

There is a case to be made for a more explicit identification of competences relating to culture and cultural context as a determinant of organisational leadership and evaluation. The need to provide students with a capacity to critique, adapt and perhaps adopt the different models of leadership and evaluation presented from a culturally responsive viewpoint would appear to be important. This is an aspect that should be covered in the study unit currently entitled *Strategic Leadership in Education*.

How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?

Learning support is provided on the course learning platform. Interactions on the VLE is encouraged and naturally through the use of emails and face-to-face meetings. However, the teaching methods for the DL

programme are not innovative at all (e.g. use of modern teaching and learning technologies like serious games and automated formative assessments).

Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?

The technology is only used to try to provide the regular, residential programme through the available distance teaching technologies that are available. This will not make the teaching process more effective.

How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?

As has already been mentioned, at its core the School of Business and Management see this course as an applied programme that explicitly seeks to use the professional practice experiences of the student cohort as a basis for class discussion, assessment and feedback. The centrality of the practice context is confirmed both by the programme documentation and the input of the teaching staff during the online visit who emphasise the relevance and rooted nature of the theoretical inputs to their professional lives. However, much of the theory offered by the programme is unconnected to the field of educational leadership, making theory-practice links problematic. Furthermore, the video clips we were shown do nothing to engage, challenge or debate educational issues. Hence, our concern as to the level of engagement that will take place.

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?

There does not appear to be any practical component within the course. although arguably the applied nature of many of the assessment activities, allows course participants to engage with various skill sets. Through the study unit *Leading People and Teams*, for example, offers an excellent opportunity for course participants to engage in groups, develop group dynamics, handle case studies, develop intra and inter personal skills that can be applied. Such learning opportunities would allow participants to demonstrate their mastery of identified skills and competencies within an educational setting. So, whilst the University may be here proposing a purely online DL programme we would seriously recommend going for a blended approach as particular skills, attributes, etc., need an environment that a DL will not ensure.

Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?

The research component represents a substantial part of this course, i.e. 44% of the course weighting. There is a formal research study unit entitled *Designing and Planning your Research Project* that introduces the course participants to the area of identifying, designing and undertaking a research project that directly addresses a need identified by the different candidates. The study unit description makes reference to exposure to 'traditional and alternative research approaches' but there is no mention as to whether qualitative and quantitative research methods would be discussed and explored. One only finds these in the Study Unit Guide Books. The References recommended in the study unit a vast selection of books related to such research methods is made.

The Study Guide itself shows that the students need to engage themselves solidly for a whole semester to go through the varied readings and activities and finally work and submit a Research Project within the stipulated time. It is only through the discussions with the students that we came to know that the students

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who are on part-time studies get to cover the course in two academic years. We assume that a DL programme would work round the students' personal itinerary. However, if this happens then it would be difficult for the course participants to engage in group activities.

How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?

One assumes that the current provision that was in use for the conventional programme would be made available to those following the DL programme.

Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?

There is an explicit link between EQF and the programme at all levels.

How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?

The University has robust procedures to ensure fairness in the assessment system. The Academic Regulations issued by UCLan UK is the one adopted by UCLan Cyprus and presents a clear outline of what students need to do if they feel grieved in any way. No mention has been made as to whether appeals have been sought, whether appeals have been granted and re-marking facilitated.

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

1. Quality of some course descriptions which have clearly articulated LOs, assessment criteria and the benefits to be accrued.
2. The applied nature of many of the study units and the assessment practices that encourage course participants the opportunity to link theory with practice.
3. There is a strong emphasis on developing and maintaining a strong rapport with the students throughout the course. Meaningful relationships are aimed to ensure that helps students settle and feel safe, facilitating their improvement.
4. A practical and project-based approach to this masters.

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 concerns raised for the conventional programme apply here, namely:
1. The DL programme needs to be redesigned in its teaching approach, using the principles for effective online course design in order to provide an attractive, motivational, inspirational and activating learning experience for distance learning students.

2. There is an evident need to review the way the study units have been identified and developed. They are not in line with international best practice.
3. Broadening the curriculum focus beyond Anglo-American literature.
4. Assessment activities need to see students practising and engaging with the knowledge and skills being experienced as the course unfolds.
5. Consider whether the Research approach adopted in this master's degree is leaving its desired impact on students/graduates.
6. At this level and in an area like leadership the EEC would argue that contact between students should be encouraged such as through occasional seminars.
7. The Triple Research Project should have clear guidelines for the students to follow to ensure that the template is respected. Set guidelines should be made available. This will help to set standards and express the professionalism required at this level of study.
8. There is a clear need to enhance the focus on educational leadership, including greater attention to the education context, throughout the programme, reflected in content, readings, and assessment.
9. Ensure that the Research work undertaken by students address the current gap in that research and literature based on the Cypriot context does not appear to feature in the course. Given that Cyprus has world leaders researching on this area, their work should be included.

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	Non-compliant
2.2	Practical training	Not applicable
2.3	Student assessment	Partially compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Non-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.

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

The School of Business and Management employs three full-time and two part-time academic members of staff that deliver the whole programme. However, there are no senior members of staff holding Associate Professor or Professor status. During our meeting we met all the teaching staff. Whilst all of them have a PhD, and are research active, the EEC has major concerns about their background and the contribution that they can make to fulfilling the aims and objectives set by a number of study units. A review of the academic profile involved in the implementation of the course shows that none of the five candidates have studied at postgraduate level in the area of educational leadership. While these staff are research active, their activities and publications are not related to the espoused focus of the MA Educational Leadership course. This connects to the EEC's concerns about the structure and content of the course. The modules do not fit contemporary views about educational leadership in the 21st century, internationally and in Cyprus.

Their areas of interest are also limited in input, these mainly being in the area of adult learning and online learning. Most of the staff are experienced teachers of e-learning programmes. The one study unit that the EEC feels confident that the staff can fulfil the objectives and learning outcomes set is *Learning Technologies in Education* but this is not an appropriate module for a programme on educational leadership at Master's level. The latest publications of the academic staff confirm the concerns of the EEC. The legitimacy of postgraduate courses in educational leadership depends on staff being well qualified in this specific field, with relevant research and publications. The EEC does not believe that education is simply another setting to which general management principles can be applied.

The Application notes that all 'special teaching personnel' employed for teaching this degree are in possession of a PhD, have adequate teaching experience, and are provided with the opportunity to attend Teaching Toolkit Training so as to achieve the Fellowship of the UK Higher Education Academy.

3.2 Teaching staff numbers and status
Full time academic staff have teaching, research and administrative responsibilities. UCLan Cyprus establishes that in average time full-time professors are expected to invest 40% of their time teaching, 40% in research activities and 20% in managing tasks. The maximum teaching load is 12 hours per week but this very much depends on the other responsibilities assigned they might not reach the maximum. Two of the full-time members of staff have reached their maximum. During the meeting with teaching staff, they confirmed that they are able to focus on research for 40% of their time. They have a research day each week and also utilise less busy periods (notably the summer period) for research activities.

The number of FT professors is in accordance with the regulations. The EEC considers that five staff members are sufficient to the course given its small cohort. The staff referred to 'experts' (academics and practitioners) who contributed to the course. The EEC was unable to establish the scale and nature of such contributions.

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research
There is evidence that both FT and PT staff involved in implementing this programme have a varied research background. Quite a number have presented recent research publications. They are engaged in scholarly activity with the intent of extending their profile in their respective disciplines. However, as noted in other sections, the EEC main concern is that this research and involvement in various projects are not at all related to the main area of educational leadership. Whilst the Application states that teaching staff offer 'tailored knowledge and skills in the area of educational leadership' (p. 25), the EEC questions this assertion since none of the teaching staff have the theoretical background or experience themselves, and it is therefore rather difficult to 'bridge theory with practice' (p.26).

As noted above, newly-appointed staff and current staff are provided with the opportunity to attend Teaching Toolkit Training so as to achieve the Fellowship of the UK Higher Education Academy.

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

1. Among the teaching staff that met with the EEC there was evident enthusiasm, high morale and satisfaction, and a good sense of team spirit. The students we met collaborated this positive feeling, indicating high levels of satisfaction with their teaching staff. Above all, they emphasised the teaching staff's supportive attitudes and their availability to address their needs be they personal or professional. It is evident that teaching staff are committed to providing students with an engaging and worthwhile experience whilst they are at UCLan.

2. The teaching staff are research active, but not in educational leadership.

3. Most of the teaching staff are experienced teachers of e-learning programmes.

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.

1. The limited specific educational leadership expertise of the teaching staff makes it vital that appropriately qualified and experienced adjunct staff are employed to enrich the students' experience. There appear to be such colleagues but we cannot ascertain the extent and nature of their contributions. If this course is to remain an important part of the University's profile, as stated by several people interviewed by the EEC, additional staff, qualified at masters and doctoral level in leadership, are required to teach this programme of studies.

2. The EEC is rather concerned by much of the content of the programme, as indicated in study guides. In particular, there are significant omissions of topics and issues that reflect up-to-date discourses in the field, and which have been current for around the last decade or more, while very dated issues and perspectives dominate the content of the study guides. Whilst a number of concerns have been addressed within section 1 of this report, it also reflects the issues covered in this section, for the EEC feels that this apparent out-datedness of course content reflects the research activity, foci and expertise of teaching staff. The EEC is concerned that those members of the programme teaching team who hold professional posts may simply not have the background or had the time or opportunity to keep up with the most up-to-date research in the field, and, as a result, the research upon which they base course content is not state-of-the-art. To address this problem, if the UCLan Cyprus wants this programme to truly reflect the most up-to-date research and the areas pertinent to school development and school improvement, it would benefit greatly from the involvement of overseas-based teaching staff and researchers in the field of (educational) leadership and related areas (e.g. professional learning) as visiting professors.

3. During the meeting with teaching staff, the EEC's comments about the inappropriate content of the MA in Educational Leadership were rebutted. Staff asserted that the modules are all relevant to educational leadership. The EEC cannot agree with such comments. The course structure, content, and readings are not 'fit-for-purpose'.

4. This means reviewing the university's policy on employing visiting academics. Such visiting professors' involvement might initially be confined to a small number of guest lectures within an existing study unit thus adding value to the student experience.

5. The above points also reflect on the staff recruitment policy, a policy which states that it is aimed at ensuring the highest of standards.

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

Sub-area		Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Non-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 admission criteria are in place. The MA in Educational Leadership aims to attract 'graduates from any discipline who are working in schools and/or have a teaching role,' and must demonstrate a good command of the English language as stipulated by the Academic Regulations and Assessment Handbook issued by UCLan UK. Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently.

Regulations regarding student progression are in place. The processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information pertinent to student progression exist.

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. The Application presents a detailed approach to the Accreditation of Prior Learning. Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on: the 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.

Information and published regulations related to student certification are in place. Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, the level, content and status of studies that were pursued and successfully completed. The certificate of the University is accompanied by a diploma supplement which is in line with European and international standards.

An appeals process is in place for addressing any issues that may arise with the intention of providing a fair and transparent hearing. Student-centredness is a key tenet of the University's espoused culture and principles, making sure that students' individual needs are seriously addressed. The intent is to provide the same service to the students following the distance learning programme.

Through the remote visit, together with the study of the material provided by the School of Business and Management, it seems that student access policies are implemented consistently. Any students who want to pursue the APL route can do so. It was reported that at masters level no one has pursued this route to access the programme. Students' degrees/background are taken into consideration for admission. They need to be in possession of a first degree (i.e. a Bachelors degree) from an accredited university or tertiary institution; have very good knowledge of the English language – written and verbal; this is essential since the programme is offered in English.

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

The conventional programme had the following strengths which we assume the School of Business and Management will do its utmost to ensure that they are able to adequately support the DL students.

1. The University's electronic system seems to work pretty well and so according to the different stakeholders interviewed, namely students, teaching staff and administrators. These monitoring processes are in place to address students' progress, requests and/or concerns of both students and staff.

2. Offering a double-awarded degree supports students' employment opportunities in Cyprus and academic mobility to other European countries. However, as noted above, one has to note the EEC's concern about this.

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 University needs to ensure that there is clear explanation provided of the different courses available and how they operate, whether a student is full-time, part-time or following a distance learning programme. At the moment this is not clearly articulated neither on the University website nor in the documentation. However, we assume that this matter would be resolved once the programmes are approved and up and running.

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	Partially 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.)?*

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> - *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.

Overall, the programme is well structured with sufficient attention to detail in terms of learning and teaching resources with a variety of tools and approaches used as the course unfolds. We assume that provision for student support will be in place. Feedback from the students that had followed the conventional programme was very positive with tutor support identified as the best feature of the course. The teaching and administrative staff will need to engage in a different manner to ensure that good levels of support exist as the engagement required for a DL programme will be different.

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

Organisation
The material that we were shown is of the distance learning programme that is also being accredited for the first time. We do feel that most of the samples viewed showed a didactic approach to teaching with no engagement with the students as active participants. However, the documentation highlights that there is a lot of interaction taking place.

Programme design and delivery
In addition to the face to face interaction, there are some established mechanisms and technologies that support interaction between staff and students, mainly through Blackboard and the use of computer mediated communication.
The Blackboard offers opportunities for interaction predominantly through the use of discussion for a and a chat function.

Staff and student support
Teacher training is offered on the specificities of technology and distance learning.
Support is provided to students from both academic and administrative staff.
There is evidence in the documentation that we have seen that the University provides support to students with special needs. The virtual session of the University premises highlighted the accessibility of the various centres and halls that have all been made accessible.

Resources
The library offers both hard and electronic copies of academic texts and research literature. We were not able to visit the University consequently we did not manage to have a hands-on experience of assessing the full extent of the physical resources and the teaching materials available to support the programme. From discussions we had with the Programme Team and the Administrative staff, and the documentation that we were shown, it appears that these seem to be adequate.

Human Resources

Academic staff are either permanent or part-time lecturers. The number of administrative staff appears to be adequate for delivery of this 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.

1. The virtual learning environment offers opportunities for further interaction in addition to face to face sessions. However, the EEC has not seen examples of innovative use of technology such as computer simulations, virtual or augmented reality embedded in the programme online environment.

2. The EEC recommends that there is a clear student facing narrative on how the learning environment of the conventional programme integrates face to face and online components so that students truly benefit from a blended learning environment.

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	Non-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 EEC is appreciative of the warm welcome received from the University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus rector and staff, and of the time taken to prepare and present us with extensive information on this programme, and to address our questions.

The Committee finds that the proposal to introduce a Masters in Educational Leadership Distance Learning programme that is practically identical to a conventional programme that has not been running for two academic years without taking the necessary steps to address issues related to quality assurance, improved course design and development, and the engagement of teaching staff qualified in educational leadership as serious matters and therefore we cannot support or recommend that it is approved.

The recommendations and conclusions drawn for the conventional programme apply here.

The committee concludes that the notion of a master's programme in educational leadership delivered in English is sound. It covers an area of knowledge and study that features as the subject of hundreds of taught programmes in universities worldwide including Cyprus which has a strong history in this area. However, the current course design leaves much to be desired as the areas that have been presented do not take into consideration content that is internationally recognised as central to a master's in educational leadership programme. Furthermore, the School of Business and Management does not draw on a range of research and teaching expertise that would help design a programme that would entice and provide prospective students with an in-depth postgraduate engagement with a wide range of challenging and interesting subject specialism. The lack of focus in the programme in both the application of theory to practice, and the provision of high-quality teaching and research experiences in contextually appropriate areas of studies is disconcerting.

The current teaching staff, whilst having the expertise in various professional areas, do not have the right credentials to develop an engaging and cutting-edge programme that would be able to compete with other courses offered in other Cypriot institutions and compete in the international arena. This is especially so given the desire of the University to attract foreign students.

Of particular note is the focus on applying research-derived knowledge to professional practice, even though this is marred by the lack of academic staff that can adequately address this link in the field of education in general and educational leadership in particular. This is a point that the EEC recommends to the University authorities to address to enhance the quality, relevance, impact in Cyprus and beyond.

All the evidence that the EEC gleaned suggests that the University has an extremely strong record of student nurturing and emotional support, and this programme follow this well-established model of excellence in student welfare.

In terms of the programme's design and delivery the EEC urges the University/ School of Business and Management to extend its teaching team to include tutors (whether of adjunct, visiting or even permanent status) who undertake, and could disseminate, through the courses, cutting-edge research in the field that incorporates consideration of critical leadership studies, and different models of leadership presented from a culturally responsive viewpoint. Such recruitment of additional teaching team members could make significant contributions towards transforming what is in many respects a 20th century curriculum (as it is

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currently proposed) into one that reflects 21st century research and scholarship that is global in focus, rather than narrowly Anglo-American, in the (educational) leadership field.

Issues relating to the nature and number of assessments also need to be considered by the programme team.

Whilst the proposed online MA in Educational Leadership builds on the existing conventional programme and may be a welcomed approach to potential candidates, the EEC recommends that a more blended approach is adopted. The area of leadership requires more interaction amongst course participants that a fully online approach does not allow.

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E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Christopher Bezzina	
Tony Bush	
Daniel Nordholm	
Rob Koper	
Victoria Michaelidou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 26th November 2021