

Doc. 300.1.3

Date:

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus)
- **Town:** Larnaca
- **School/Faculty:** School of Business and Management
- **Department:** Department/Sector
- **Programme of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

MA Educational Leadership (1 year 90ECTS)

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

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Professor Christopher Bezzina	Chair	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	Student	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University



B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.

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

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

The response presented by the School of Business and Management shows varied attempts to address a number of issues that were raised by the EEC. The School of Business and Management justifies the double-degree award system in place and argues that the course has been designed by an “experienced academic UCLan UK team.” Once again, our concern is that the team mentioned are not academically qualified in the area of educational leadership although they may hold leadership positions. At the same time, we appreciate the initiatives currently undertaken to recruit 3 new associate lecturers and another call published. We anticipate that these associate lecturers will address the identified lacunae. Visiting staff are also in the process of being invited to participate. Furthermore, the suggestion to introduce critical friends is being addressed through the setting-up of an Advisory Board. In conclusion, the EEC emphasizes the importance of further recruitment, also including more experienced researchers within the field of educational leadership, i.e. Associate Professors and Full Professors who can build profound structures for research, teaching and international collaborations.

The concern raised by EEC that various modules in the proposed course are inappropriate has been addressed. A review of the Course Content shows that the recommendation to review and introduce other course modules has been undertaken and another study unit being developed (as noted on page 12 of the Response). However, we still have major concerns about the content of these study units. Overall, the drafting of these study units shows a number of disjointed ideas that are brought together; an infinite list of references some of which are not directly related to the areas developed. For example, the newly-proposed study unit entitled Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership should be exploring issues such as diversity, inclusion, social justice, migration, entitlement, etc. These are completely left out! In that sense, the programme (still) does not reflect the field's latest research.

So, whilst the introduction of three apparently new modules is welcome, as they appear to be relevant to educational lead they still do not address our major concern that the people designing these courses are not directly working in the field of education and their track record as seen through their c.v's justifies our concern. Arguable, this “gap” reduces teachers' possibilities to bridge teaching and research in general, but also to apply (their own) research in teaching practice in particular.

What follows are our major concerns re the respective study units and the lecturer that co-ordinates the study unit:

1. **Instructional Leadership:** The content description demonstrates that the course team does not understand what is meant by instructional leadership. Good modules on this topic address progress evaluations, monitoring, including classroom observation, modelling good progress, mentoring teachers, and CPD. These are not covered in this module. The named tutor (Maria Zeniou) has no background in educational leadership.
2. **Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership:** The proposed content is acceptable. The named tutor (Maria Nicolaidou) has a Ph.D. in education but no connection to educational

leadership. She has some publications, mostly focused on professional practice rather than school leadership.

3. **Leadership for School Improvement:** The main foci of this module are school effectiveness and school improvement, with little attention to leadership. In order to bridge educational leadership and SE/SI the EEC recommends to take advantage of the profound work of Karen Seashore. Regarding the field of SE/SI, the influential work of Hopkins, Stringfield, Harris, Stoll & McKay (2014) should also be considered. The named tutor (Michael Constantinos) has a Ph.D. on pedagogical practice and an interest in social justice, but little on educational leadership and no English language publications.

Assessment Procedures

Whilst a justification has been given as to a heavy reliance on examinations as per University regulations, we feel that each School/ Faculty has a right to have its own bye-laws and assessment criteria that allow for changes to be proposed and introduced.

Research Project.

The concern raised by EEC regarding the time needed to cover the project work has been addressed.

Admission Criteria.

The admission criteria have been revised to ensure that only those with an educational background are considered/admitted to the course.

2. Student - centered learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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As noted in Section 1, the admission criteria have been reviewed to attract only those pursuing a career in education. The clarifications made, especially in relation to the Research component and especially the Research Methods study units help EEC to appreciate the work covered. There is also clarification that students are provided with material through periodicals that are then discussed. However, whilst the comments refer to what is covered during the lectures the dissertations reviewed are not considered by the EEC to be of Masters degree level. We had noted that they lacked a critical and analytical stance and thus students pursuing this course would not be able to proceed to further studies given the level of attainment. The comment made regarding the presentation of the Research Project was, in the opinion of the EEC, not adequately addressed. Stating that the students follow the Harvard system when this is not always being followed cannot be justified. However, justification comes later (page 27) with the introduction of a Guide book to help the students address the format of their final submitted work (refer to Appendix 9). This is better work. Furthermore, when one looks at the projects reviewed the work does not justify or collaborate the points raised that such studies are leaving the desired impact on the graduates and that those wishing to pursue further studies at doctoral level can do so. This will have to be seen if the supervisory work is actually improved. Interaction between course participants and the educational environment is being addressed as a number of seminars have been organised. Others are in the pipeline.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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Points raised by EEC have been addressed through the introduction of 3 associate lecturers, and another call is out for another post. This is indeed a step in the right direction, expressing a clear commitment to enhance the course delivery. However, once we went through the credentials of the appointed staff we realised that they are not qualified in the field of educational leadership. Until this matter is addressed it will be difficult for the university to develop a programme that actually addresses the intentions behind this programme of studies. As also noted above, to develop into a “complete academic environment” the EEC identifies a need to engage Associate and Full Professors.

As noted in Section 1 we feel that the University has not truly addressed our major concern that staff who teach or are being selected to teach this programme NEED to be qualified in the area of educational leadership.

Furthermore, we cannot assess the credentials of the person appointed to the three-year advertised position (closing date 19 March), until we know who s/he is.

At the same time, the University needs to ensure that existing staff currently involved are provided with opportunities for professional growth. No mention is made re this.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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It is argued on page 32 of the Response that the concerns raised by EEC will all be addressed once the course is re-accredited.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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The HEI reported that they worked on the restructuring of the digital learning environment to ensure it is learning-centered and allowing further academic skills development. In response HEI mentioned a long list of tools that they added to the distance learning environment, without a clear analysis why these tools are needed to increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of the learning environment for the students and teachers. It is very unlikely that this combination of tools is a) really needed and b) pedagogically seen effective. Also, some examples (screenshots) are provided to show the interactivity of the materials. Although we welcome this effort, it is still far from the type of interactivity that we currently seek in distance learning programmes. The examples given are all examples of instructions given to students in terms of 'do this or do that'. Including posting something to the discussion board and react to others. This is very artificial and students can easily ignore these activities. It is unclear what they add to the actual learning process, for example, discussions about theoretical stances, practical or ethical implications of approaches, critical reflections, etc. All of this with clearly stated learning objectives and direct relations with the assessments of the course objectives. To conclude, the EEC gets the impression that the HEI misses experience and knowledge in designing and delivering a good quality distance learning programme. It would be advised to employ/hire experienced DL experts who collaborate with the teachers to design an effective programme optimizing content related, pedagogical, technical and organisational design requirements. On page 27 (repeated on page 34) it is asked whether the teaching staff is using new technology to make the teaching process more effective. The answer repeats the long list of tools, again without motivation why these are added, but the most important part of the question is not answered at all: 'to make the teaching process more effective'.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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7. Eligibility (Joint programmes) (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

EEC's final conclusions and remarks

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Overall, the EEC agrees that it is too early to approve this resubmission. While some of the issues have been addressed, there remain problematic issues concerning course content, digital learning environment, pedagogical design and staffing.

There has been an attempt to address a number of issues and it is evidently clear that they have made the necessary procedural changes that we noted. For example, the Admission Criteria has been addressed.

However, EEC feels that the matter to review the course content of this Masters programme has been rushed and not enough time has been allowed for the new academic personnel to settle in and develop the new study units that have been introduced. The development of new study units takes time. This becomes evident when we examine designs, content, choice of literature, and so on. Furthermore, the chosen associate lecturers do not have the appropriate background to develop courses that address the areas that EEC had identified in the first report.

As a result, one of the main points highlighted in the evaluation report back in November 2021 that, and we quote, "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" (p.40) has not been adequately addressed. Unless the University/ School of Management and Business attracts lecturers in the field of educational leadership the issues highlighted will not be resolved.

Furthermore, linked to this is the concern of the Committee that the new staff members still lack the 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 still of major concern. Even if a holistic perspective on (educational) leadership is important, as also stressed in the Institution's reply, and improvements

have been made, there are essential components of educational leadership that should be focused much more in detail.

The EEC concludes that the same concern is true for the adaptations made by HEI to comply with our comments about the design of the distance learning programme. The addition of the long lists of tools to the digital learning environment, without a strong pedagogical motivation, a good embedding of the tools in the overall design of the programme objectives and with no evidence of teaching staff experience with these tools, is not sufficient to cope with the comments made.

Given these serious shortcoming the Committee cannot support or recommend that it is approved.

D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Christopher Bezzina	
Tony Bush	
Daniel Nordholm	
Rob Koper	
Victoria Michaelidou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: Click to enter date

