



Form 400.1

Ref. Number: 07.14.345.033

**FINAL REPORT OF THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND  
ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**EVALUATION - ACCREDITATION  
OF THE PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

**IN GREEK:**

**Διοίκηση της Εκπαίδευσης (1 ακαδημαϊκό έτος, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, πρόγραμμα εξ  
αποστάσεως)**

**IN ENGLISH:**

**Educational Leadership (1 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master, E-Learning delivery)**

**OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION  
University of Central Lancashire-Cyprus**

This Final Report was prepared on the basis of Article (20)(2)(f)(i) of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in 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].

**THE PROCEDURE:**

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the legal representative of the Higher Education Institution University of Lancashire-Cyprus, submitted an application (Doc. 200.1), based on Article (17) of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021, for the evaluation-accreditation of the programme of study:

**IN GREEK:**

**Διοίκηση της Εκπαίδευσης (1 ακαδημαϊκό έτος, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, πρόγραμμα εξ  
αποστάσεως)**

**IN ENGLISH:**

**Educational Leadership (1 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master, E-Learning delivery)**

This application is registered with the reference number: **07.14.345.033**

In the framework of competences conferred on it by the relevant legislation, the Council of the Agency has constituted an External Evaluation Committee (EEC), which after initially examining the institution's application for programme evaluation and accreditation, performed a remote visit at the institution on November 17, 2021.

The EEC met remotely with the head of the institution, the head of the relevant department, the programme's coordinator, members of the academic staff, members of the administrative staff, students and/or their representatives and the Internal Quality Assurance Committee.

Additionally, the EEC remotely examined the institution's facilities (library, computer labs, labs, teaching classes, research infrastructures, etc.), various documents presented and/or requested by the EEC, the School's/Faculty's structure and the programme's position in it, the CVs of the teaching staff and their relationship to the institution as teachers in regard to any other duties and teaching.

The EEC has documented its findings and recommendations and drew up the External Evaluation Report in the Doc. 300.1.1.

### **CYQAA Council's Decision**

The Council of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education, during its 86th Summit on October 10, 2022, according to the Article (20)(2)(f)(i) of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in 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], and on the basis of the suggestions of the External Evaluation Committee, the comments of the institution on the External Evaluation Committee report and the additional feedback from the EEC **decided that the programme is rejected based on the following reasons:**

- 1. There is not enough permanent staff to support this programme and to enhance its development.**

### **EEC Comments:**

*[...Our concern is that the team mentioned are not academically qualified in the area of educational leadership, although they may hold leadership positions...]. [... 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...].*

### **Institution's response:**

*[...Efforts have been taken at the School and University levels to recruit additional academic staff. It is worth noting at this point that, aside of the associate lectures recruited, we have also appointed Visiting Academics (see Appendix I) who have kindly agreed to actively participate, aside of the duties assigned as part of their formal appointment (i.e. teaching, research mentoring and research leadership in publications and funded research, as well as knowledge transfer to the Cypriot educational community,) in the process of designing, developing and continuously improving the program as part of an Advisory Board (at the programme level)...].*

### **EEC Comments:**

*[...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...]. [...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...].*

### **Institution’s response:**

*[...Dr. MA has been appointed as Visiting Associate Professor in Educational leadership. Dr. MA is working as a Reader in HRM and Educational leadership at Manchester Metropolitan University...]. [... In addition to Dr. MA’s appointment, the School of Business and Management has proceeded with the appointment of another Visiting Assistant Professor in Primary Education Leadership, Dr. MK, who is working as Senior Lecturer in Primary Education-Science and Professional Studies at Middlesex University London...].*

*[...The University and the School implement a Research, Innovation and Enterprise Mentoring Team (RIEMT) scheme, where senior academic members of the staff join with junior staff offering their advice and support to help them develop their research portfolio, both formally and informally...]. [... For early career researchers appointed to the University, we pay particular attention to their publication records and potential. Research mentorship workshops are therefore regularly organised within the School...].*

### **CYQAA’s position:**

Your answer does not address the concerns raised above by the EEC. You do not comply with the articles of the Law, according to which 70 % of your academic staff needs to be hired on a permanent basis. Visiting academics may in no way substitute for permanent staff.

## **2. There are major concerns about the design of the programme.**

### **EEC Comments:**

*[...There is a 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...]. [...We still have major concerns about the newly developed 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...].*

### **Institution's response:**

*[...Our updated programme structure is now enhanced by newly introduced modules based on the EEC feedback, which is congruent with current debates in the field as evidenced by the programmes in other exemplar universities presented above. Some differences in structure may of course always apply across different MA in Educational Leadership programmes, since academics who design them are active interpreters of education leadership and they naturally exhibit variations in their understanding of the curriculum that constitutes the optimal mix of topics which enable the preparation and equipment of skilled education leaders who can work across contexts and under changing circumstances...].*

### **CYQAA's position:**

Your answer does not address the concerns raised above by the EEC regarding “high-quality teaching and research experiences.” What takes place in other institutions regarding this matter is irrelevant for the purposes of the evaluation of your particular program, which, and as the EEC has identified, has major shortcomings in both its design and its teaching methodology.

### **3. Students' work is not up to standard.**

#### **EEC Comments:**

*[...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...]. [... 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...].*

#### **Institution's response:**

*[...When it comes to the quality of the dissertations submitted as part of this Programme, we would like to offer here a relevant extract from the External Examiner's report (p.10-11)...]:*

*“The dissertations examined within the sample all represented work of good standard. Work assessed as “Pass” was of an appropriate standard of the award, and some of the work, appropriately graded as Distinction, was of very good standard indeed. There was clear evidence of good teaching and support evident in the quality of the work and the scholarly approach adopted. Feedback given is detailed, constructive and helpful, including both comments relating to the specific learning outcomes linked to the dissertation and overall comments.”*

### **CYQAA's position:**

It is the role of EEC members, who have expertise in the field, to determine the level of Masters degree dissertations. Based on the EEC members' experience and subject-specific expertise, and taking into account the European standards on the matter, students' dissertations have not been considered to be of Masters degree level.

#### **4. The added value of the E-Learning component of the programme is not evident.**

### **EEC Comments:**

*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, the 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. 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'.*

### **Institution's response:**

*[...The development of online communities of practice among teachers and the sustainment of learning communities and collaborative practices across other professionals is a key element of our course design. We aim to maintain inclusion, belongingness and encourage the lived experience and full engagement and participation of professionals within online platforms for the advancement of their leadership skills through engagement into collaborative learning activities...].*

*[...As evidenced, our DL environment in Blackboard comprises of learning resources, module information and activity spaces with clear tasks. It also provides access to expert professionals in the field, tutors, professors and practitioners in educational leadership. Through embedded links, Blackboard may provide access to other applications which are used in school governance*

*and leadership and will add to the repertoire of skills needed for successful educational leadership. The DL program would be offered in a combination of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. The sessions delivered in a synchronous mode would be using a student-centred “flipped classroom” approach. The academic team will be able to effectively assess the students’ learning experience and their involvement and performance during the asynchronous sessions...].*

*[...Finally, it is also worth mentioning our strong and fruitful collaboration with the Centre for Collaborative Learning at the University of Central Lancashire that offers training, mentoring, a large database or resources on the technical teaching and learning methodology and a collaborative forum to share good practice, influence strategy and evolve provision through active communities and bespoke pedagogical and technological initiatives...].*

### **CYQAA’s position:**

Your answer remains incomplete. As the EEC has pointed out, you only showcase a number of E-Learning tools which do not necessarily increase the pedagogical effectiveness of the E-Learning programme and/or enhance its quality.

The quality of E-Learning programmes is enhanced when they are supported by a) a pedagogical team attending to the programme’s content, design, and teaching methodology (i.e. simulations, problem solving, representations in virtual environments) and b) an IT team responsible for supporting the technological infrastructure and for providing staff’s professional development on using e-learning tools.

**The Agency indicates that the answers provided by the Institution to the EEC’s feedback report remain inadequate and unsatisfactory.**

**The Agency also indicates that, based on CYQAA’s existing legal framework, higher education institutions may not operate programmes of study which are not accredited.**

**On the basis of Article 20(2)(g)(i)** The institution may, within one (1) month from the receipt of the final Report of the Agency, raise an objection requesting its review by the Evaluation Agency, stating the grounds which, in its opinion, justify the withdrawal and the review of the Evaluation Report.

(Professor Mary Ioannidou-Koutselini)  
President of the Board of the  
Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and  
Accreditation in Higher Education

Date: October 24, 2022