

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: 31/12/2025

# Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** School of Business
- **Department:** Digital Innovation
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

## Programme 1

### **In Greek:**

Programme Name

### **In English:**

Blockchain and Digital Currency

## Programme 2

### **In Greek:**

Programme Name

### **In English:**

Blockchain and Digital Currency (E-Learning)

## Programme 3

### **In Greek:**

Programme Name

### **In English:**

Programme Name

- **Department's Status:** Choose status



**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. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.3.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the on-site evaluation of the Department of Digital Innovation and two of its programs: MSc In Blockchain and Digital Currency and MSc in Digital Currency (DL) on September 25, 2025. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. During the visit, the EEC met the faculty supporting the programme, and had separate meetings with students and alumni of the programme, as well as external stakeholders.*

*We would like to also thank the EEC for their extremely positive evaluation of the Department where 14 out of 16 quality indicators received the top rating of “Compliant” (amongst the choices of compliant, partially compliant, non-compliant) and 2 indicators receiving the rating of “Partially-Compliant”. We would like to note that 69 out of the 95 (applicable) quality standards/indicators received a perfect score of 5 out of 5, resulting an overall average score is 4.71 out of 5.*

*More specifically, the EEC states, amongst other:*

- *The Department of Digital Innovation is a notable asset to the University of Nicosia.*
- *Current students and alumni consistently commend the high quality of instruction.*
- *A compact group of research-active staff and PhD candidates excels in research output and external funding.*
- *Efficient, forward-looking administrative support at both departmental and university levels underpins these achievements.*

*We do appreciate the committee’s recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our Department and its programs and we will be addressing those in the corresponding section of this response.*

## 1. Department's academic profile and orientation

### Sub-areas

- 1.1 Mission and strategic planning
- 1.2 Connecting with society
- 1.3 Development processes

We appreciate your acknowledgement of our early commitment to blockchain education and are delighted that students and alumni value the expertise and approachability of our instructors, the interdisciplinary scope of the curriculum, and the truly international character of the cohort. Your observation that graduates now hold senior roles or lead successful start-ups, along with praise for our exceptional administrative support, affirms the programme's real-world impact. Finally, your confirmation that the expanded staff development schedule has effectively addressed earlier recommendations on faculty training encourages us to continue raising the bar for quality and innovation.

Thank you for your insightful recommendations. To address these, we adopted an iterative annual curriculum-review cycle; expanded faculty development to include training in the new LLM, and other seminars offered by the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research; establish an external advisory board of industry practitioners for curriculum updates based on industry needs; organize webinars and other events where students are invited (e.g. Digital Innovation Entrepreneurship webinar scheduled for Feb. 5 2026, BLOCKTEA 2026 scheduled in September of 2026); prepared an action plan to enhance our intake number; monitor closely key indicators such as application volume by region and conversion rates; invite students to participate in summer schools where they can be funded by the Erasmus programme.

## 2. Quality Assurance

### Sub-areas

- 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy
- 2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

We are grateful for the committee's positive observations regarding the inclusive and highly engaged structure of the UIQAC, the department's proven commitment to student satisfaction and wellbeing, and the robust policies that keep our operations in line with international standards. Your feedback affirms our current practices and encourages us to sustain and further improve them.

Thank you for highlighting these important points regarding quality assurance. Like UIQAC, the Department follows the European Standards and Guidelines of 2015 (ESG 2015 [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) ). Our quality assurance indicators are fully formalised, though their details may not have been communicated clearly during the meeting; Annex A lists the complete set. Faculty are now encouraged to consider the ABS ranking framework alongside the Scopus index that currently underpins the University's incentive scheme, and a proposal to incorporate the ABS framework will be submitted to the next School Council. In 2025 the School of Business, which houses the Department of Digital Innovation, completed its AACSB accreditation review, documenting every process; these records now serve as the primary reference for departmental procedures. The department is further strengthening its quality cycle by introducing a brief intranet log to capture insights from informal conversations, with entries reviewed each semester.

**Regarding 2.2.20:** There is a clear policy on authorship and intellectual property. (3)

Please note that for the faculty, this is part of their contract. A sample is shown below:

## **10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

**10.1** The **Faculty Member** acknowledges and accepts that for any of his/her intellectual work produced during the term of this Agreement, which is or shall be eligible for legal protection, the **University** maintains first option right to subsidize and/or undertake at its own cost any effort and/or procedure to secure such legal protection. In such case, the exact percentage of the ownership for the **University** on this Intellectual work, shall be determined and mutually agreed by both parties, on a case by case basis and on a separate agreement.

**10.2** In case of any partial subsidization, directly or indirectly by the University, for the development of any Intellectual work of the **Faculty Member**, both Parties acknowledge and mutually accept that the **University** maintains the right to claim ownership of the Intellectual Property of this work. The exact percentage of the ownership for the **University** on this Work shall be determined and mutually agreed by both parties, on a case by case basis and on a separate agreement.

**10.3** The **Faculty Member** shall at the request of the **University**:-

- (a) Supply all information, data, drawings, software or other materials and assistance to enable the **University** to fully exploit any Intellectual Property and Work to its best advantage.
- (b) Execute all documents and do all things necessary or desirable to vest ownership of Intellectual Property in any Work or otherwise belonging to the **University** and/or to obtain patent and/or other protection for the Intellectual Property.

**10.4** The **Faculty Member** warrants and represents that all work provided by him/her, now or in the future, to the **University** has been and will be his/her original work. The **Faculty Member** further warrants and represent that his/her work has not been and will not be Copies, in whole or in part, from or use any work or material owned by any third party and that, no third party has or will have any Intellectual Property or other rights in his/her Work.

Moreover, we do not have a single standalone “Intellectual Property Policy” document for students, but, the key points mentioned such as authorship, originality, respect for intellectual property etc are covered in the Internal Regulations, mainly in Chapters 11 and 12 (attached).

For the students (e.g., thesis/project work):

- Chapter 11 (Institutional Values & Code of Practice), 11.2.5(i) Professional Ethics: sets the general principle that contributions of others must be recognised and intellectual property must be respected etc.
- Chapter 12 (Doctoral Regulations)
  - 12.2: covers originality/authorship requirements (the thesis must be the student’s own work, sources must be clear, and the original contribution must be identified).
  - 12.21: covers thesis deposit and repository upload, including the consent form process for the digital submission etc.

In addition, in Chapter 11, there are also related clauses for staff/faculty:

- 11.2.5(i) Professional Ethics: same general principle on recognising contributions and respecting IP.
- 11.2.1(b) Avoiding Conflicts of Interest: covers external research for pecuniary return and the need for prior understanding/approval with the University’s appropriate authorities

### 3. Administration

We appreciate the committee's acknowledgement of the dedication and forward-looking mindset shown by both our academic and administrative teams, as well as the consistently high student-satisfaction scores achieved by our established distance-learning MSc programme.

We also thank you for the observations and recommendations. We appreciate the recognition of our automated processes and the excellent provision for students with disabilities. We acknowledge, however, the need to clarify how exceptions are managed within these automated workflows and we are documenting and communicating these procedures more explicitly. Any exceptions are brought to the next Department Council meeting, where a decision is made and recorded in the minutes; these records serve as precedents for future cases.

Regarding the feedback from junior teaching faculty on administrative support, with the new semester, more work-study scholarships are being provided to assist faculty based on their needs.

## 4. Learning and Teaching

### **Sub-areas**

#### **4.1 Planning the programmes of study**

#### **4.2 Organisation of teaching**

We are grateful for the committee's endorsement of our robust, multi-stage system for developing and updating programmes, the proven effectiveness and global appeal of our E-learning MSc—enhanced by the active role students play in shaping and refining it—the clarity and accessibility of our admissions and credit-transfer policies, including the free MOOC that serves as a gateway to the MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency, and the strong culture of ongoing dialogue we sustain with our students. Your positive feedback confirms that these practices are delivering tangible benefits and inspires us to keep improving them.

Thank you also for the valuable recommendations. We acknowledge the importance of clearly defining procedures for handling exceptional cases and ensuring sufficient capacity to manage emergencies. Exceptional cases are at the discretion of the specific instructor in collaboration with the Head of the Department.

We also appreciate the suggestion to strengthen the integration of theory and practice through enhanced networking opportunities and on-site events connecting students and alumni. As stated above, the Department is actively involved in the organization of BLOCKTEA 2026 in Cyprus and other online or international events for next year. Moreover, our students are invited to summer schools where they can also obtain funding for their participation through the Erasmus programme. This aligns with our commitment to fostering a vibrant academic and professional community.

Furthermore, the proposal to make the thesis component compulsory—or at least more strongly encouraged—is well noted. Advisors are encouraging students to follow the thesis path.

## 5. Teaching Staff

We appreciate the committee's positive assessment of the Department of Digital Innovation. Your feedback affirms our ability to design and manage MSc programmes that evolve continuously, uphold the qualifications of teaching staff, and attract a genuinely global student cohort. You also noted our faculty's flexibility in updating content and accommodating shifts in enrolment, as well as the added value that distinguished external honorary professors bring by boosting the programme's visibility and helping graduates transition into the workforce. Your observations encourage us to build on these advantages as we plan the programme's next phase.

Thank you also for the important observations. We fully acknowledge the need for continuous upskilling of our workforce to keep pace with technological and pedagogical advancements. This is addressed through targeted professional development programs and regular training initiatives such as the Blackboard training that took place this semester (Fall 2025) for all faculty. In addition to that, faculty are encouraged and incentivized to work on research, publish and attend conferences.

We also recognize the challenges posed by high fluctuation in teaching staff and the burden placed on the permanent staff. To mitigate this, we make use of teaching assistants to assist all faculty (adjunct and permanent staff). Moreover, two junior faculty positions have been requested to assist in the delivery of our courses.

Regarding the following comment:

"While the ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff is sufficient to support and ensure the quality and delivery of the programme of study, the ability to manage this seems to depend to a great degree on the frequent use of adjunct teaching staff to boost capacity. This in turn places a greater burden on the permanent teaching staff with respect to ensuring continuity."

Thank you for this comment. We do recognize that we depend on the permanent teaching staff to ensure continuity, and the frequent use of adjunct teaching faculty required well ahead planning. To mitigate the challenges, as mentioned above, we are in the process of actively recruiting for next year permanent staff. Currently we have:

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work: 7
- Number of special teaching staff (Adjunct Faculty): 8; teaching 1-12 sessions
- Number of visiting Professors: 3; teaching 1-2 sessions
- Number of teaching assistants: 1-2 per course depending on the number of students

## 6. Research

We are grateful for the committee's acknowledgement that our extensive portfolio of third-party funded projects not only secures vital resources for research but also elevates the Department's international profile. Your observation that the grants we win demonstrate our capacity to contribute meaningfully to global collaborations is especially encouraging. We are pleased that you recognise how our research-active staff, despite the Department's modest size, consistently deliver results that exceed expectations. Your positive feedback motivates us to strengthen these efforts and pursue even greater impact in the research community.

Thank you also for your insightful recommendations. We recognize the value of making the MSc thesis a more integral part of the program, and that is why our students are encouraged to follow the thesis path. We also appreciate the suggestion to integrate research results more effectively into teaching and to develop additional teaching materials based on faculty research outputs. The Department in collaboration with its research institute (IFF) has been organizing seminars where all faculty (including adjunct) are presenting their research work. Colleagues and students and alumni are invited to participate. Research results are incorporated in our courses. At the next curriculum review at the end of the academic year, all courses will be reviewed to ensure that.

**Regarding 6.6:** The Department ensures that research results are integrated into teaching and, to the extent applicable, promotes and implements a policy of transferring know-how to society and the production sector. (3)

We acknowledge the Committee's observation regarding the integration of research results into teaching and the promotion of knowledge transfer to society and the production sector. While efforts have been made in these areas, we recognize that further improvement is needed to achieve full alignment with best practices. To address this, online seminars are being organized where faculty are invited to present their research to colleagues and students. Moreover, the Department is working on following actions:

- **Strengthen Research-Integrated Teaching:** a policy requiring faculty to incorporate research outputs into MSc courses. A departmental repository of research-based teaching materials has been developed to support this initiative.
- **Enhance Knowledge Transfer:** The Department is expanding its outreach activities by organizing workshops, public seminars and leveraging our involvement in international conferences (e.g., EMCIS 2026, BLOCKTEA 2026) to showcase research impact and foster partnerships. In addition, we are looking into establishing collaborations with the production sector.
- **Engage Adjunct Faculty and Alumni:** Enhance adjunct instructors and alumni involvement in bridging research and practice through guest lectures, mentoring, and co-supervised thesis projects. They already participate in the seminars we organize.

## 7. Resources

We appreciate the committee's recognition of the Department's financial resilience during periods of volatile demand, the strong network of skilled collaborators, alumni, and adjunct staff that enriches our work, the programme coordinators' responsiveness in securing talent and adjusting courses while upholding all academic standards, and the excellent institutional resources that support us, highlighted by the impressive library services. Your positive feedback affirms our current practices and encourages us to build on these assets as we move forward.

Thank you also for these important recommendations. We acknowledge the concern regarding the paused MSc Metaverse program and agree that relying on its projected income is not a robust long-term strategy.

Strategic planning is therefore a priority, focusing on diversifying and expanding our portfolio of teaching programs. In line with this, we have already begun to explore synergies and collaborations beyond the School of Business. We are in the process of preparing a new MSc on Digital Governance of Educational Units, in collaboration with the Department of Education (University of Nicosia) and the University of Patras as well as an undergraduate degree program on Digital Innovation within our Department in order to strengthen interdisciplinary offerings and ensure resilience in a rapidly evolving academic landscape. These steps are incorporated into our planning to support sustainable growth and innovation.

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

The Department of Digital Innovation appreciates the External Evaluation Committee's recognition of its contribution to the University of Nicosia and its acknowledgment of the high quality of instruction, research excellence, and efficient administrative support. We are committed to maintaining these strengths while addressing the recommendations provided to ensure continuous improvement and resilience in a rapidly evolving academic and technological environment.

The Committee's suggestions regarding enhanced intra-cohort and alumni interaction, formalization of external stakeholder engagement through an industrial advisory board, and systematic monitoring of program coherence are well noted. These initiatives are incorporated into our strategic planning to strengthen community engagement and academic alignment.

We also acknowledge the recommendation to expand permanent faculty, particularly in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, to reduce reliance on adjunct instructors and distribute program responsibilities more effectively. The suggestion to reintroduce conventional face-to-face teaching, leveraging our excellent facilities, is being considered alongside our blended learning strategy to optimize student experience.

Finally, we appreciate the guidance on improving future evaluation submissions by including comprehensive program statistics, student evaluations, sample assignments, course notes, and examination materials. This will be implemented to facilitate transparency and ease of assessment. The Department remains committed to innovation, academic excellence, and adaptability in the face of technological change and global challenges. These recommendations will inform our operational and strategic priorities moving forward.

Once more, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for its professional and diligent approach in providing constructive feedback and recommendations aimed at further improving our Department and its programs.



### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Prof. Angelika Kokkinaki</b>	Dean, School of Business	
<b>Prof. Soulla Louca</b>	Head of Department of Digital Innovation	

Date: 31/12/2025

