

Doc. 300.3.2

Date: February 9, 2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo
- **Town:** Paphos
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- **Department:** Department of Philosophy, Politics & Economics
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Φιλοσοφία, Πολιτική και Οικονομία (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο(BA))

In English:

Philosophy, Politics & Economics (4 Years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

Programme 2

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

Programme 3

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Programme Name

- **Department's Status:** New



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.*

1. Department's academic profile and orientation

Sub-areas

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

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating in two sub-areas and “**Partially Compliant**” in the third.

We first tackle the section's Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: “***The planning of the department reflects cross-disciplinary discussion and collaboration between representatives of the three PPE disciplines and the proposed plans are adequate for the initial launching phase of two years***”.

“***This is a commendable effort to build a PPE department in a new university. At present, among the many PPE study programmes that exist, only very few are anchored in PPE departments.***”

EEC listed strengths as listed below:

- ***“Thoughtful and enthusiastic planning***
- ***Conventional but sensible initial launch plans***
- ***A principal willingness to address the specific potential of the local environment***
- ***Students support an interdisciplinary programme***”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. Lack of clarity about medium terms academic staff plans beyond the first two years (number, specialism, etc)
2. Lack of clarity about how autonomously the department will evolve (or whether it will be dependent upon choices made by mother departments at AUB in Beirut)
3. Very high planned tuition fees which may discourage Cyprus and European citizens from applying and affect both quality of recruitment, quality of experience, and viability.

Institution's Response:

1. During the first year and given that the institution does not have enough time to run international recruitment for teaching staff, a good number of the teaching staff will be seconded from AUB, to become full-time faculty members at AUB Mediterraneo. The rest of the needed teaching staff will be hired locally as part-timers or full-timers. At all times, the

number of teaching staff part-timers will be less than 30% of the overall number of teaching staff.

The appointed Chairperson, Dean, and the teaching staff at AUB Mediterraneo will run international recruitment for the following years with the objective to attract and recruit high-quality local and international academic staff who will teach and conduct research at AUB Mediterraneo. This is a top priority as the university aims to provide adequate support and resources to students in line with the institutional 2023-2032 staffing plan. Following other top quality institutions of higher education, the student-faculty ratio is set at 15. Around 50% of the teaching staff will be of professorial rank, i.e. professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. The other 50% will be lecturers and instructors, both full-time and part-time, such that no more than 30% of the total teaching staff are part-timers. The table below shows teaching staff with respect to students for the first 10 years of operations:

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Students	200	396	600	873	1041	1259	1477	1692	1873	2091
Teaching Staff	14	27	40	59	70	84	99	113	125	140

- AUB Mediterraneo is a twin campus of AUB Lebanon, and as such, it will be governed at the highest level by the AUB Board of Trustees (BoT) and the AUB President. However, it has full autonomy with its own governance structure including the rector, deans, department chairpersons, senate, and standing committees at both the senate level and at the faculty/school level, with faculty and student participation (Section A-5 of the Institution Evaluation Application).
- It is true that the tuition is higher than local universities; however, AUB Mediterraneo has a robust financial aid program to assist qualified undergraduate and graduate students in good academic standing who may not be able to afford the cost of tuition. We believe that financial considerations should not prevent students who meet our academic criteria from receiving high-quality education. Financial aid ranges from 0 to 80% allowing needy students to enroll at AUB Mediterraneo. In addition, 20% discount will be given to all students in the first cohort, and 5 full scholarships will be offered.

2) Sub-areas sections comments

EEC comment Re 1.1 Mission and strategic planning (including SWOT analysis): “The EEC noted that it is important for the department to consider how the profiles of AUB-M and AUB differ. In particular, AUB owes part of its unique appeal by being the face of US, and more broadly Western stile academic education in the Middle East. This strong appeal will not carry over to the AUB-M which will instead be perceived as the outpost of an excellent Middle Eastern university. Such differences in the outside perception of AUB and AUB-M and their foreseeable consequences must be accommodated in all of AUB-M’s strategic planning.

Finally, there is a mismatch between the benevolent and non profit mission which is a key part of the university’s self-identity and expected tuition fees which are, within an EU context, significantly out of line in comparison with local and continental tuition fees. Overprizing runs the risk of making the department unattractive for many Cypriot and European students. This could adversely affect student diversity.”

Institution's Response: AUB Mediterraneo is an approved twin campus of AUB by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education (CHEA). MSCHE accreditation is an expression of confidence in the university mission, goals, resources, and performance based upon periodic internal and external assessment. This is an appeal for both AUB and AUB Mediterraneo.

It is true that the tuition is higher than local and European universities; however, AUB Mediterraneo has a robust financial aid program to assist qualified undergraduate and graduate students in good academic standing who may not be able to afford the cost of tuition. We believe that financial considerations should not prevent students who meet our academic criteria from receiving high-quality education. Financial aid ranges from 0 to 80% allowing needy students to enroll at AUB Mediterraneo. In addition, 20% discount will be given to all students in the first cohort, and 5 full scholarships will be offered.

EEC comment Re Coherene and Compatibility among department and programs “The PPE department initially intends to offer a single (undergraduate) programme of study. This is limited but fully understandable in the first few years of the department's existence. The panel encourages the department to think of its potential growth plans early on. Other things being equal, a department with a bachelor programme but no master programme (nor a PhD-Programme) will be less attractive for many potential students as well as academic staff. Additionally, the limited capacity of academic staff will limit the range of options and specialties for enrolled students in initial years. However, there is reasonable hope that the risk of squeeze will be mitigated when the ambitious recruitment plan is put into action.

Synergy is sought between the PPE department and other departments, in particular with ‘the Faculty of Arts and Science’s department of psychology, and strongly with the faculty’s Institute for Liberal Arts.”

Institution's Response: Indeed, the university shared plans for growth in terms of launch of new programs per year, recruitment plans for more academic staff to teach new courses and sections, as well as additional support services such as counselling, advising, and mentoring, which will increase the recruitment for staff. Proposing Ph.D. programs will surely come few years down the road. As noted in the Institution Evaluation Application, the university plans to open one new graduate program every two years. AUB Mediterraneo faculty members will also serve as advisors or member of thesis committees and supervise graduate students at AUB Beirut and other reputable institutions within Cyprus and beyond. There will be collaborations between PPE and other departments within FAS and other faculties/schools (OSB and MSFEA) in terms of interdisciplinary research and ILA.

EEC comment Re 1.3 Development processes: “The departments’ development plans are sufficient for the first two years. However, there is little clarity about exact numbers, profiles, or balance between permanent, invited, and adjunct staff beyond that initial phase.

Because the department effectively intends to bring together three diverse and vibrant disciplines, and not only aggregate them, it will be critical to get some more clarity and commitment about the specifics of the development plan from year 3 onwards. The next phase of the department's development plan will significantly depend on how the department will integrate the distinct disciplinary components of its PPE programme into a unified conception of PPE. Presently the

planning is concerned with expected student numbers (20/year in this programme) which is prudent in its economic rationale but is underdetermined concerning specific staffing implications. This makes it difficult to assess the viability of the department development plan in the medium term - The EEC's numerical score simply reflects that uncertainty."

Institution's Response:

The institution indicated in the application the number of teaching staff that will be hired during the first 10 years, as follows:

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Students	200	396	600	873	1041	1259	1477	1692	1873	2091
Teaching Staff	14	27	40	59	70	84	99	113	125	140

These numbers are based on the student projection, and might change. These numbers though are in line with top quality institutions of higher education with a student-faculty ratio set at 15. Around 50% of the teaching staff will be of professorial rank, i.e. professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. The other 50% will be lecturers and instructors, both full-time and part-time, such that no more than 30% of the total teaching staff are part-timers.

Building the connections between Cyprus, Lebanon, and the region is one of the department's first aims once commencement of operation starts. We will use the first two years to shape our development plan for year 3 and beyond. We agree about gaps but many of them can only be filled once we are on the ground. The risk/uncertainty are a fixture of similar projects and has to be acknowledged. There are many moving parts but we are determined to mitigate any risk in timely manner.

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-areas

2.1 System and quality assurance strategy

2.2 Quality assurance for the programmes of study

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: “**Overall, the quality assurance mechanisms seem adequate and well-designed.**”

EEC **noted also that** “**The council of the University is determined to provide quality services to the students. Having this in mind, they are determined to make all the required investments in order to achieve their tasks. The EEC believes that the close ties with the American educational system and the experience of the mother university in Lebanon will help the AUB-M progress well over the years.**”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

So far the department does not have any accreditations but should aim, in its forward looking strategy, to achieve accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and by the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS).

As soon as is feasible the department should seek collaborations with other leading departments in Europe and non-european Universities.

Institution’s Response: Most accreditation bodies grant program accreditations once the programs are up and running, and some of them require that the program graduates at least one cohort of students. Hence, we are determined to seek more accreditations such as AACSB and EQUIS, among others. Seeking collaborations with other departments in Europe and non-European Universities is also a must. AUB Mediterraneo, even before commencing operation, is being engaged in such collaboration, for instance with Trinity College Dublin.

3. Administration

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section.

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1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: “***The group of people involved in the processes and functions of the department seems well-coordinated and efficient in dealing with all aspects both administrative and academic of the departments operation.***”

EEC noted also that “***The academic staff and the administration trust and respect each other and appear able and well-intentioned to work efficiently towards solving any problems that may arise and also work for the further advancement of the department. They were open to listening to new ideas and recommendations from the EEC.***”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: In the current state, the EEC did not find any significant problem areas within the administration. In the future, as the university starts operating and growing, the university must try to maintain the current enthusiasm of the administrative staff.

Institution’s response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback and we surely will maintain the culture at AUB Mediterraneo that will inspire the administrative staff to be motivated, enthusiastic and ensure their career progression.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its two sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“It is very difficult to assess admissions, teaching, and assessment since at this early stage the EEC was only able to verify intentions and statements, but how well they are adhered to will remain to be established when the department, faculty, and university start operating. Nevertheless, the EEC was satisfied that the intentions of the institution certainly go in the right direction. A slight concern is that some of the students from the AUB who the EEC had opportunity to talk to via Zoom did not feel that they had much ability to influence teaching, learning and assessment or that their criticisms were taken seriously enough to effect change. The EEC wants to point out that the fact that this criticism emerged with regard to AUB by no means implies that the corresponding problem will be reinstated at AUB-M. However, it is critical to ensure that it does not and that student feedback is protected by strict confidentiality and that it is taken seriously.”***

As academics have strong power when it comes to setting and changing assessment, It will also be important to ensure that students are already aware well in advance of the final assessment methods for a given course, ideally, before the opening of course selection.”

EEC noted also that ***“Overall, the design of the teaching and learning experience is sensible but conventional. There are also intentions to keep assessment diverse.”***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. The EEC could assess at this early stage only the intentions, not yet their implementation in practice, and for lack of AUB-M students had to rely for certain aspects on the experience of students in the mother institution AUB.
2. It is crucial to ensure that students’ feedback is taken seriously.
3. It is crucial to ensure transparency and information about assessment methods which should ideally be finalised and confirmed long before course selection is open

Institution’s Response:

1. It is true what the EEC stated that it is not possible to assess before the program starts and instruction commences; however, the intentions are “appropriate if not outstanding”. AUBM will be a small university (at least initially) and we think we bring closer together students and teachers. The PPE department was also designed so that students - professors interaction forms the core of the department. It is part of our core belief system that the quality of this interaction will set us apart. To achieve this, we have not just designed year-long tutorial courses but we intend to make ourselves available to the needs, hopes, and anxieties of students entering the adult world in unsettling times. They will need our full support also because they will be the first cohort and their job / further studies prospects will depend to an important extent on how much we know them and are able to back them up in their applications.
2. Both AUB and AUB Mediterraneo take students’ feedback as input seriously to assist them in improving and assuring the quality of education. The university is keen on and have processes in place to address student feedback, but students may not be aware of the processes or may not see the changes/improvements immediately. Also, to ensure freedom of expression, students always have the chance to follow a grievance procedure as detailed in [*Appendix 11 - 07.14.690.003_appx11- Student Grievance Policy and Procedures*]. At AUB Mediterraneo we will raise enough awareness to inform students about the various ways they can adopt to eventually receive fair treatment.
3. Students receive in the first period of the semester a syllabus of the course that details the course description, learning outcomes, assessment tools and the weight that each tool contributes to the students’ final grade. Also all courses syllabi will be posted on the Student Information System for all students to see at any time.

5. Teaching Staff

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of two sub-areas and “**Partially Compliant**” in the third sub-area.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The quality of identified teaching staff is internationally competitive with strong pedagogical credentials and research profiles. The established internal processes of evaluating academic staff (some of whom will be transferred to Paphos) offers additional reassurance on quality. The balance between permanent and contract (or part time) staff is initially very good and the mix of seniority of those delivering teaching is appropriate. Given the strong research profile of staff, the availability or research-led teaching is to be welcomed.”***

EEC noted also

- ***“Evidence of the strong pedagogical commitment of members of staff to ensure a more personalized educational experience***
- ***Strong research profile of staff allowing for the delivery of research-led teaching (although this may be constrained by the small number of staff based in the AUB-M in the first years of operation.***
- ***Small student-staff ratio which is compatible with the pedagogical mission of the university. Commitment of the institution to sustain this ratio as student numbers expand over the next few years***
- ***Established record of the parent institution in delivering student-focused teaching based on the US Liberal Arts College tradition”***

EEC commented that: “The parent institution has an established procedure of evaluating teaching, which includes student-led evaluation. There is some evidence to suggest that the student-led evaluation process in the parent institution needs to be made more robust and more powerful. For the AUB-M, the small number of students envisaged in the first few years will necessitate careful consideration of how student-led evaluation remains strictly confidential and what are the most appropriate channels for following up students’ concerns.”

Institution’s Response: Student learning and student success are core at AUB Mediterraneo. The university acknowledges that in the first few years, the deans and department chairs will conduct focus groups to solicit student feedback on their studies, learning, teaching by faculty, advising, grading, etc. These will be conducted by a trained administrator who is not involved in teaching.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. The list of staff who will be transferred to the AUB-M needs to be finalised as soon as possible and the appropriate employment contracts should be signed.

2. It is not entirely clear to the members of EEC whether all units listed in the programme of study can be serviced effectively by the number of staff who have ‘committed’ to join the AUB-M.
3. Special care should be taken in the advertisement of the new programme to ensure that potential students are not misled about the availability of seminar units listed in the syllabus.
4. It should be expected that the first years of operating the new university will generate a higher number of student complaints, as the new structures bed in. The leadership of the university should embrace this challenge by designing student evaluation processes that are temporarily even stronger than the routine processes without compromising anonymity while allowing the department to ‘learn’ quickly from its mistakes

Institution’s Response:

1. The Rector has been officially appointed and is located in Pafos. This is in addition to local staff and multiple local consultancy companies to assist the institution in legal matters, accounting, payroll, procurement, communications, and talent acquisition. The Deans and teaching staff have been identified and they will be seconded from AUB Lebanon to start up the campus and increase the faculty body by conducting local and international recruitment. The plan is to contract them once the institution receives the license; they are expected to move to Pafos in summer 2023.

The institution pledges to send CYQAA at the beginning of every month moving forward, a list of the job vacancies (teaching and admin) that it is advertising for, in addition to the list of new hires (teaching and admin). The institution will share this information in the form of commitment letters or contracts.

2. In line with top quality institutions of higher education, the student-faculty ratio is set at 15. Around 50% of the teaching staff will be of professorial rank, i.e. professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. The other 50% will be lecturers and instructors, both full-time and part-time, such that no more than 30% of the total teaching staff are part-timers. The table below shows teaching staff with respect to students for the first 10 years of operations:

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Students	200	396	600	873	1041	1259	1477	1692	1873	2091
Teaching Staff	14	27	40	59	70	84	99	113	125	140

As for the recruitment of non-academic personnel, it will be also done in accordance with the 10 year institutional staffing plan, which extends over three phases that correspond to the three phases of campus construction. Staff will be increasingly recruited to accommodate for the growing number of students at the university. Non-academic staff will provide support to the operations of AUB Mediterraneo and will assume the following functions:

Unit	Positions
Secretarial Support (Executive Leadership)	Administrative Assistant
Academic Support/Student Affairs	Accessible Education Officer; Career Services and Mobility Officer; Student Counselor
Academic Support/Student Enrollment Services	Registrar; Student Services/Records Assistant; Financial Aid Officer; Admissions Officer; Admission Advisor; Data Management Specialist
Academic Support/Library	Librarian; Library Assistant
Academic Support/Office of Research	Grants Officer
HR and Benefits	HR/Benefits Officer; HR/Benefits Assistant
Information Technology	IT Manager; Field Support Engineer; Systems Engineer; Computer Lab Supervisor
iPark	iPark Manager
Finance	Finance Manager; General Accountant; Procurement Agent
Communications & Events	Communications and Events Officer
Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement	Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement Officer
Advancement	Stewardship Coordinator; Advancement/ Development Gifts Coordinator
Facilities	Facilities Engineer
Institutional Compliance & Ethics	Institutional Compliance Officer

It is to be noted that any shortage in academic or non-academic staff will be mitigated by tapping into the many resources that already exist in Cyprus via hiring part-timers, and also the resources that exist at AUB.

3. The recruitment team will provide transparent, accurate and up-to date information about new programs on the website, hold open houses, and information sessions for potential students to learn more about the program and ask questions.
4. Student learning and student success are core at AUB Mediterraneo. The university acknowledges that in the first few years, the deans and department chairs will conduct focus groups to solicit student feedback on their studies, learning, teaching by faculty, advising, grading, etc. These will be conducted by a trained administrator who is not involved in teaching.

6. Research

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating of this section and the quality indicators of its four sub-areas.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant.

1) Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: “***AUM-B could benefit from the strong research profile of AUB and will second a number of AUB academics to the new university. Stated policies are generally well organised and well thought through.***”

EEC noted also that

- “***Potentially backed by the strong research profile of mother institution AUB***
- ***Reduced number but high quality academic staff***”

EEC commented that: “The interdisciplinary nature of the department and its small size create challenges for constituting a productive research environment with relevant colleagues. It will be important to engage in strong research seminar and events programme, collaborate intensively with visiting professors and academics from other Cyprus universities and develop a stimulating research culture both within and across the three disciplines of the PPE department.

Institution’s response: The University highly encourages visiting professors at all levels, through the existing EU programs, MoU’s, or any other means. The department will be welcoming both research as well as teaching visiting faculty, to provide workshops, summer and winter schools, research seminars, and teaching duties. Visiting faculty members will be hired on a regular basis. AUBM is currently in advanced discussions with Trinity College to establish student and faculty exchange programs. More such collaboration will be established with other esteemed institutions in Cyprus and Europe.

EEC commented that: “The lack of PhD and even of graduate students might pose an additional challenge, as does the initial online only library.”

Institution’s response: Proposing Ph.D. programs will surely come few years down the road. As noted in the Institution Evaluation Application, the university plans to open one new graduate program every two years. In the meantime, AUB Mediterraneo faculty members will serve as advisors or member of thesis committees and supervise graduate students at AUB Beirut and other reputable institutions within Cyprus and beyond.

In addition to the online library, the current facility of AUBM includes a small physical library but the facility has a large multipurpose room that can easily be used as a library extension and quiet studying space. In the new facility that AUBM intends to move to in academic year 2024-25, there exists a dedicated physical library for students. Kindly find attached the file called “***Library.pdf***” that presents the schematic design. In addition to providing the faculty and students with the needed online resources and e-books to facilitate teaching and research, the library also facilitates the procurement of local and foreign books, teaching materials, and paraphernalia. The library

coordinates with every department to identify the books needed for teaching and the expected number of books. The library then procures for them whether the books were online or hard copy, and provides them to the students at cost. The library will also join the Cyprus Libraries Consortium to tap into its resources and also to contribute to it with the valuable resources at AUB Mediterraneo and support its research agenda.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:

1. Difficulties in creating a strong research culture with the limited number of scholars from each disciplines will require a strong research engagement culture, seminar series, and bringing in partner scholars from other
2. Cyprus universities or visiting professors in order to engender an intellectually thriving and stimulating environment for academic staff and students alike
3. Limits of an online-only library will need to be resolved in the first few years of operations
4. As yet limited research office size and support in initial years will need to grow to a critical mass soon if academic colleagues are to be able to successfully seek external funding
5. Lack of graduate and doctoral programmes may be an issue for the research culture of the department in the medium and long terms.

Institution's Response:

1. Current department members have experience in multi-disciplinary research and are aware of the many risks (and benefits!). We aim that this department will form a safe place for young budding scholars and researchers who need a few years to establish their research. The senior faculty are well aware of the challenges but given their vast experience they will insure (through travel grants, exchange programs, and research grants) that they have the right environment to carve a place in the academic and policy worlds.
2. The institution highly encourages the use of visiting professors at all levels, through the existing EU programs, MoU's, or any other means. The department will be welcoming both research as well as teaching visiting faculty, to provide workshops, summer and winter schools, research seminars, and teaching duties. Visiting faculty members will be hired on a regular basis. AUBM is currently in advanced discussions with Trinity College to establish student and faculty exchange programs. More such collaboration will be established with other esteemed institutions in Cyprus and Europe.
3. In the current facility of AUBM, the physical library is small but the facility has a large multipurpose room that can easily be used as a quiet studying space. In the new facility that AUBM intends to move to in academic year 2024-25, there exists a dedicated physical library for students. Kindly find attached the file called "**Library.pdf**" that presents the schematic design.
4. At the start-up phase, we believe that one experienced research officer is sufficient. Staffing for the research office will be scaled up as the size of the faculties grow.
5. Proposing Ph.D. programs will surely come few years down the road. The university plans to open one new graduate program every two years. In the meantime, AUB Mediterraneo faculty members will serve as advisors or member of thesis committee and supervise graduate students at AUB Beirut and other reputable institutions. In addition, we are planning to start an MA program in PPE as soon as we get a sense of students' numbers and quality and once the first cohort is approaching the graduation date. The final year dissertation could form a formal first draft of an MA thesis.

7. Resources

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is highly appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) and is very pleased with the “**Compliant**” rating [all scores of 5] of this section.

We first tackle the section’s Findings, Strengths, and Areas of Improvement and Recommendations, and then address the comments in the sub-areas sections even when all the scores are compliant

The university underlines the findings of the EEC: ***“The establishment of the entire new University is backed by a strong investment (50 million US dollars) by the parent institution (AUB) over the next few years. AUB is an established academic institution with a reputable presence for over 150 years. The parent institution is supported by a substantial endowment and a steady supply of financial support from its large alumni base and other donors. The accounts of the parent institution are monitored by a Board of Trustees in line with best international practice.*”**

The establishment of AUB-M in Paphos has been backed by independent market research (not accessible to the EEC) and financial forecasting which accounts for a short-term deficit, to be recovered in the medium term as the university increases its student intake. Sufficient funds are allocated to key services, the development of its staff (also supporting their research activities) and, importantly, the financial support for eligible students who cannot afford the high fees charged. There are adequate provisions for the periodic review of the strategic plans at all levels of operations (University, Faculty, Department).

The university is currently operating from a temporary (but very well equipped) facility in Paphos which can comfortably accommodate the student intake for the time until the development of the new university is completed. The investment allocated to the construction of the MUB-M campus is substantial and expected to provide first class facilities for students and staff as well as providing substantial benefits for the local economy and society.”

EEC noted also that

- ***“Strong financial support for establishing the new university.***
- ***Reputable financial procedures in line with international best practice***
- ***Non profit institution with a generous commitment to staff and student welfare***
- ***Investment delivers strong returns for the local community”***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: The high level of fees may pose a financial risk in terms of student recruitment. This issue may need to be revisited in light of student recruitment performance over the medium term.

Institution’s Response: The tuition is perceived to be high, but this is in line with the high quality education AUB Mediterraneo aims to provide. However, AUB Mediterraneo has a robust financial aid program to assist qualified undergraduate and graduate students in good academic standing who may not be able to afford the cost of tuition. We believe that financial considerations should not prevent students who meet our academic criteria from receiving high-quality education. Financial aid ranges from 0 to 80% allowing needy students to enroll at AUB Mediterraneo. In addition, 20% discount will be given to all students in the first cohort, and 5 full scholarships will be offered.



The institution will monitor closely the effect of the tuition on student recruitment and revisit the tuition if necessary.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC was impressed by the amount of preparation that went into the AUB-M project, careful thinking about creating a truly interdisciplinary department, and staff involvement and enthusiasm.

The project, backed by strong feeding departments of economics, philosophy, and political studies at the mother institution has the potential to result in an attractive and innovative PPE department of international reputation.

Nevertheless, the EEC has identified a number of potential risks and challenges that should be considered:

1. Beyond the first two years the academic and staff plan is underspecified. This affects the long-term planning of the department's outlook, teaching provision, and research profile, in quantitative and qualitative terms.
2. Tuition fees are disproportionately higher than those of local competitors in Cyprus and other EU countries, notably for EU students. This pricing strategy involves financial risks for the department as well as putting off potentially interested EU students. This could affect recruitment diversity and the intellectual environment of the department.
3. The limited number of academics in the department as well as the lack of graduate and doctoral programmes may be an issue for the research culture of the department in the medium and long terms.

Institution's Response:

1. The institution indicated in the application the number of teaching staff that will be hired during the first 10 years, as follows:

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Students	200	396	600	873	1041	1259	1477	1692	1873	2091
Teaching Staff	14	27	40	59	70	84	99	113	125	140

These numbers are based on the student projection, and might change. These numbers though are in line with top quality institutions of higher education with a student-faculty ratio set at 15. Around 50% of the teaching staff will be of professorial rank, i.e. professor, associate professor, and assistant professor. The other 50% will be lecturers and instructors, both full-time and part-time, such that no more than 30% of the total teaching staff are part-timers.

To ensure that the number of hires are met and with high quality, the leadership team (President, Rector, Founding Deans, Chairpersons, and seconded faculty members) will strategize (short, medium and long-term) the disciplines and areas for recruitment to attract and recruit high-quality local and international academic staff who will teach and conduct research at AUB Mediterraneo. This is a top priority as the university aims to provide adequate support and resources to students in line with the institutional 2023-2032 staffing plan.

2. The institution will monitor closely the effect of the tuition on student recruitment and revisit the tuition if necessary. It is worth noting though that AUB Mediterraneo has a robust financial aid program to assist qualified undergraduate and graduate students in good academic standing who may not be able to afford the cost of tuition. We believe that financial considerations should not prevent students who meet our academic criteria from receiving high-quality education. Financial aid ranges from 0 to 80% allowing needy students to enroll at AUB Mediterraneo. In addition, 20% discount will be given to all students in the first cohort, and 5 full scholarships will be offered.

3. Indeed, the university shared plans for growth in terms of launch of new programs per year, recruitment plans for more academic staff to teach new courses and sections, as well as additional support services such as counselling, advising, and mentoring, which will increase the recruitment for staff. Proposing Ph.D. programs will surely come few years down the road. The university plans to open one new graduate program every two years. In the meantime, AUB Mediterraneo faculty members will serve as advisors or member of thesis committee and supervise graduate students at AUB Beirut and other reputable institutions. In addition, we are planning to start an MA program in PPE as soon as we get a sense of students' numbers and quality and once the first cohort is approaching the graduation date. The final year dissertation could form a formal first draft of an MA thesis.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature	
Wassim El Hajj	Rector		
Ramzi Mabsout	Department Head		
Bashshar Haydar	Program Coordinator		
Boushra Rahal	Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement		



Rania Hussein

Strategy and Risk

Date: February 9, 2023

