

Higher Education Institution's Response

(Departmental)

Date: March 2, 2023

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo
- **Town:** Paphos
- **School/Faculty:** Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB)
- **Department:** Department of Business Administration and Analytics
- **Programme(s) of study under evaluation**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

Programme 1

In Greek:

Οργάνωση και Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο(BBA))

In English:

Business Administration: Management (4 academic years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor(BBA))

Programme 2

In Greek:

Επιχειρηματική Αναλυτική (1.5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό (MS))

In English:

Business Analytics (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master (MS))

- **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: “***This appears to be an excellent academic unit that is very well resourced in both the research and teaching domain.***”

EEC commented that “Our only concern is that there is no possibility of tenure for the teaching focused academics. We understand that this is how AUB operates in Lebanon. Please clarify why Ph.d. teaching intensive staff can't get tenure. Clarify the conditions for contract renewal of such staff. We note that this is common practice in the AUB. We Clarify how non-tenured staff with non-Phd can fit into the AACSB classifications. Also clarify if the current Department is accredited and by whom (site visit by the AACSB will determine accreditation?).”

Institution's Response:

The ranks of professorial faculty members at AUB Mediterraneo (and at AUB) are assistant, associate, and full professors all of which are evaluated on their research, teaching, and services. All professors in these ranks must do quality research, otherwise they will not be granted promotion/tenure. The process of evaluating candidates for tenure and/or promotion is essentially an inquiry, to evaluate whether they are accomplished scholars and significant contributors to their fields, in comparison with peers at similar points in their careers, while taking into account the candidate's discipline and working conditions in terms of available resources for research, teaching load, opportunities for service and mentoring support. In considering a faculty member for tenure and promotion, a comprehensive assessment of contributions, achievements and impact should be conducted based on the domains of excellence for research, teaching and service. The level of excellence should be acknowledged by internal peers and internationally established external experts who can objectively and comprehensively evaluate the candidate's scholarly contributions. More details are included in section 10. *Recruitment and career advancement planning for academic staff* of the department evaluation document. Also attached is the AUB Policy and Procedures for Tenure and Promotion < *Policy and Procedures for Tenure-Promotion.pdf*>, which we are adopting at AUB Mediterraneo.

Teaching faculty members at AUB are given the titles Lecturer or Instructor. Lecturer title is given to Ph.D. holders, while Instructor title is given to Masters holders. These teaching positions are on contract basis for a period of three years, renewable upon the approval of the department. This is in line with most US institutions.

According to AACSB guidelines, there are 4 categories of qualifications (SA; PA; SP; IP). SA is for tenure track faculty at OSB, while full-timers (lecturers/instructors) will fit in the PA; SP and IP categories depending on their qualifications and professional engagement. SA ratios should be at

least of 45% for undergraduate and 55% for graduate, while the sum of SA, PA, SP and IP should be above 95%. Our recruitment and teaching allocation will be in line with those standards.

The American University of Beirut – Mediterraneo is already approved by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) < <https://www.msche.org/institution/0647/>>. The Business school was also approved by AACSB following a substantive change request that the university submitted. Kindly find attached <AACSB Accreditation.pdf>.

EEC noted the strength ***“Student support is very strong—student focused. In-term surveys to improve the student experience. This is best practice, but not adopted by most universities. Hiring practices are on par with international standards, but these are highly bureaucratized. The teaching load for research focused staff is comparable and even better than top European universities (3 modules per year). Research support is also well above the bar. One should note that providing research assistants, who are grad students, to staff is an excellent means of improving research capabilities. These students are rewarded by fee reductions and monetary stipends (could be elaborated upon). Support to teaching focused staff is excellent, well above what’s provided in leading European (and UK) universities. Staff that we spoke to were quite enthusiastic about the available support. Hiring plans for the future is market sensitive and well-articulated. Also, the holistic approach to hiring and promotion is one which encourages staff to be involved and aspire to excellence with regards to research, teaching, and engagement.”***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: Hiring practices for staff is highly layered and time consuming. Could be streamlined in line with leading European universities. But the democratic nature of the process is appreciated. Admin staff is almost entirely imported from the AUB. These are very well qualified individuals. But there is and will be a gap in local knowledge here and in connectivity with local communities. There is a plan to remedy this in hand. But this could be better articulated with a better time-line provided. Students complained that not all necessary information that they required was easily identifiable (these are AUB students, past and present). It is available. But more effort could be made to make sure that students are aware of the required info and that it is easily accessible. Better articulation of the budgetary framework and how the Department is financed, and its contribution margin would be helpful.

Institution’s Response:

We acknowledge that the hiring practices are highly layered, however this allows us to have multiple layers of checks and balances to ensure fair treatment of all candidates.

To ensure alignment with AUB practices and guidelines, AUB Beirut Administrative staff will support during the first period while recruiting and transitioning towards local teams. Our first set of local hires include head administrator (already hired), three admission advisors (in the final stage of hiring), and administrative officers (in the initial stage of hiring).

Students are well informed by various means as follows:

1. Students attend a new student orientation once they join the university to learn about the curriculum, services provided by the university and how to access them, their rights and responsibilities, and all processes.
2. Each student is assigned an academic advisor. The name of the advisor and contact details is available to students on their records system. Advisors are always available to assist students and provide them with all needed information (academic and administrative) during their office hours or by appointment.

3. Students who need assistance and/or information (academic and administrative), can contact the department.
4. All needed information needed by students will be available on the department's and the University's website and in the prospectus.

A detailed departmental budget can be found in the annexes: *07.14.690.005_Annx6-OSB Department Budget*.

2) Sub-areas sections comments

EEC comment Re 1.1 Mission and strategic planning (including SWOT analysis): "The mission statement is clear and transparent. But it is less clear how this will be disseminated to the Cyprus community. Strategy is well-defined and the process is well articulated. The evidence suggests that the Department abides by international standards as it is largely a transplant from the AUB which is AACSB accredited and also accredited through other international agencies including from the USA. AACSB has also accredited the new programmes to be offered in the AUBM based on what is offered in at the AUB, with a site visit to Cyprus planned shortly to determine the affirmation of AUBM accreditation. The structure in Cyprus differs from the European model, which is argued by the AUBM to be a comparative advantage in Cyprus (the American liberal arts education framework). Further clarification on how the department is situated and will be operationalized in the European context and in the context of the Bologna process would be useful as it will help guide AUBM in situating it as high quality European university. Other points are well defined and elaborated upon.

Institution's Response:

To disseminate its mission to the Cyprus community, the American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo will use a multi-channel approach, including social media accounts, the website, public relations, organizing events such as open houses, seminars, and conferences, and forming partnerships with local organizations to collaborate on projects, research, and community service initiatives. Through these channels, the university intends to share updates, engage with the community, raise awareness about its activities and achievements, showcase its programs and services, attract potential students, and build relationships with the local community.

As for inclusion in the European context given that we have an American Model, AUB Beirut has previously been granted many Erasmus and EU grants and is used to collaborate with European institutions. AUB Mediterraneo will follow those footsteps and recognize studies abroad and encourage student and faculty mobility. Moreover, AUB Mediterraneo aims to be an active player in the European higher education ecosystem and participate in dialogues with Cypriote and European institutions. AUB has over 85 agreements with universities for student exchange for student exchange (incoming and outgoing mobility). Many of those universities are European and span across the continent such as UNIBO; Trinity College; University of Copenhagen; University of Oslo; Dublin city University; Politecnico di Torino; University of St.Gallen; UCL; Universite de Paris; and many more.

Our programs are already aligned with the Bologna process whereby:

- We adopt the three-cycle degree structure
- Have a quality assurance system that conforms to European standards
- Have a credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS)

- Have mobility programs.

EEC comment Re 1.2 Connecting with society “The AUBM needs to better elaborate on how it will relate to its Cyprus stakeholders. This gap should be easily addressed. Thus far the discussion is much too vague. For example, there is a mention of an advisory board, but no details are provided. There is nothing specific on how the AUBM will positively impact on Cyprus society. More details on how the AUBM will communicate to and interact with the larger Cypriot community and the region within which it is embedded is also required.”

Institution’s Response:

The AUB Mediterraneo Advisory Board will be composed of the Dean and senior faculty members of business (preferably full professors), and will invite participation of visible business leaders and corporate employers from Pafos, Cyprus, and the region. In the future, successful alumnus would be recruited as well. Candidates for membership in this Board should have the following attributes: representing major businesses and industries in the country and the region, culture fit, expertise, and independent thought.

The role of this board is to advise the Dean as follows:

1. Support OSB efforts to achieve its vision, realize its mission and goals
2. Advise on improving the quality of students education, learning and development within the global and ethical decision-making context necessary for local, national and regional enterprises
3. Periodically evaluate the OSB-AUBM strategic plans and their implementation
4. Advise on curriculum innovation/development for the ongoing and proposed educational programs, certificates, diplomas and degrees
5. Engage in creating endowment funds and educational scholarships
6. Assist in the fostering experiential learning environment for students
7. Assist in placing students in internship programs, job shadowing, and graduating students career placement and planning
8. Share the community feedback to the OSB and advocate the OSB to the community
9. Propose external activities for faculty research enhancement and students experiences enrichment

The formation of the Mediterranean Advisory Board will take place within the first one to two years of operations. As soon as the university intends to invite undergraduate students’ applications, AUBM will position itself in the immediate and neighbouring communities by contacting major industrial and business sectors in the economy including chambers of commerce, syndicates of various economic activities followed by visits (in-person face-to-face and/or virtually) to schools in the city, nation and neighbouring countries to introduce its programs. OSB-AUBM will present to the IT and business analytics community and employers the value and prospects of its Masters in Business Analytics, which is expected to make a strong and measurable impact on business activities in the city and the country. Toward this end, OSB-AUBM will resort to hold town meetings, open house events, social media presentation, a show of students’ abilities and production, etc.

EEC comment Re 1.3 Development processes: “The development processes are very well articulated. But more clarity on efforts to recruit some Cypriot teaching staff will be helpful. More information is required on how the budget of the Department is determined. Thus far, this is not at all clear. More info on the sources of funding would also be useful as well as the anticipated contribution margin of the Department, which at this point, is the same as the school.”

Institution's Response:

The development processes for academics are articulated in section *ACADEMIC PROFILE AND ORIENTATION OF THE DEPARTMENT*, subsection 10. For non-academic staff, training and development activities are already part of the activities the university conducts, such as orientation for staff and career development activities. The various training activities are captured in the Institution Evaluation Application in sections A-12, E-8, G-3, and H-7, which probably the EEC did not have access to.

As for the budget, a detailed departmental budget can be found in the annexes: *07.14.690.005_Annx6-OSB Department Budget*. In addition to the department budget, attached is the institution budget <*Institution's Budget based on the mission and strategic planning.pdf*> which clearly highlights the 10 year budget for AUB Mediterraneo. It includes the expected revenues and all expenses derived from construction, academic staffing, non-academic staffing, marketing, student recruitment, IT infrastructure, utilities, etc. Also attached is <*Two-year growth budget and funding processes.pdf*> which presents a similar budget but for only two years. Hence, at this stage the school has only one department and will have almost a very similar budget.

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: ***“During the site visit we were able to get a more nuanced understanding of the quality assurance process. This process is adopted from the AUB and that process has been quality assured and the locale university (AUBM) will be subject to continuous QA checks, from the AACSB for example, and internally. So, we are looking at high standards, the details of which are provided in the application. Some areas are difficult to judge (N/A) as this is a new university being established in Cyprus. For example there is, as of yet, no Phd programme. The library will soon be situated in a new campus as will many of the facilities. The new campus, once constructed will have excellent facilities. There appears to be significant room for growth of faculty. Clarification on what the anticipated size of the AUBM over the next 5 years would be helpful to better evaluate the adequacy of facilities. It is interesting to note that the university is leaning to retain the old campus (which is state of the art) for executive education and conferences. More info on this would be helpful and is all positive for the future.”***

EEC also noted that ***“Aspects of blended learning have been introduced and excellent facilities are being provided. The current library has access to the online facilities of the AUB. And, this facility will be expanding in the new campus. Support for students is in part nuanced for the Department. Quite important. In many universities the entire process and infrastructure are overly centralized. Many of the QA processes are in line with what one finds in top universities, and these have been adopted from a heavily accredited university (AUB). The AACSB also forces universities to have a strong QA process, which is reflected in the submission.***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: More details should be provided on admission standards and criteria, especially nuanced for Cypriot students. This is currently a very small operation and the student to staff ratio is very low. But more information is required on what to expect for the future when/if student numbers grow in terms of the student staff ratio and how this relates to what one finds in top Cypriot and European universities. In the strong UK university this ratio is no higher than 15 on average, but tends to be higher in business schools. The same can be said with regards to the student per staff ratio on staff advice. Great now. But clarify for the future given the expected growth. Also, elaborate on how, “names and positions of the teaching staff of each programme are published and easily accessible.” Given the small size of the Department this is not a significant issue now. Policy should be in place to identify staff on the website with their information and one can also sperate staff using different filters by discipline ie management, data analytics, economics, finance, etc.

Institution's Response:

Admissions criteria can be found in section *E. QUALITY ASSURANCE*, subsection 6. *Criteria and student admission process*. Since SAT is not a common exam in Cyprus or Europe, the admissions team of AUB Mediterraneo is exploring alternatives to SAT that are common in Cyprus and Europe such as the British-based AS exam. In principle, either the SAT scores would be required or the International AS-level qualifications. The acceptance decision will then be made on the AS-level grades and the high school grades. The team is also looking into ways to attract Cypriot students by relying mainly on the formal examinations in the Cypriot High School System and Apolytirion. Our student to faculty ratio is set on average to 15, which is in line with top institutions in the world. We aim to abide with this ratio to the extent possible. Staff to student ratio is around 20, which is also in line with top universities. The AUB Mediterraneo website, and similar to AUB website, will surely include a directory of all faculty and staff once the license is obtained. There will be one directly per department/unit and one directory for the institution as a whole.

EEC comments re 2.1 System and quality assurance strategy: More information could be provided on how its “policy for quality assurance that is made public.” Standards for tenure and promotion should be clarified (what is required for tenure and promotion—be specific). What is quality research? What does the AUB understand to be quality research? Thus, far, rather vague. We were told that book chapters and books don't count for promotion and tenure. This is not in line with many universities. Also one has to be careful about using journal rankings as a core criteria for excellence. This is consistent with the DORA accord (<https://sfdora.org/read/>).

Institution's Response:

Quality assurance is publicized mainly by having The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation. The AACSB logo will be posted on OSB-AUBM website and school site. Only 5% of business schools around the world are accredited by AACSB. OSB is one of 856 institutions in 56 countries that earned AACSB accreditation. “94% the institutions listed on the European Financial Times' Global MBA Rankings 2019 (including the top ten) are accredited by AACSB.” Schools of Business are AACSB accredited because they have adequate financial resources, current and relevant curriculum, good programs, good faculty, highly qualified students, internationalized curriculum and students, and technology friendly. Nevertheless, this quality will be further ensured once AUBM graduate its first few batches of students and these are received and tested by employers. This is yet to be validated in the next 10 years. Meanwhile, AACSB will carry the flag of our perception and communicate our reputation to parents and employers.

Our **tenure and promotion standards** are coherent with the university principles. AUBM is both a research and teaching institution. Moreover, it is community oriented. The university founder vision about the people of the region “that they may have life and have it abundantly” remains the main driver for our plans to engage with the surrounding community.

There are two tracks for faculty teaching at the university: Professorial Academic track designated to PhD and terminal degree holders covering the three categories Research-Teaching-Services, and Non-Professorial practitioners Research-Teaching-Services track designated to Masters Holders.

The promotion and tenure rules concerning professorial academicians are attached < *Policy and Procedures for Tenure-Promotion.pdf*>. A similar policy will be adopted by AUBM.

The referenced document elaborates in details on all evaluation stages of the promotion and tenure process for all three ranks: Promotion and tenure for Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, tenure only for Associate Professor, promotion and tenure for Associate to Full Professor, and tenure for Full Professor. Moreover, it presents the domain, the scope and the extent of the evaluation at

all levels and for all three categories. Intellectual contributions include peer reviewed journal publications, books, monographs, case studies (published in refereed outlets and/or adopted by other universities), participation in professionally relevant conference, editorial and academic reviews services, funding applications, evidence of self-development activities, and evidence of recognition, among others. Textbooks are assigned lower weight as they are considered paid academic activity unless the book is published in respected academic presses and/or widely adopted in other programs. Scholarship is assessed based on: quality, originality; significance; excellence as per external referees, independent scholarly identity, research focus and coherence, trajectory for growth post to promotion, leadership, regional and international recognition, and applicability of scholarly work. Quality is measured quantitatively and qualitatively as known norms in the field of research. Among the quantitative measures is journal ranking, citation, H-index of the candidate and the journal, and impact factor. These are useful metrics especially to promotion and committee members from outside the field. For specialized evaluators, the quality is assessed mostly on qualitative basis by evaluating the writing, rigor and depth of impactful intellectual contribution.

With regard to the promotion of non-professorial track, it concerns each faculty/school according to the ranks available in the respective faculty. Currently, there are four such ranks: instructor, senior instructor, lecturer, and senior lecturer. The distinction among these ranks depend on seniority (i.e., years of service in the rank), and impact of teaching performance, services to the school and to the discipline, in addition intellectual contributions to education and practice. OSB_AUBM will adopt the same current guidelines and expectations for promotion at AUB from instructor to senior instructor, from senior instructor to lecturer, and from lecturer to senior lecturer. Generally speaking, the senior lecturer is kept for PhD faculty who are less active in academic research or for Masters Holders with significant industrial experience who are visible in the business community (e.g., members in corporate boards, members in specialized syndicates, etc.)

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.

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 administration domain is quite strong based on the application and on the site visit. There is a gap on the Cypriot and Pafos context of the AUBM.***”

EEC noted also that “***The administrative process is top-tier. There is nothing specifically innovative, but the AUBM follows and abides by high standards.***”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: What requires clarification is the how the AUBM fits in the Cyprus context especially with regards to, “Internationalization of the Department and external collaborations.” These need to be placed in the context of what is optimal from the perspective of Cypriot university that also has the advantage of significant relationships vested in the AUBM.

Institution’s response:

We understand the importance of contextualizing the AUBM's activities within the local academic and social landscape. AUBM will be actively working on developing partnerships with key players in the Cyprus academic community. We believe that by leveraging these partnerships, we can establish meaningful collaborations that will benefit both the AUBM and the broader Cyprus academic community.

Additionally, AUBM is exploring opportunities to enhance the internationalization of the department by engaging in activities such as student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, and international conferences. These activities will not only enhance the internationalization of the department but also facilitate knowledge transfer and promote academic excellence.

EEC comments re 3. Administration: The administration domain is very strong. What should be elaborated upon for this new university is the process of internationalizing the Department (academics and professional staff) and external collaboration specific to the AUBM as opposed to the AUB. This can be easily done given the networks that the AUB has. More information and more of a narrative on how these relate to the Cyprus location of the university and Pafos.

Institution’s response:

AUB Mediterraneo is very proud of his heritage and link to AUB Beirut. However, it will have the full authority and freedom to pave its own way in terms of collaboration, internationalization and decision making. The recruitment of faculty will be open to all and the focus will be mainly on European and international faculty members through advertising in key conferences related to the field such as EGOS, DRUIDE, AOM, AIB and others. AUB Mediterraneo is an equal opportunity employer and we will not discriminate in our selection process. As for staff, recruitment will mainly be from Cyprus and as mentioned earlier, the recruitment process of local staff has already started.

4. Learning and Teaching

<u>Sub-areas</u>

4.1 Planning the programmes of study 4.2 Organisation of teaching
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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: ***“The site visit largely reinforced what was elaborated in the application. The gap here in the application is the lack of Cyprus and European context, which was also was not adequately addressed during the site visit***

EEC noted also that ***“The planning of programmes is designed with a very collegial approach in mind as well as being mindful of transparency. The process in place assures input from stakeholders. Recognition of prior learning, important to AUBM, is elaborated upon. But this needs to be better situated in terms of the EQF. The processes here are largely in line with top-tier universities.”***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: In terms of stakeholder inputs, there should be elaboration on the advisory board and other external stakeholders and how they will input into the process of programme design and implementation. Also, of significance is the gap in discussions on the EQF with regards to the Teaching and Learning space. Clarify the feedback mechanism from faculty to students. It is important that students know that their feedback is taken into consideration and how this is operationalized. The relationship between theory and practice in the Cyprus and European context should be elaborated upon. Very important for employability and future impact of AUBM in Cyprus and Pafos more specifically. Another point worthy of further elaboration is the basis for cancelling of a programme or module. When is a module no longer viable? This will have financial and budgetary implications.

Institution’s Response:

The first part of this comment is addressed in section 1. Department’s academic profile and orientation, subsection EEC comment Re 1.2 Connecting with society

Cancellation or major changes to programmes must follow an approval path as indicated in the Faculty and Senate bylaws. Eventually, the Academic Development Committee (ADC) of the Senate makes the final decision. Such decision is not just related to budgetary viability of keeping a programme, as AUBM might decide to keep programmes running even if they are not financially viable if they serve a bigger purpose such as supporting the community and society. Programmes are amended following consultation with key stakeholders and based on changes in the business environment and needs of businesses and society as a whole.

AUB Mediterraneo and OSB have a set of reviews to ensure that all programmes are relevant and constantly updated. This includes periodic unit reviews; policies and procedures periodic reviews; periodic program learning outcomes review; periodic program reviews; periodic review of GE and learning outcomes.

EEC comments re 4.1 Planning the programmes of study: There is nothing on the EQF. This is quite important to take into consideration given that the AUBM is located in Europe. One could elaborate further on how “Department ensures that its programmes of study integrate effectively

theory and practice.” This is especially with regards to pertinence to the Cypriot economy and society and its hub in Pafos.

Institution’s Response:

The department aligns perfectly with EQF in all its aspects. AUBM is committed to providing a well-rounded education that effectively integrates theory and practice. We have taken several steps to ensure that our programs of study prepare students for successful careers in the business world.

AUBM has a Career Management Service Unit dedicated to the career planning of BBA students. This Unit will staff qualified Cypriots who are experienced in career placement in the European market and in building relationships with future employers to provide students with internship opportunities during their studies and job placement upon graduation.

We have developed learning objectives that emphasize the integration of theory and practice. These learning objectives are woven into the curriculum, ensuring that students have ample opportunities to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations.

We have faculty members who have relevant experience in the business world. These faculty members bring real-world examples to the classroom and help students understand how theoretical concepts apply in practice. They are also actively involved in research and consulting projects with industry professionals.

We encourage collaboration with industry professionals through internships, guest speakers, and mentorship programs. These collaborations provide students with real-world experience and help them develop the skills they need to succeed in the business world.

We use assessments that measure the integration of theory and practice. For example, we have assignments that involve analyzing case studies, developing business plans, and participating in simulations.

Finally, we continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the integration of theory and practice. We collect feedback from students, faculty members, and industry professionals to ensure that our programs are meeting the needs of students and providing them with the skills they need to succeed.

EEC comments re 4.2 Organisation of teaching: More elaboration on how “teaching staff of the Department provides timely and effective feedback to their students,” would be helpful. Thus far, too vague.

Institution’s Response:

Teaching staff provides feedback to their students in a timely manner through different means:

1. AUB Mediterraneo has an open door policy encouraging students to meet with their professors.
2. AUB Mediterraneo faculty and teaching staff have predetermined office hours to ensure availability for students
3. Every student is assigned an advisor
4. All assignments should be graded and given back to students or allowing students to consult their copies to discuss improvements
5. Faculty and teaching staff are required to respond to their emails (from students) within 48 working hours to ensure timely response
6. Case studies and other assignments are discussed in class

7. For certain topics, there are lab hours in which students and faculty solve problems together
8. Students have support from staff as well through the coordinators of the programmes
9. A student grievance policy and procedure is put in place
10. There is a procedure to address allegations of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment

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 three 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: “***The documentation and site visit affirm that the Department is excellent in this domain.***”

EEC noted also “***Current staff have been imported from the AUB, but the Department’s hiring criteria and process should assure that high quality academics will dominate the department.***”

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: There is nothing to improve upon. But what should be underlined is what is being taken on board from the AUB needs to be maintained and operationalized when the Department is officially open for business and begins to grow.

Institution’s Response: We thank the EEC for their positive feedback.

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: ***“There is a very strong research staff evidenced by the CVs provided and on the onsite visit. Also, research is supported at a very high level. What is not clear is how research informs teaching, not only with respect to the research-focused staff, but also with respect to the teaching-focused staff who have a very high teaching load. Relatedly, how is research done by the AUBM staff communicated to the teaching-focused staff? No discussion on how research and research processes compare with other Cyprus and European universities. The committee’s knowledge base suggests that AUBM compares favorably. But AUBM must address this point.”***

EEC noted also that ***“The CVs evidence an excellent publishing record. Publishing, research in general, is an important component of the holistic tenure and promotion process. Also, research is heavily supported by the AUBM financially. This is common practice amongst to best research-intensive business schools/departments.***

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: Exclusion of book chapters and refereed books is a very narrow approach to research recognition. Many top business school include these, inclusive of AACSB accredited business schools. Something to think about. Also, what is not clear is how research informs teaching, not only with respect to the research-focused staff, but also with respect to the teaching-focused staff who have a very high teaching load. Relatedly, how is research done by the AUBM staff communicated to the teaching-focused staff? There is no substantive discussion on how research and research process compare with other Cyprus and European universities.

Institution’s Response:

	Peer-Reviewed Journals	Editorial-Reviewed Journals and Articles	Peer-Reviewed Academic/Professional Meeting Proceedings	Academic/Professional Meeting Presentations	Textbooks	Case Studies	Other IC Type Selected by the School
2022	32	0	9	0	3	0	1
2021	51	2	4	4	4	2	14
2020	70	5	13	4	10	5	1

2019	72	0	18	6	14	3	0
2018	55	0	17	4	5	2	0
	280	7	61	18	36	12	16
Percentage	65%	2%	14%	4%	8%	3%	4%

As exhibited in the table above, in addition to peer-reviewed journals and academic/professional meeting proceedings and presentations, AUB also recognize textbooks and case studies as valuable forms of scholarly output. AUBM will adopt the same procedure.

Specifically, AUB recognizes textbooks as intellectual contributions, we also acknowledge the importance of case studies and require them to be peer or editorially reviewed before being entered as an intellectual contribution. Over the past 5 years 8% of our publications were textbooks, 14% conference proceedings and 7% were case studies and instructional material.

Teaching staff are encouraged to write case studies and this counts towards their performance appraisal. Through the different communication means such as department meetings, faculty meeting, newsletters, social media, new publications are promoted and advertised. Moreover, knowledge dissemination workshops are organized to share the publications with other members of the department.

The case study approach is often used in the classroom, of which many are written by OSB faculty and teaching staff members. Also, undergraduate and graduate students are expected learn how to write literature reviews and research.

7. Resources

The American University of Beirut - Mediterraneo is appreciative for the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) rating of the “**Partially Compliant**” for 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 noted the findings of the EEC: ***“It does appear that the budget is fit for purpose. But more clarification is required. Section J. of the application does not provide adequate detail. There is some important detail on how the budget is determined, however. Clarity and more specificity required in all but one of the above points.”***

Institution’s Response:

As for the budget, a detailed departmental budget can be found in the annexes: *07.14.690.005_Annx6-OSB Department Budget*. In addition to the department budget, attached is the institution budget <*Institution’s Budget based on the mission and strategic planning.pdf*> which clearly highlights the 10 year budget for AUB Mediterraneo. It includes the expected revenues and all expenses derived from construction, academic staffing, non-academic staffing, marketing, student recruitment, IT infrastructure, utilities, etc. Also attached is <*Two-year growth budget and funding processes.pdf*> which presents a similar budget but for only two years. Hence, at this stage the school has only one department and will have almost a very similar budget.

Areas of Improvement and Recommendations: There is no detail on expected revenue and costs and how costs will be covered (largely through tuition revenue). More detail on how necessary staff and research support might be provided in the budget needs elaboration. More information on how profits will be used to support the community (Pafos, more specifically) is required. Clarify how the budget is now and will be expected to be fit-for-purpose in the future. Addressing these points will clarify the extent to which the budgetary process is fit-for-purpose. We scored this section as partially compliant because of the lack of adequate detail. We see now reason why our concerns can’t be easily addressed.

Institution’s Response:

With regard to profits, AUBM is declared as a not-for-profit university. Therefore, it does not distribute dividends and any profit made remains in the university to enhance its teaching, research, and facilities. AUBM is committed not to be a university for the elite wealthy people, and has decided from the out start that no qualified student will be left behind without due education. Toward this end, AUBM has a robust merit and financial aid system that reduce the tuition in the range of 20% to 80%. Therefore, one way in repaying the community is through generous financial aid that would be granted every year to needy students. Once a student is admitted on financial aid, she/he will continue to receive the same percentage waiver until graduation as long as the student is on good standing. In addition, outperforming students would be granted merit waivers as well. On another front, AUBM would be open to events and activities held on its premises with no charges advocating social, charitable, and commercial enhancement.

EEC comment re 7. Resources There is no detail on expected revenue and costs and how costs will be covered (largely through tuition revenue). More detail on how necessary staff and research support might be provided in the budget needs elaboration. More information on how profits will be used to support the community (Pafos, more specifically) is required. Clarify how the budget is now and will be expected to be fit-for-purpose in the future. Clarify point 7.8.

Institution's Response:

This comments is answered in the above two points.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC noted that AUBM Department of Business Administration and Analytics has the makings of an excellent Department to be embedded in a broader business school with the hoped-for increase in student numbers. The philosophy of the university which contains the Department being evaluated is unique in Cyprus given it has its roots in the American liberal arts tradition wherein students must take courses outside of business, inclusive of the humanities.

EEC commented that:

1. It is important that the University better contextualize the Department in Cyprus and, more broadly, in Europe. This relates to, for example, how it's programme fits into the European Qualifications Framework and the Bologna Process. When there is lack of compatibility this will impede mobility of its students across Cypriot and other European universities, which negatively impacts on students and also on the demand for programmes offered at the AUBM. Also, there is no mention of an advisory board (which plays a role in connecting the Department to its Cypriot stakeholders). More details on how the AUBM will communicate to and interact with the larger Cypriot community and the region within which it is embedded is also required.
2. The Department is very much an import from the American University of Beirut with its very high and well accredited standards, rules, regulations, and processes. But there are some gaps in the current application. One relates to the budgetary process and predicted cost, revenues, and surpluses. This is quite vague in the application. Better articulation of the budgetary framework and how the Department is financed, and its contribution margin would be helpful. Also, hiring practices for staff is highly layered and time consuming. This could be streamlined in line with leading European universities. But the democratic nature of the current process is appreciated. Admin staff is almost entirely imported from the AUB. These are very well qualified individuals. But there is and will be a gap in local knowledge here and connectivity with the local communities. There is a plan to remedy this in hand. But this could be better articulated with a better time-line provided. Students (from AUB) complained that all necessary information that they require was not easily identifiable. It is available. But more effort could be made to make sure that students are aware of info required.
3. More details should be provided on admission standards and criteria, especially nuanced for Cypriot students. This is currently a very small operation and the student to staff ratio is very low. But more information is required on what to expect for the future when/if student numbers grow in terms of the student staff ratio and how this relates to what one finds in top Cypriot and European universities. The same can be said with regards to the student per staff ratio with respect to staff advice. Also, elaborate on how, "names and positions of the teaching staff of each programme are published and easily accessible." Given the small size of the Department this is not a significant issue now. Policy should be in place to identify staff on the website with their information and one can also separate staff using different filters by discipline.
4. In terms of stakeholder inputs, there should be elaboration on the advisory board and other external stakeholders and how they will input into the process of programme design and implementation. Also, of significance is the gap in discussing the EQF with regards to the Teaching and Learning space. Also, clarify the feedback mechanism from faculty to students. The relationship between theory and practice in the Cyprus and European context should be elaborated upon. This is very important for employability and future impact of AUBM in Cyprus and Pafos more specifically.
5. Research is very strong. But the exclusion of book chapters and refereed books is a very narrow approach to research recognition. Many top business schools include these, inclusive

of AACSB accredited business schools. Also, what is not clear is how research informs teaching, not only with respect to the research-focused staff, but also with respect to the teaching-focused staff who have a very high teaching load. Relatedly, how is research done by the AUBM staff communicated to the teaching-focused staff? There is no discussion on how research and research processes compare with other Cyprus and European universities.

6. The new campus, once constructed will have excellent facilities. There appears to be significant room for growth of faculty. Clarification on what the anticipated size of the AUBM over the next 5 years would be helpful to better evaluate the adequacy of facilities.

Institution's Response:

The comments/recommendations in the Conclusions and final remarks section have been addressed within the various sections of this report. For convenience, a summary of the responses is presented below (detailed responses are present within the specific sections of this report):

- 1- The proposed programs fully align with EQF as presented in the application. As for the Advisory Board, The AUB Mediterraneo Advisory Board will be composed of the Dean and senior faculty members of business (preferably full professors), and will invite participation of visible business leaders and corporate employers from Pafos, Cyprus, and the region. In the future, successful alumnus would be recruited as well. Candidates for membership in this Board should have the following attributes: representing major businesses and industries in the country and the region, culture fit, expertise, and independent thought.

The role of this board is to advise the Dean as follows:

1. Support OSB efforts to achieve its vision, realize its mission and goals
2. Advise on improving the quality of students education, learning and development within the global and ethical decision-making context necessary for local, national and regional enterprises
3. Periodically evaluate the OSB-AUBM strategic plans and their implementation
4. Advise on curriculum innovation/development for the ongoing and proposed educational programs, certificates, diplomas and degrees
5. Engage in creating endowment funds and educational scholarships
6. Assist in the fostering experiential learning environment for students
7. Assist in placing students in internship programs, job shadowing, and graduating students career placement and planning
8. Share the community feedback to the OSB and advocate the OSB to the community
9. Propose external activities for faculty research enhancement and students experiences enrichment

The formation of the Mediterranean Advisory Board will take place within the first one to two years of operations. As soon as the university intends to invite undergraduate students' applications, AUBM will position itself in the immediate and neighbouring communities by contacting major industrial and business sectors in the economy including chambers of commerce, syndicates of various economic activities followed by visits (in-person face-to-face and/or virtually) to schools in the city, nation and neighbouring countries to introduce its programs. OSB-AUBM will present to the IT and business analytics community and employers the value and prospects of its Masters in Business Analytics, which is expected to make a strong and measurable impact on business activities in the city and the country. Toward this end, OSB-AUBM will resort to hold town meetings, open house events, social media presentation, a show of students' abilities and production, etc.

- 2- A detailed departmental budget can be found in the annexes: *07.14.690.005_Annx6-OSB Department Budget*. In addition to the department budget, attached is the institution budget *<Institution's Budget based on the mission and strategic planning.pdf>* which clearly highlights the 10 year budget for AUB Mediterraneo. It includes the expected revenues and all expenses derived from construction, academic staffing, non-academic staffing, marketing, student recruitment, IT infrastructure, utilities, etc. Also attached is *<Two-year growth budget and funding processes.pdf>* which presents a similar budget but for only two years. Hence, at this stage the school has only one department and will have almost a very similar budget.

With regard to profits, AUBM is declared as a not-for-profit university. Therefore, it does not distribute dividends and any profit made remains in the university to enhance its teaching, research, and facilities. AUBM is committed not to be a university for the elite wealthy people, and has decided from the out start that no qualified student will be left behind without due education. Toward this end, AUBM has a robust merit and financial aid system that reduce the tuition in the range of 20% to 80%. Therefore, one way in repaying the community is through generous financial aid that would be granted every year to needy students. Once a student is admitted on financial aid, she/he will continue to receive the same percentage waiver until graduation as long as the student is on good standing. In addition, outperforming students would be granted merit waivers as well. On another front, AUBM would be open to events and activities held on its premises with no charges advocating social, charitable, and commercial enhancement.

- 3- Admissions criteria can be found in section *E. QUALITY ASSURANCE*, subsection 6. *Criteria and student admission process*. Since SAT is not a common exam in Cyprus or Europe, the admissions team of AUB Mediterraneo is exploring alternatives to SAT that are common in Cyprus and Europe such as the British-based AS exam. In principle, either the SAT scores would be required or the International AS-level qualifications. The acceptance decision will then be made on the AS-level grades and the high school grades. The team is also looking into ways to attract Cypriot students by relying mainly on the formal examinations in the Cypriot High School System and Apolytirion. Our student to faculty ratio is set on average to 15, which is in line with top institutions in the world. We aim to abide with this ratio to the extent possible. Staff to student ratio is around 20, which is also in line with top universities. The AUB Mediterraneo website, and similar to AUB website, will surely include a directory of all faculty and staff once the license is obtained. There will be one directly per department/unit and one directory for the institution as a whole.
- 4- Details about the Advisory Board are presented in comment 1
- 5- In addition to peer-reviewed journals and academic/professional meeting proceedings and presentations, AUB also recognize textbooks and case studies as valuable forms of scholarly output. AUBM will adopt the same procedure.

Specifically, AUB recognizes textbooks as intellectual contributions, we also acknowledge the importance of case studies and require them to be peer or editorially reviewed before being entered as an intellectual contribution. Over the past 5 years 8% of our publications were textbooks, 14% conference proceedings and 7% were case studies and instructional material.

Teaching staff are encouraged to write case studies and this counts towards their performance appraisal. Through the different communication means such as department meetings, faculty meeting, newsletters, social media, new publications are promoted and advertised. Moreover, knowledge dissemination workshops are organized to share the publications with other members of the department.

The case study approach is often used in the classroom, of which many are written by OSB faculty and teaching staff members. Also, undergraduate and graduate students are expected learn how to write literature reviews and research.

- 6- Kindly find attached <*Campus in the steady state-Map facilities.pdf*> which presents the details of the campus's facilities. The document presents the initial phase of the campus construction which is expected to house 1200 students. The campus will be extended to house more students as demand arises. Plot 4672 which is about 6350 m² is reserved for extension purposes.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Wassim El Hajj	Rector	
Alain Daou	Department Head	
Boushra Rahal	Quality Assurance and Institutional Improvement	
Rania Hussein	Strategy and Risk	

Date: March 2, 2023