



Doc. 300.2.2

Date: 25.08.2022

Institution

Response

(Institutional Evaluation)

- Higher Education Institution:
Aigaia School of Art & Design
- Town: Nicosia
- Institution Status: Currently Operating

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.300.2.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the Institution in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, in the section building facilities, student welfare services, infrastructure, the HEI must respond on the comments and scoring of the EEC.*
- *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. 300.2.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

BUILDING FACILITIES - STUDENT WELFARE SERVICES - INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Building facilities

1.1 Plans and licenses

EEC:

1.1.1.2:

- a) Being an exercise and sports premises, there is an agreement with Strovolos Municipality for the use of its facilities.
- b) As per the suggestion of the issuing Municipality, there is a parking area at the basement within the building, to be used by people with disabilities.
- c) A fee has been paid to the issuing Municipality for the buy-out of seven parking spaces, upon receipt. The Municipality hasn't appointed them yet.

1.1.2 There is a receipt issued by the Municipality for a work permit and other taxes.

1.1.3.5 There is no issued licence by the Electro-Mechanical Department. There are assurances though, by the Electrical and Mechanical Scholars

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

We would like to add on this comment that Aigaia School of Art & Design has submitted an application to the relevant Electromechanical Department of the Republic of Cyprus for the inspection of the Electrical and Mechanical Installations of the institution's building in order to issue the needed for this external evaluation Certificate. Since the Electromechanical Services did not complete the inspection on time – which is still pending - the necessary certificates were issued in written by the Electrical (EL & D Christou) and Mechanicals Scholars (ELIOFOTOU & ZINIERIS MELTEC) respectively which were included in our application for Institutional evaluation. The receipt of the Electromechanical Services (No 753857) when paying the fee for this inspection application is attached as an Appendix 8.

1.2 Other facilities

EEC:

1.2.6 - 1.2.7:

This is a preserved building and therefore requires a reduced number of parking spaces. For the issuing of the building permit, a fee has been imposed for the buy-out of seven spaces which haven't been appointed yet. Upon agreement with the committee of the neighbouring Church, the temporary use of its yard can be used as a parking space by the teaching staff and students. This agreement is temporary until the Municipality appoints the seven parking spaces.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

According to the Building Permission (attached as an Appendix “9”) and relevant provisions of respective Law “Περί Πολεοδομίας και Χωροταξίας Νόμος”, as the Institution is hosted in an enlisted building within the area of special character of Αγιοί Omologites - Nicosia, Aigaia School of Art & Design has paid the specified amount of 14000 Cyprus Pounds for the acquisition of the necessary parking places as requested by the official authorities of the Republic of Cyprus (Town Planning & Housing Department) to the Municipality of Nicosia which has now the obligation by law to provide them to the Institution. This is evidenced by the above EEC comment. It is also documented by the following extract of the Attached Building Permission (Appendix 9):

“..... Επειδή σύμφωνα με τις πρόνοιες των παραγράφων 9(γ), 24(1)(γ) του Παραρτήματος Γ των Τοπικών Σχεδίων και 36.2.14 του Τοπικού Σχεδίου Λευκωσίας (Ειδική Διακριτική Ευχέρεια), απαιτείται η διαμόρφωση οκτώ χώρων στάθμευσης για τις συνολικές ανάγκες της ανάπτυξης.

Επειδή μέσα στον ελεύθερο χώρο του τεμαχίου είναι δυνατόν να διαμορφωθεί μόνο ένας από τους οκτώ απαιτούμενους χώρους στάθμευσης για τις ανάγκες της ανάπτυξης.

Επειδή εξασφαλίστηκε από το Δήμο Λευκωσίας

(α) συναίνεση σύμφωνα με την παράγραφο 5.2 του Περί Πολεοδομίας και Χωροταξίας Διατάγματος Εκχώρησης Εξουσιών του 2004,

(β) έγκριση για την εξάσκηση από την Πολεοδομική Αρχή Ειδικής Διακριτικής Ευχέρεια αναφορικά με τις πρόνοιες της παραγράφου 36.2.14 του Τοπικού Σχεδίου Λευκωσίας, σύμφωνα με την παράγραφο 8(1) του πιο πάνω Διατάγματος εκχώρησης εξουσιών,

(γ) και έγκριση για την εξαγορά επτά χώρων στάθμευσης.

Επειδή η «Πολεοδομική Αρχή» έχει διαπιστώσει ότι συντρέχουν οι πιο κάτω αναφερόμενες προϋποθέσεις για την εφαρμογή της πρόνοιας της Παραγράφου 25(2) του Παραρτήματος «Γ» των Τοπικών Σχεδίων, Λευκωσίας (2003) για την εξαγορά των χώρων στάθμευσης”

(α) η ανάπτυξη είναι επιθυμητή και σκόπιμη από χωροταξικής άποψης

(β) η αυστηρή εφαρμογή των προτύπων για χώρους στάθμευσης θα είναι υπέρμετρη ή δυσανάλογα επιζήμια για την υλοποίηση της ανάπτυξης, και

(γ) έχουν εξαντληθεί όλες οι δυνατότητες για εξασφάλιση των απαιτούμενων χώρων στάθμευσης μέσα στον ελεύθερο χώρο του προς ανάπτυξη τεμαχίου.

Μεταξύ άλλων όρων που έχει αποφασίσει η «Πολεοδομική Αρχή» να επιβάλει στη χορήγηση της απαιτούμενης πολεοδομικής άδειας για την πιο πάνω ανάπτυξη, περιλαμβάνεται και η υπογραφή Συμφωνίας, δυνάμει των προνοιών του Άρθρου 43(1) του Πολεοδομίας και Χωροταξίας Νόμου, για διευθέτηση του πιο πάνω θέματος (εξαγορά χώρων στάθμευσης),

Γι’ αυτό τα συμβαλλόμενα μέρη συμφωνούν όπως:



(α) η Πολεοδομική Αρχή χορηγήσει Πολεοδομική Άδεια για την ανάπτυξη με όρους που κρίνει κατάλληλους και

(β) Ο «Αιτητής» καταβάλει προς το ειδικό Ταμείο Εξαγοράς Χώρων Στάθμευσης του Δήμου Λευκωσίας το ποσό των Λ.Κ. 14.000 (δεκατεσσάρων χιλιάδων λιρών) για επτά χώρων στάθμευσης”

2. Student Welfare Services

EEC:

The student welfare services are provided by one member of the academic staff with parallel administration responsibilities. Additionally, to her art related qualifications, she is a holder of an MBA. Where necessary the Director of the School, complements these services, while some of the services can be outsourced, if necessary, i.e. psychological support. The very small number of students (15 students) makes this structure adequate for the time being. Surely, if the number of students increases substantially (as stated in the strategic planning presentation), additional staff members should be considered

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

In addition to the staff stated in the above EEC comment (1 administrative Staff, Director of the School) the Director of Administration & Finance – who among other qualifications is a University of Cyprus MBA holder - is also involved. Furthermore, when necessary the institution is outsourcing such services related to Student Welfare Services. This is also noted by the EEC under 2.5 Counselling Services “..... *the student is directed to external services, e.g., the Youthboard of Cyprus Psychological Support Services and other private qualified practitioners.*”

As an example, the school was in close consultation with Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist Margarita Orfanidou for the psychological support of a couple of students (names are not provided for obvious reasons).

As the school grows in size needs in academic and administrative staff, specially trained student counsellors, careers advisers, etc are expected to grow. All needs in staff are continuously assessed and immediate action is taken for the recruitment of staff when needed. In this respect, our students’ needs and recommendations are seriously taken into account.

Consequently, we totally agree with the EEC recommendation that if the number of students increases substantially – which is the projection after the introduction of a BA course – additional staff members should be considered.

EEC:

2.1. Special access for students with disabilities

There is no special treatment for students with disabilities upon entry. Students are evaluated on their academic level, regardless of having a disability or not. Nonetheless, the school can provide preparation classes so they can upgrade their level to meet course/diploma expectations. The school can provide special support during their studies, such as more time to deliver a project, peer support, support by a third party etc. All relevant information is disclosed in the application form. The premises meet the specifications for accessibility.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

We would like to add to the above comment that our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Appendix 3 page 35) affirms our commitment to ensuring that no applicant for job recruitment or for studying at Aigaia or appointee is discriminated against on the grounds of: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; ethnic; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation. This is also clearly stated in QAE Handbook (Appendix 1) page 45.

Our premises do not only meet the specifications for disability accessibility – as it is confirmed by the EEC – but also support the needs for studying at Aigaia School of Art & Design (special elevator, WC for people with disabilities etc).

EEC:

2.2. Recreation areas

“The School has a canteen offering snacks and beverages to students and visitors. There is also a small sitting area (tables and chairs)”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

EEC:

2.3. Policy and statutes for academic student support

“At the beginning of the academic term, the students are assigned to an academic advisor. This role is picked up by members of the academic staff, based on how many hours they are present/teaching at the School and also taking into consideration the personal relationship with the students. Moreover, due to the very small number of students, staff have direct and daily contact with them, so they have the opportunity to discuss any issue, academic or not, that arises”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

EEC:

2.4. Policy and statutes for financial support

“The School provides scholarships upon merit and student financial situation. The students are informed from the beginning on their financial obligations and timeline of payments of tuition fees. Flexibility can be provided if necessary and upon request and agreement between the two parties”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment. The scholarship provided is **“Costas Hadjistefanou” scholarship** to honour Dr Costas Hadjistefanou who dedicated his life in education and whose support from the very early steps of the creation of Aigaia School of Art & Design was more than valuable in all aspects. This scholarship is published in our website at the following link:

<https://www.aigaia.com.cy/tertiary-education/visual-arts/?lang=en#1652087988258-b8686a5e-1451>

His contribution to Education and Culture and generally to our society in Cyprus is invaluable. Profoundly knowledgeable of the Greek language, Culture and Education, he devoted his life to it. His ongoing purpose was to establish the Greek language, Education, culture and values in Cyprus, offering himself completely and truly, with unlimited time and effort, educating and cultivating the new generation, offering knowledge from his rich spiritual world. In this context and spirit, Costas Hadjistefanou supported the efforts and contributed actively to the creation of Aigaia School of Art and Design based on a solid pedagogical and healthy academic basis.

EEC:

2.5. Counselling Services

“General counselling is provided by the academic advisor and the academic staff. If a need for further counselling support arises, the student is directed to external services, e.g. the Youthboard of Cyprus Psychological Support Services and other private qualified practitioners”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

EEC:

2.6. Career Office

“The student welfare officer provides basic career advice and information to students, mostly on choosing their next academic step, i.e., the topic and place for their top up BA. The officer also helps in preparing a CV (Europass and a more custom-made one), interview tips, informs students on internships opportunities and small-scale jobs (gigs). In line with the above, the School provides a relevant course as part of the curriculum”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

EEC:

2.7. Service linking the institution with business

“As mentioned above, the School provides small-scale job opportunities to students, in order for them to gain experience and develop their network with the industry and society at large. They also provide them with information on relevant competitions they can participate in and a small number of internships, found mainly through personal contacts”.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

EEC:

2.8 Mobility Office

“There is no “official” mobility office. The Director is mainly responsible for participation in European mobility projects. The School participates in Erasmus+ projects as partners, hosting workshops for foreign partners and also participating in similar outgoing activities of students and staff. There is room for more exploration and participation in E+ projects and other European mobility and funding programs such as the European Solidarity Corps and acquiring the E+ charter.”

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As organised, the mobility service at Aigaia School of Art & Design is very successful. Aigaia is an active participant in E+ projects and its participation is evolving and improving in numbers and quality year by year. This will continue in the forthcoming years as Aigaia School of Art & Design pays great attention to this area. We take very seriously and we fully adopt the suggestion of EEC to participate also in other European funding programs such as the Europe Solidarity Corps and acquiring E+ charter and this will be realised the soonest.

The creation of an “Official” Mobility office will be reconsidered as the school and the participation in European mobility projects grow in size, the participation in European Solidarity Corps is realised and Aigaia acquires the E+ charter.

EEC:

2.9 Student Clubs/organisations/associations:

“There are no student clubs or associations. Nonetheless often teams of students ask to organise an event or other activity either in the School or elsewhere and the School provides the space and organisational support to them. Also, often students participate in volunteering activities with collaboration with the School.”

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Organising and taking part in clubs and students associations is provided in the attached reviewed, revised and amended according to EEC recommendations APENDIX 3 PROGRAM HANDBOOK page 34:

“Aigaia encourages all students to take part in all of its other activities that are not included as compulsory participation in the curriculum of the Programs they are studying.

1. **Theatre/Drama.** All students are encouraged to take part in the youth and adults groups associated with theatre and drama offered by Aigaia in their premises. Students can become active members taking part in the theatre productions involved in the overall design, visualization, promotion and have various roles in the actual implementation of the events. They can also be active performers or both. If they wish they can also take part in the examinations offered by the school in association with LAMDA. (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts) that Aigaia is an accredited centre for many years now.
2. **Students are encouraged to organise student clubs and associations or single events whenever they wish.** All they have to do is request and then the Institution will help and assist in the organisation. Requested events or other activities or student clubs etc can be hosted either in the Aigaia premises or elsewhere. Aigaia will provide the space and organisational support.
3. **Volunteering activities** for charity or support of any other organisations Aigaia supports.
4. **Outreach activities.** «Aigaia’s social engagement program» includes events like design and creation of wall murals in public and private education, teaching related subjects when invited by primary and secondary education to visit and teach at their premises, organising events for other cultural organisations etc
5. **Educational programs for students and teachers** of primary and secondary education that take place in Aigaia’s premises. The students are encouraged to assist in the design and implementation of our annual educational programs.
6. **Other courses and programs at Aigaia.** Assist in all other teaching activities that take place as part of Aigaia’s art programs, courses etc. Students are encouraged to assist with teaching, the design and implementation of lesson plans and classes.
7. **«Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες».** Visual Arts hosting in our premises. Aigaia hosts annually, Visual Arts exhibitions and presentations of guests, alumni and staff at its premises. All our students are encouraged to participate in the organisation and implementation of all such events.

Aigaia also encourages its students to become members and get involved with any of the activities and/or organisations of the Cyprus Youth Council, link provided below.

<https://cyc.org.cy/en/member-organizations/>

“

EEC:

2.10 Other Services

The Student Welfare Officer aids students who seek housing and also the school director liaisons with other governmental authorities or services such as Immigration in case a foreign student needs help with visa related issues.

The School also issues a Student Card and guides its students to register for the European Youth Card, issued by the Youthboard of Cyprus, so they can gain access to benefits including discounts in bus transportation, access to cultural events, etc.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

3. Infrastructure

EEC:

There are no deficiencies.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

Sub-Areas

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

EEC:

"1.1.6 The institution's three-year strategic development plan needs some finessing. Engaging with peer review by inviting in external stakeholders from academic and professional sectors would raise the educational standards of the institution and also enable it to make the most of its existing resources".

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

We fully agree with EEC comment that engaging with peer review by inviting in external stakeholders from academic and professional sectors, would raise the educational standards of the institution and also enable it to make the most of its existing resources.

As already commented on an identical EEC observation included in EEC report on the program of study provided, Aigaia has extensively reviewed, updated and amended its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook according to relevant EEC recommendations. It now includes its specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes including engagement with external stakeholders in order to raise educational standards and enable the institution to make the most of its existing resources (Appendix 1 QAE Handbook , pages 26-29).

To raise educational standards by engaging external stakeholders, is achieved among others:

- through the accumulated knowledge and experienced gained throw the valuable interaction and collaboration with Pearson Education for all these years, as an approved PEARSON Educational center since Aigaia's establishment, with center number 90102, link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/find-a-pearson-centre.html?Country=Cyprus&City=Nicosia&QualificationFamily=BTEC>

By this way, parity with other institutions with validated Diploma level courses like the HNDs, is also secured.

- through the role assigned to the External Examiners (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 26) which is to be auditors of the assessment process, mentor-support and offer their expertise for academic programs and course review, monitor the academic standards of awards at institution and to confirm:

- The standards for the courses/awards are set and maintained at an appropriate level;
- The standards for the courses/awards are comparable with similar courses/awards within the sector and parity with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is proved;

- The structure and nature of the assessment permits students to demonstrate their level of achievement and they are related written feedback is provided;
- The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted; and
- There is consistency between the institution regulations, ESG provisions and relevant national legislation and directives and guidelines of CYQAA
- Contribute to academic programs and course review / preparation - validation of new academic programs.

Within this context, Aigaia contacted several candidates for the two positions of the EEs including the following Academics with experience in Quality Assurance:

- Caroline Alexander, Senior Lecturer, Year Leader Kingston School of Art, Kingston University.
Elinor Renfrew, Honorary Professor, Course Director
- Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Professor, Associate Dean Research, Business & Innovation, Kingston School of Art, Kingston University.
- David Thornhill, PEARSON Senior EE
etc

We are currently in the selection process, discussing and negotiating in order to find the most appropriate EEs for our “Visual Arts” Diploma, Short Cycle, EQF Level 5 for the forthcoming Academic year.

EEC:

“1.1.7 This isn’t happening routinely presently; should be put in place. The EEC recommends that the institution anonymously collect, analyse, and use student feedback. A system for data analysis should be adopted from a comparable higher educational institute.”

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia anonymously collects, analyses and uses student feedback:

- Relevant Form in pages 55-58 of APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook:
Course / Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire for (Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 Students)
- link of the forms sent to our previous graduates covering all different relevant aspects of this EEC recommendation:

AIGAIA_INSTITUTION SATISFACTION SURVEY :

<https://forms.office.com/pages/designpagev2.aspx?lang=en-US&origin=OfficeDotCom&route=Start&subpage=design&id=I5A1024PTEa7jVuobXj6LQHsN-MCk8NLslXJxPyAdqpUNURUOE3VknBQUixUU8xNTVKWjRGNzVMVi4u&wdlor=cCD58D444-A7F1-3247-9434-5C97DA0F0AAE>

AIGAIA_STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY :

<https://forms.office.com/pages/designpagev2.aspx?lang=en-US&origin=OfficeDotCom&route=Start&subpage=design&id=I5A1024PTeA7jVuobXj6LQHsN-MCk8NLsIXjPyAdqpUNIZaMTQxWUtRUE44RldBQkgxOEVSIRXTi4u&wdlor=c29274951-B4F4-BB43-BA5F-662BC714C7A4>

AIGAIA_PROGRESSION INFORMATION SURVEY :

<https://forms.office.com/pages/designpagev2.aspx?lang=en-US&origin=OfficeDotCom&route=Start&subpage=design&id=I5A1024PTeA7jVuobXj6LQHsN-MCk8NLsIXjPyAdqpUMjdPRE9NRjFSWDZBNFlwMFhNVjVETVYyWi4u&wdlor=c57026A1B-0395-5C4C-ACA3-9AA41621A5ED>

AIGAIA_SPECIFIC COURSE CONTENT_SATISFACTION SURVEY :

<https://forms.office.com/pages/designpagev2.aspx?lang=en-US&origin=OfficeDotCom&route=Start&subpage=design&id=I5A1024PTeA7jVuobXj6LQHsN-MCk8NLsIXjPyAdqpUM1hKTTBQVjRJQUtWV0JYSzRUNIRNVjVPSy4u&wdlor=cF39DF477-BE70-E449-92A7-1F6139C1A168>

Aigaia is registered in “Microsoft 365” for higher education and uses the provided platform as a data analysis tool. The Microsoft used platform, provides the required useful data analysis based on those data collected. It has also very powerful data visualization elements such as graphs and charts that provide data analysis in visual form.

EEC:

“1.2.4 The EEC cannot verify how the institution follows its graduate destinations.”

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As said before, Aigaia anonymously collects, analyses and uses student feedback including graduate destinations, either academic and/or professional:

- Relevant Form in page 55-58 of APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook:
Course / Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire for (Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 Students)

Link of the specific form sent to our previous graduates for the collection of data related to their future destinations:

AIGAIA_PROGRESSION INFORMATION SURVEY :

<https://forms.office.com/pages/designpagev2.aspx?lang=en-US&origin=OfficeDotCom&route=Start&subpage=design&id=I5A1024PTeA7jVuobXj6LQHsN-MCk8NLsIXjPyAdqpUMjdPRE9NRjFSWDZBNFlwMFhNVjVETVYyWi4u&wdlor=c57026A1B-0395-5C4C-ACA3-9AA41621A5ED>

EEC:

1.3.1 Presently, on the whole, the Institution does not attract qualified academic staff and it doesn't yet have any mechanisms to support their Researcher Development or their Scholarship of Learning and Teachings (SoTL).

1.3.1 Academic Staff Recruitment and Training (under areas of improvement and recommendations)

The Institution should seek attract qualified academic staff by creating permanent fractional and full-time posts that are commensurate with those in other AMD institutions in Cyprus, the MENA region and the EHEA. It should also create mechanisms to support staff Researcher Development and their Scholarship of Learning and Teachings (SoTL). Clearly this could prove to be a challenge regarding remuneration – however, the Institution offers other in-kind benefits (such as studio support for staff and access to Erasmus+ networks, etc.) that it can combine into an attractive package. It can also offer micro-residencies as a way of attracting temporary visiting staff-researchers.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of art & design has a clear and a very effective system and it attracts qualified academic staff from which it selects and recruits only the best.

In the attached reviewed, revised and amended according to EEC recommendations QAE HANDBOOK (Appendix 1), section 10 refers to the "Recruitment and Development Policy" of our institution which among others covers in details our related recruitment policy including teaching staff, staff recruitment processes, job description and person specification, advertising, application processes, shortlisting, selection process, complaints (pages 45 – 49).

Recalling from "Job Description and Person Specification of the same document (page 45):

" In case of an academic staff post, Aigaia School of Art & Design will ensure by the appropriate Person Specification all successful applicants' competence:

- ***as established researchers and/or practitioners in their ADM field***
- ***as experienced/trained teachers in ADM***
- *to achieve the objectives and planned learning of the programmes of study offered by Aigaia and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*

..... "

Aigaia currently employs 11 members of Academic staff for the Visual Arts, Short Cycle Diploma, EQF Level 5:

- Eight (8) of the members of the academic team hold a Masters qualification
- One (1) member holds a Bachelor qualification
- One (1) member holds a BTEC HND (Higher National Diploma)
- One (1) member holds the 2-year Diploma of Visual Arts

All CVs have been submitted to the CYQAA as part of the application for accreditation. Also attached a list of academic staff with their highest qualification in APPENDIX 5 REVIEWED, UPDATED & AMENDED CURRICULUM page 6.

As evidenced before, out of the 11 academic staff that is currently employed for Visual Arts, Short Cycle Diploma, EQF Level 5, 9 hold either an MA (8 members) or a degree (1 member). All of our teaching staff holds a degree which is at least on the same level that they teach – including our 2 Technical staff who only teach technical aspects of the responsible workshops that are appointed to - and 81.8% of our teaching Staff has a degree which is at least a level higher than the level they are teaching.

Furthermore, out of the 11 academic staff, 7 are full time, 2 part-time and 2 of them visiting lecturers.

This is in line with the provisions of the respective national Law (“Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(I) του 2013”) as they are obtained from the CYQAA website. Link from CYQAA website:

https://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/nomothesia/private_institutions_tertiary_education_law_en.pdf

According to this law no less than 70% of the teaching staff should have an approved degree that is a level higher than the level they are teaching to and the rest 30% of the same level.

Our fully qualified teaching staff are also established practitioners which can be verified by the CVs which have been submitted to the CYQAA as part of the application for accreditation. Just to mention Eleni Panayidou, a very well known and respected printmaker – Director of the Hambis Printmaking Museum in Nicosia, Maria Papacharalambous an established Cypriot fine artist – co-founder of Artos Foundation with presentations in Cyprus and abroad who also teaches at Aegean University in Greece etc

Furthermore, Aigaia also supports and provides remunerated training time within workload plans for its staff, and has registered all of its teaching staff to attend the following courses, according to EEC recommendations (attached APPENDIX 1, QAE HANDBOOK page 48). This will ensure that their teaching level and experiences are formally up to standard:

- Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) (38 hrs) offered by CAULLT – Council of Australian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
- Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, coursera, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning exchange (15 hrs).
- Introduction to Teaching and Learning for RQF Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Introduction to teaching and Assessing the RQF Higher Nationals in Art & Design, Pearson Education
- Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing Art Design RQF BTEC Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Grading Standardisation Workshop for BTEC Higher Nationals Art and Design (RQF), offered by Pearson Education

Our teaching staff is also trained in practice by progressively being engaged in teaching at lower educational levels provided by Aigaia, before being ready and consistently adequate to teach at Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 or on any other educational programme of higher level provided by Aigaia. As

already said Aigaia is an approved PEARSON Educational center since its establishment with center number 90102, for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

Staff Mentoring Scheme is provided for all new staff, including a comprehensive induction and the early flagging of staff development needs (attached APPENDIX 1, QAE HANDBOOK page 48).

Training of every member of Staff in QAE is provided as part of contract (for new staff) and as a % of their workload (attached APPENDIX 1, QAE HANDBOOK page 48).

Training about professional development of the staff is also be a yearly compulsory activity from 22-23. Staff development as in APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48.

As far as the support provided to our Staff for their Researcher Development, according to EEC recommendations as from the forthcoming academic year 2022-2023 all of our staff will be allocated remunerated time in order to work and research personal themes, topics, processes, techniques, issues and generally develop their personal interests and critically reflect on their personal practice (APPENDIX 1, QAE Handbook, page 48).

They will also be working on curated research subjects given by Aigaia with the scope of publication and presentation.

Aigaia school of Art & Design hosts Visual Arts in its premises under the program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες”. Aigaia hosts annually, Visual Arts exhibitions and presentations of guests, alumni and staff at its premises. All our students are encouraged to participate in the organisation and implementation of all such events. Examples are the Hambis printmaking exhibitions and lectures, artists Eleni Meli – Eleana Chrysanthou – Anna Alexandrou exhibitions.

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully adopts EEC recommendation to offer micro-residencies as a way of attracting temporary visiting staff-researchers and intends to realise it under existing program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες” (attached APPENDIX 3 page 34).

EEC:

1.3.3 *The Institution doesn't have any non-Cypriot students and does not yet have an effective strategy to attract high-level students from abroad.*

Expected number of non-Cypriot students = 0

Expected number of Cypriot students 15

1.3.3. Strategically plan for non-Cypriot students (under areas of improvement and recommendations)

The institution needs to seriously consider how it might attract non-Cypriot students from the MENA region and, perhaps, beyond. It should do this by focusing on its existing strengths in supporting the transition into

higher education at a reasonable price in a safe and supportive environment. Having brought in student for portfolio-preparation, it can work on retaining them as Diploma students.

The lack of non-Cypriot students and staff is responsible for the programme being relatively cut-off from what is happening in the ADM sector across the EHEA and beyond. The staff student body is cultural homogenous and, thus, not representative of the ADM workplace in the EHEA. Since Cyprus is an EU member state, this is not excusable.

Since the institution does aim to start to attract non-Cypriot students from the MENA region and, perhaps, beyond – it needs to diversify its curriculum to include engagement with Islamic / Arabic art and design and with contemporary cultures.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

What is expected is the outcome of many factors like geographic, demographic, behaviour characteristics of target-market, competition analysis, environmental analysis, non-expected and unforeseen situations like COVID pandemic, war in Ukraine etc.

Building on these expectations, an effective strategy has been developed to overcome negative outcomes - like the expected number of non-Cypriot students - and enhance positive ones.

This is exactly the case with our 2-year development plan. Based on the outcome of the analysis of the above-mentioned factors, it is projected that for the next 2 years - **for the academic program currently provided** - non-Cypriot students are not expected.

This negative expectation by itself in no way implies that Aigaia does not have an effective strategy to attract high-level students from abroad. On the contrary, by being aware of this possibility, we have developed the effective strategy for overcoming this and other negative expectations. This strategy is part of the 2 year development plan which has been submitted as an annex in our application for institutional evaluation and is being attached as APPENDIX 10 (revised according to EEC recommendations).

Within this framework:

- According to our strategic planning - which includes objectives in the short, medium and long term – for the next 3 academic years, our objective is to reach at least 50% of our capacity in students 10% of which to be originated **from abroad** (page 6 of APPENDIX 10 2 year-development plan).
- As it is stated in our 2-year development plan, for the next 2 years Aigaia will target both domestically **and abroad** for potential students (page 5 of the 2 year-development plan).
- As it is stated in the brand – positioning section of our 2 year development plan (page 7): “*Aigaia will position itself as the premier specialised Institution of art & design in Cyprus, offering the highest quality of tertiary art education courses accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), to Cypriots **and students from abroad**”.*
- According to our marketing strategy:
 - In the long-term Aigaia will examine the potential of expanding its operations **abroad** (page 7 of the 2 year-development plan submitted with our application for institutional evaluation).

- According to our 2-year development plan, a key-element in attracting students **from abroad**, is the introduction of higher – level educational programs like a BA program of study.
- During the stages of development and maturation after the introduction of a BA program, the Institution will target new market segments of potential students, **like students from abroad** (page 7 of the 2 year-development plan).

The introduction of a BA course in the short-term is in the core of our 2-year development plan including attracting high-level students from abroad, EU, MENA region or elsewhere. Aigaia has identified on time what EEC states in its recommendation above with which we totally agree; that we should do this by *“focusing on its existing strengths in supporting the transition into higher education at a reasonable price in a safe and supportive environment. Having brought in student for portfolio-preparation, it can work on retaining them as Diploma students”*.

Specifically, Aigaia will be in a much stronger position to attract high-level students from abroad for portfolio preparation and other PEARSON courses provided and retain them as Diploma students, if they have the prospect of joining a BA course at a reasonable price in our safe, supportive and totally unique environment and continue their studies at Aigaia. **That is why our strategy adds another factor on this equation for attracting high-level students from abroad: the introduction of a BA course.**

It is highlighted that until very recently, and before COVID pandemic, Aigaia School of Art & Design was attracting non-Cypriot students from MENA region like from Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Kurdistan etc for its academic programs provided, especially for the BTEC FADM (Foundation in Art & Design). During Covid pandemic - which affected our school like everyone globally in many ways - no non-Cypriot students choose Aigaia for their studies. Just after Covid strict restrictions were lifted and in the midst of the war in Ukraine, Aigaia sensed “opportunities” and has managed to attract students from both Russia and Ukraine and have been registered for the PEARSON FADM course for academic year 2022-2023 with the prospect of continuing with the Short Cycle EQF 5 Visual Arts course and the BA when accredited.

Within this respect our Strategy provides the means for the promotion and realisation of our short-medium and long-term objectives including to attract non-Cypriot students, like: MPR (Marketing Public Relations) and direct marketing, implementation and control issues, financial aspects of this strategy, our tuition fees strategy (for the next 2 years penetration pricing policy to increase its market share including from abroad), advertising, target markets, brand positioning, SWAT analysis, contingency planning etc.

In the two-years development plan, all aspects of strategic planning are examined including how Aigaia School of Art & Design will achieve its goals by analysing the current educational environment and market, specifying the targets and its potential students, specifying its mission, objectives and strategy, elaborating on its marketing plan, outlining implementation and control issues and providing the related financial aspects of its strategy. Finally, a contingency planning is provided describing the policy of Aigaia in case of unforeseen difficulties or risks.

Within this framework and according to EEC relevant recommendations, in all amended courses the study of examples of visual arts will include contemporary art from different cultures around the world including the MENA region, in order to create a diversified exciting content of study for the students (attached APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED, UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES).

EEC:

Findings

The strategic planning presents an exclusively ‘resource-base view of the firm’ and fails to provide any research-based evidence or insight into how it relates to existing high quality First Cycle provision in ADM in Cyprus.

1.1.6 Improve Strategic Planning (under areas of improvement and recommendations)

The institution follows Birger Wernerfelt’s resource-based view (Wernerfelt 1984), focusing the supposed uniqueness of its resources. The competitive advantages here, however, are negligible since the institution’s resources are not unique in Cyprus – on the contrary, they already exist in other validated ADM programmes. (The institution does not present any research-based scoping, knowledge or analysis of this fact). Moreover, the existing institutions remain the best resourced organisations in Cyprus in this respect.

If the institution wishes to be successful in the Cypriot ADM environment, then it needs to move beyond the limitations of its ‘resource-based view of the firm’. Michael Porter’s positioning school (Porter 1980: 871) is more concerned with the organisation’s milieu, with how it analyses and strategically adapts to ‘threats’ and ‘opportunities’ generated by its and thus is unable to position the institution’s resources in relation to the field in which it operates. To be able to do this, the institution needs to understand that their main ‘competition’ is the quality that other institutions offer. If they are to compete here, they need to learn how to better position the resources they have currently with the contemporary ADM sector. Presently they are beginning to do so, but they have a way to go before they are convincingly integrated with Cyprus’ and international contemporary ADM networks in ways that will raise their peer esteem in the sector. Recognising that their USP here currently lies in how they integrate with schools and continuing education (Lifelong Learning), would be key to a successful positioning school approach to strategic resource management. Perhaps engaging an external professional educational consultant with experience of Porter’s positioning school analysis of their field would be helpful here?

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

In the current educational market analysis among others, it is examined **how the school relates to existing high quality First Cycle provision in ADM in Cyprus** (pages 2-3 “Introduction” & “Company Analysis” & page 4 “Competition Analysis” of attached APPENDIX 10, 2 year-development plan).

Aigaia school of Art & Design recognises that the educational environment in Cyprus and abroad largely determines our school’s freedom to manoeuvre and adapt. We are very well aware of the niche and very small character and size of the school. That is why the educational environment had and still has far more influence on shaping our strategy than the other way round and this is evidenced in our revised 2-year development plan (attached APPENDIX 10) where the emphasis of our school’s strategy is to adapt to its educational environment.

This is also recognised by EEC comments in page 21 of it’s report: “ the Institution has proven itself to be highly adaptable, resilient and resourceful in how it does all of the things expected a much larger institution”.

This statement is in the core of Porter’s positioning school with which we agree and follow rather than the Birger Wernerfelt’s resource-based view.

The uniqueness of our institution that has been identified by the EEC – even though not always appreciated as probably not deep dived in it – does not refer to its resources as EEC argues but mainly to its explicit specialisation in ADM educational field and in its friendly, warm and professional environment and approach to ADM education it provides to its students.

As “resource” and “educational product” are the two different sides of the same coin a key issue here is Quality. In this respect we fully adopt all EEC recommendations on QAE and on the improvement of the educational program provided, as a big step towards competing within the contemporary ADM sector and accomplishing our mission to *“offer the highest quality of art & design tertiary education and produce excellent contemporary art & design in a unique friendly, warm and professional environment providing the society with artists of highest ethical standards, in order to be established as the leading specialised School of Art & Design in Cyprus”*. Reviewed, revised and amended QAE Handbook, Program Handbook, courses and curriculum according to EEC recommendations are attached as APPENDIX 1, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

EEC:

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

1.2.1 The institution has highly effective mechanisms to assess the needs and demands of society and takes them into account in its various activities. It is very well integrated into the School>HE transition areas and it plays a very active role in the arts community. The EEC wishes to congratulate the School on its work here! The EEC felt that this was the institution’s USP (something akin to ‘social practice’) and that all of its provision, present and future, should build upon this firm foundation. The institution offers support – in the form of scholarship / fee reduction – to support the widening of participation in ADM. Developing a social justice approach and tying this to the strategic planning and Mission would be beneficial.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Our Social justice approach can be found in the attached APPENDIX 3 PROGRAM HANDBOOK (page 35) which has been reviewed, revised and amended according to all EEC recommendations which have been adopted and implemented.

Promotion of social justice has been included as an objective of the strategic planning of our institution for implementing its mission (APPENDIX 10 REVISED TWO YEARS DEVELOPMENT PLAN page 6).

2. Quality Assurance

Sub-Areas

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

EEC:

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

2.1.1 The Institution has a handbook for quality assurance, but it does not yet have a Policy for quality assurance

2.1.2 Internal stakeholders develop and implement a policy for quality assurance, yes, but they do not do so through appropriate structures and processes, nor do they involve external stakeholders in creating such QAE assurances

2.1.4.1 Teaching and Learning need to supported by more robust QAE procedures

2.1.5 The quality assurance system does not yet promote a culture of quality

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see our response under “Areas of Improvement and recommendations” 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4.1, 2.1.5 on same respective EEC comments (page 29).

EEC:

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

2.2.2 - 2.2.3 Monitoring isn't happening using data collection methods currently.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

2.2.2 refers to the system and criteria for assessing student's performance in the subjects of the programmes of studies offered and 2.2.3 refers to specific indicators of the quality control system.

All recommendations of the EEC on Assessment have been fully adopted and our Assessment has been reviewed accordingly. The detailed Assessment implemented by Aigaia according to EEC relevant recommendations can be found in the attached APPENDIX 1 QAE handbook pages 13- 26 and includes:

- Introduction
- Recognition of previous studies and prior learning
- Assessment procedure
- Assessment decisions through applying individual course-based criteria
- The assessment team
- Formative Assessment
- Summative Assessment
- Written Assessment feedback
- Student preparation
- Student grievance procedure (appeals against assessment decisions)
- Mitigating circumstances - Setting Alternative Assessment Date
- Late submissions
- Issuing assessment decisions and feedback
- Resubmission opportunity
- Repeat courses
- Internal verification (moderation) regulation Policy
- Calculation of grades

Furthermore, within the revised QAE Handbook according to EEC recommendations, a section concerning monitoring of existing programmes of study is included (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 9-12). This revised detailed section among others refers to on-going monitoring and review of existing programmes of study (APPENDIX 1 pages 10-11) using related key performance indicators (APPENDIX 1 pages 11-12).

Relevant forms of assessment and monitoring data collection methods and tools are attached in Appendix 11 ASS & IV TOOLS.

EEC:

2.2.5 There is a Plagiarism Policy / Awareness Training, but it needs to be ‘upgraded’ into a fully-fledged Academic Integrity Policy that covers art and design practice and is for staff and students. The ADM sector has seen a steep increase in self-plagiarism (re-submitting the same studio work for more than one course) and plagiarism (submitting studio work created by someone else)/ The Academic Integrity Policy, thus, must also cover the submission of AMD artefacts and processes and not just writing.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

QAE has been reviewed, updated and amended according to all relevant EEC recommendations included in its External Evaluation Reports, all of which have been adopted and implemented in detail.

Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as Appendix 1) which includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes including an **Academic Integrity and Freedom – Vigilance against academic fraud Policy** (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 29-32):

- Expectations
- Academic Integrity
- Academic Judgement
- Academic misconduct (Plagiarism, Self-Plagiarism, Collusion, Falsification or fabrication, Cheating, Contract Cheating)
- Introduction to good academic practice
- Academic misconduct procedure

In this section of ‘Academic Integrity and Freedom – Vigilance against Academic Fraud Policy’, Plagiarism detection relating to the submission of practical (i.e. ADM artefacts) and written work is clearly covered (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 30). Furthermore, all the different aspects of Academic Misconduct including Self-Plagiarism are addressed in detail (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 31).

EEC:

2.2.6 There is no (Research) Ethics Policy; The process for students making appeals re: their assessment is not clear.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design aims to provide a high standard and quality of service. However, we recognise that things can go wrong and when they do students may have legitimate reason to complain about provision of academic courses, facilities, services or staff and making appeals.

We aim to ensure that student complaints are treated seriously and dealt with promptly, fairly and consistently. We also aim to learn from the outcomes of complaint investigations in order to help improve the institution services and enhance the student experience.

Wherever possible, students’ concerns about their course, services provided by the institution or any other aspect of their experience at Aigaia should be dealt with promptly at the earliest opportunity.

The complaints principles, the procedure followed, grounds for complaint etc are included clearly and in details in the attached reviewed, revised and amended according to EEC recommendations APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook under section Students Engagement with Quality Processes / Complaints in pages 40-44.

EEC:

2.2.8 The Institution needs to make more use of staff training (online MOOCS) to support effective methodology being applied in the learning process.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia provides comprehensive internal staff development and training opportunities for all its staff to ensure that fully conforms to all recommendations of the EEC on this area.

Aigaia also supports and provides remunerated training time within workload plans for its staff, and has registered all of its teaching staff to attend the following courses, as EEC recommends. This will ensure that their teaching level and experiences are formally up to standard (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48):

- Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) (38 hrs) offered by CAULLT – Council of Australian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
- Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, coursera, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning exchange (15 hrs).
- Introduction to Teaching and Learning for RQF Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Introduction to teaching and Assessing the RQF Higher Nationals in Art & Design, Pearson Education
- Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing Art Design RQF BTEC Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Grading Standardisation Workshop for BTEC Higher Nationals Art and Design (RQF), offered by Pearson Education

Furthermore, our teaching staff is trained in practice by progressively being engaged in teaching at lower educational levels provided by Aigaia, like PEARSON Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and BTEC courses before being ready and consistently adequate to teach at Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 or on any other educational programme of higher level provided by Aigaia.

Staff Mentoring Scheme is provided for all new staff, including a comprehensive induction and the early flagging of staff development needs.

Training of every member of Staff in QAE is provided as part of contract (for new staff) and as a % of their workload.

Training about professional development of the staff is also be a yearly compulsory activity from 22-23.

Staff development as in APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48.

EEC:

2.2.9 Monitoring isn't happening using data collection methods currently.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

This comment refers to Data collection in relation to the academic performance of students.

Relevant forms of assessment and monitoring data collection methods and tools are attached in Appendix 11 ASS & IV TOOLS.

Aigaia is registered in "Microsoft 365" for higher education and uses the provided platform as a data analysis tool. The Microsoft used platform, provides the required useful data analysis based on those data collected. It has also very powerful data visualization elements such as graphs and charts that provide data analysis in visual form.

EEC:

2.2.10.5 Support structures for students with special needs and learning difficulties are not clear; (how does the institution support, for example, students with dyspraxia).

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & design is firmly committed to a policy of equal opportunities for all students and positively welcomes applications from people with disabilities and/or additional special needs. Throughout all aspects of academic life, we actively encourage and support the participation of students with special needs including dyspraxia and learning disabilities.

In the reviewed, amended and revised according to all EEC relevant recommendations Program Handbook (attached as an Appendix 3) a special section about Student Special Needs and Learning Disabilities Support Policy is included (APPENDIX 3 PROGRAM HANDBOOK pages 37-39). In this section our related policy is included together with processes to support and implement it like disclosing a disability, admission arrangements, physical access, policy and statutes for academic student support, reasonable adjustments, etc.

EEC:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.

The implementation of the current Quality framework is asymmetrical – very good in the case of some courses, very poor in others (there is little in-between). This reveals that the QAE system is not fully understood and implemented by all staff. This should be easy to fix through training and mentoring all staff. A number of courses will need to be re-validated to ensure they are up the same standards as those that are coherent and follow best QAE practice.

In part, this asymmetry arises since the Institution has a complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE. There are many conflicts of interest here that need to be eradicated by moving to a simpler, less Byzantine, structure that is in scale with the size of the Institution (15 students). The EEC understand that the Byzantine structure in place was created at the behest of their last validation. The EEC see that this structure is wholly inappropriate to the scale of the institution and recommend that this structure be replaced with a scalar one that *actually represents what the institution does*.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

EEC here touches generally a broad spectrum of issues which are related with most of the different aspects which were evaluated during the external evaluation. Our response to this very broad EEC comments is given sentence by sentence as follows:

- EEC: *“The implementation of the current Quality framework is asymmetrical – very good in the case of some courses, very poor in others (there is little in-between). This reveals that the QAE system is not fully understood and implemented by all staff. This should be easy to fix through training and mentoring all staff.”*

QAE Handbook has been reviewed, updated and amended according to relevant EEC recommendations which have been adopted by the institution. Training of staff in all aspects of QAE processes and provisions is provided as part of contract and as % of their workload (APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook page 48). Staff mentoring scheme is provided for all new staff including a comprehensive induction and early flagging of staff development needs (APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook page 48).

In addition to the above, we are committed to the development of all our staff to ensure each can play their part in enhancing our students’ educational experience. Our commitment to staff development is evidenced by the following:

- We provide comprehensive internal staff development and training opportunities for all our staff.
- Aigaia supports and provides remunerated training time within workload plans for its staff, i.e attend online courses as part of their professional development time (APPENDIX 1 QAE Handbook page 48) like:
 - Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) (38 hrs) offered by CAULLT – Council of Australian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
 - Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, coursera, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning exchange (15 hrs).
 - Introduction to Teaching and Learning for RQF Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
 - Introduction to teaching and Assessing the RQF Higher Nationals in Art & Design, Pearson Education
 - Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing Art Design RQF BTEC Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
 - Grading Standardization Workshop for BTEC Higher Nationals Art and Design (RQF), offered by Pearson Education
- EEC: *“A number of courses will need to be re-validated to ensure they are up the same standards as those that are coherent and follow best QAE practice.”*

According to relevant and more specific EEC comments / findings / recommendations included in EEC external evaluation report on the provided program of study which have been adopted and implemented, Courses have been reviewed and re-validated (attached APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES).

In this regards, contextual studies that have replaced the Art History course, now cover all contemporary issues associated with ADM including Design and Media. For example, in “Contextual Studies 1” allocated in the first semester of the program, the Introduction includes the following:

“Contextual Studies provides an historical, cultural and theoretical framework to allow us to make sense of art and design, as well as to consider how they may help us to understand the wider world.

This course **introduces** students to key cultural developments, practices and movements related to the history of art, design, visual and popular culture since 1900, **with a particular attention to developments since 2000**. Emphasis will be placed upon developing a broad knowledge of art, design and media contexts, considering the technological, economic, social and aesthetic causes which have, and continue to, inform our understanding of art and design within the twentieth **and twenty-first centuries**.

Students will be introduced to the theoretical methods with which to research and analyse works of art and design, helping them to understand the importance of being able to contextualise their own practice, as well as enhancing their understanding of the wider art and design landscape.

On successful completion, students will have developed their contextual knowledge and their conceptual tool kit by undertaking a contextual investigation of their own, linked to their subject specialism”.

Also, in the attached APPENDIX 3 PROGRAM HANDBOOK page 8 where the Intended Learning outcomes of the program are described, they include among others:

“demonstrate a coherent and detailed body of knowledge with regard to the historical and contemporary contexts of the Visual arts”

“demonstrate a coherent understanding of the historical and critical models relevant to contemporary art and to your own work and its concerns”

For the full description of the courses and confirmation of the above see the attached APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES.

- EEC: *“In part, this asymmetry arises since the Institution has a complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE. There are many conflicts of interest here that need to be eradicated by moving to a simpler, less Byzantine, structure that is in scale with the size of the Institution (15 students). The EEC understand that the Byzantine structure in place was created at the behest of their last validation. The EEC see that this structure is wholly inappropriate to the scale of the institution and recommend that this structure be replaced with a scalar one that *actually represents what the institution does.*”*

All structures and procedures for administration and governance of our institution are aligned with Laws “Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(Ι)/1996) έως 53(Ι) του 2013” as they are obtained from the CYQAA website. Link from CYQAA website:

https://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/nomothesia/private_institutions_tertiary_education_law_en.pdf

Specifically, there are 5 Committees under our organisational structure (attached APPENDIX 1 page 6):

- Academic Committee
- Administrative Committee
- Disciplinary Committee
- Admissions Committee
- Internal Quality Committee

The first three committees are provided by the existing Law “Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(Ι) του 2013” as they are obtained from the CYQAA website. In this Law it is stated that internal regulations of every educational institution can provide for the establishment and operation of any committee but it **should** provide the establishment and operation of an/a:

- Academic Committee
- Administrative Committee
- Disciplinary Committee

According to the same Law, chair of these committees is the Director of the institution.

Furthermore, according to CYQAA Council decision taken on its 34th session on the 10th and 11th September 2018, each institution / university should establish and operate an Internal Quality Committee with specific composition and responsibilities. Link to this decision:

<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/news-and-events/announcements/13-dipae-el/dipaeel/anakoinoseis/176-2018-10-08-systasi-epitropis-poiotitas-tmimatos>

The prementioned four committees of our Institution, their composition and responsibilities are a prerequisite and compulsory by the existing Law or CYQAA relevant decisions.

Consequently, there is very little room here to consolidate any two or more of these committees (Academic, Administrative, Disciplinary, Internal Quality committee) into one as EEC recommends under identical recommendation in 3.5 later in their report. Although we see the rationale behind this EEC recommendation, we can't be sure that this can be implemented without violating either the existing legislation and / or relevant CYQAA decisions.

The role of the one and only additional committee of the Institution – Admissions committee – is very straight forward and has been decided to be established for the smooth admission of students, examination of applications of candidate students, decide to offer or not a place to a candidate student, transfer of students etc.

If EEC by Byzantine structure refers to overly complex and inflexible structures – as this term usually implies - then Aigaia School of Art & Design cannot be sure it can agree with this. As EEC comments under Strengths in this section:

*“The Institution has been busy putting a QAE system in place and has made great progress here. The EEC would like to commend the Institution on coming this far given how few staff it has to devote to creating a QAE framework. The Institution has proven itself to **be highly adaptable, resilient and resourceful** in how it does all of the things expected a much larger institution.”*

Furthermore, as EEC comments in Conclusions and Final remarks:

*“The institutional **fleetness of foot** that circumstances have afforded here is a great gift - it's something that the School should be very careful to retain if it wants to ensure that it plans for sustainable growth remain centre stage in what, and how, it teaches.....”*

Consequently, we can't be sure that we agree with EEC comment that our structure *"is wholly inappropriate to the scale of the institution"* and of Byzantine character and that our institution *"has a complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE."*

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The Institution has been busy putting a QAE system in place and has made great progress here. The EEC would like to commend the Institution on coming this far given how few staff it has to devote to creating a QAE framework. The Institution has proven itself to be highly adaptable, resilient and resourceful in how it does all of the things expected a much larger institution.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above comment.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

EEC:

2.1.1 The Institution has a handbook for quality assurance, but it does not yet have a Policy for quality assurance. It should develop a QAE policy and ensure that improving the quality of its provision is the #1 priority within its strategic plan. It should *then* make both the QAE Policy and updated Strategic Plan public.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia has extensively reviewed the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook according to EEC recommendations (APPENDIX 1) **which now includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy** (APPENDIX 1 page 7) and clear related processes. Specifically, the QAE handbook includes:

Introduction

Aigaia School of Art & Design (about)

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

Design & Approval of New Programs of Study

Modification of Existing Programs of Study

Assessment

External Examining

Academic Integrity and Freedom - Vigilance against Academic fraud

Student Engagement with Quality Processes / Complaints

Recruitment and Development Policy

Policy on Conflict of Interest

Quality Surveys

The revised QAE is published in our website in the following link:

<https://www.aigaia.com.cy/aigaiaqah>

In our revised Strategic Planning according to EEC recommendations which are fully adopted, it is now stated that improving the quality of the institution's provisions is its top priority (APPENDIX 10, 2-year development plan, page 6).

The revised strategic planning is published in our website in the following link:

<https://www.aigaia.com.cy/aigaiaqah>

The above updated information will be published on this link by EOB 29 August 2022

EEC

2.1.2 Internal stakeholders develop and implement a policy for quality assurance, yes, but they do not do so through appropriate structures and processes, nor do they involve external stakeholders in creating such QAE assurances.

Engaging external stakeholders including more experienced academic staff, in addition to qualified parties such as ADM students in other Universities, ADM graduates of other Universities and other professional ADM associations in other institutions to mentor, support and offer 'critical friendship' for Curriculum Design and Development is essential in such a small specialist school.

Small specialist institutions in the vast majority EHEA states are required by law to take such measures to ensure their quality standards and, in the majority of cases to validate their higher education programmes. Hence, the EEC feel that, at very least, the School must seek to formally engage external stakeholders (including more experienced academic staff) from other institutions in the QAE processes, including the review and validation of its courses and programmes. Engaging 'external' examiners to review final projects would help raise the standards expected from students. External examiners must have academic expertise; a team might also have professional expertise (ideally both).

Implementing both externality measures would significantly raise confidence in the ability of the School to meet, maintain and enhance standards in the Diploma.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

QAE has been reviewed, updated and amended according to all relevant EEC recommendations included in its External Evaluation Report, all of which have been adopted and implemented in detail.

Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as Appendix 1) which includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes including an **External Examining Section** (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 26-29). Specifically, the QAE handbook includes the following sections:

Introduction

Aigaia School of Art & Design (about)

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

Design & Approval of New Programs of Study

Modification of Existing Programs of Study

External Examining

Academic Integrity and Freedom - Vigilance against Academic fraud

Student Engagement with Quality Processes / Complaints

Recruitment and Development Policy

Policy on Conflict of Interest

External Examining section provides engaging external stakeholders / examiners. It covers among others the role of the 2 (at least) EES, principles, appointment, selection criteria, induction and reports.

Specifically, as stated in the attached QAE Handbook, within the role of these EEs is to be auditors of the assessment process, mentor-support and offer their expertise for academic programs and course review, monitor the academic standards of awards at institution and to confirm:

- The standards for the courses/awards are set and maintained at an appropriate level;
- The standards for the courses/awards are comparable with similar courses/awards within the sector and parity with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is proved;
- The structure and nature of the assessment permits students to demonstrate their level of achievement and they are related written feedback is provided;
- The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted; and
- There is consistency between the institution regulations, ESG provisions and relevant national legislation and directives and guidelines of CYQAA
- Contribute to academic programs and course review / preparation - validation of new academic programs.

Within this context, Aigaia contacted several candidates for the two positions of the EEs including the following Academics with experience in Quality Assurance:

- Caroline Alexander, Senior Lecturer, Year Leader Kingston School of Art, Kingston University.
Elinor Renfrew, Honorary Professor, Course Director
- Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Professor, Associate Dean Research, Business & Innovation, Kingston School of Art, Kingston University.
- David Thornhill, PEARSON Senior EE
etc

We are currently in the selection process, discussing and negotiating in order to find the most appropriate EEs for our “Visual Arts” Diploma, Short Cycle, EQF Level 5 for the forthcoming Academic year.

Furthermore, as has been already mentioned Aigaia is an approved PEARSON Educational center since its establishment with center number 90102, link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/find-a-pearson-centre.html?Country=Cyprus&City=Nicosia&QualificationFamily=BTEC>

for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

An External Examiner from Pearson is visiting Aigaia each year. The visits take place once or twice per year and the PEARSON EE looks at samples of work, assessments and verifies the level of education provided according to Pearson Quality Assurance policies.

Since the onsite visit from the EEC, Aigaia went through an External Verification process for the BTEC courses provided, at the end of June 2022, like every year with the PEARSON EE Mr. David Thornhill. During this process we discussed extensively about Quality Assurance and enhancement approaches, the policies and implementation and about internal and external verification.

EEC:

2.1.4.1 Teaching and Learning need to be supported by more robust QAE procedures. The EEC have detailed how to improve the QAE procedures elsewhere in this report. Please see 2.1.1 (above) for example.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see 2.1.1 (above) for our response.

EEC:

2.1.5 The quality assurance system does not yet fully promote a culture of quality. The institution has many of the measures that will support a culture of quality, but it's missing some key elements of peer-review (and thus peer-esteem). It needs to remove the sense that it operates in a 'bubble' separate from QAE indicators and processes in other ADM fields. Some changes will be required to ensure that a culture of quality enhancement is fully in place. Please see 2.1.1 (above) for example.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see 2.1.1 (above) for our response.

3. Administration

EEC:

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

3.7 Need to create a fully-fledged Academic Integrity Policy that is for staff and students from the current Plagiarism/ Misconduct Policy / Awareness Training.

3.5 Needs to be simplified and consolidated. The Committees needs to be called what they do.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see our response under “Areas of Improvement and recommendations” 3.7, 3.5 on same respective EEC comments (pages 35, 36).

EEC:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution’s application and the site - visit.

Administration is done by members of the academic staff with parallel teaching and assessment responsibilities. Additionally, Director of the School, complements this team, while some of the Administration can be outsourced if necessary.

Both in reference to its documentation and in our interviews with staff, the EEC found that the Institution has a complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE. This is an aspect of Administration that needs to be rationalised and professionalised.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As EEC comments under Strengths in this section (Administration):

“All academic staff in all universities are expected to conduct Administration as a part of their role; so this is perfectly acceptable. The EEC were impressed with how all staff take the administrative aspects of their role very seriously. The very small number of students (15 students) makes this administrative approach adequate for the time being. Surely, if the number of students increases substantially (as stated in the strategic planning presentation), additional specialist Admin to support specific pressure points must be considered.”

We fully agree with the EEC recommendation that if the number of students increases substantially – which is the projection after the introduction of an MBA course – additional staff members should be considered.

Our response to EEC comment regarding the “*complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE*” is given immediately below on this page, under EEC recommendation 3.5.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

EEC:

3.5 The Institution has a complex and confusing structure of multiple overlapping committees responsible for QAE. The EEC understands that the Byzantine structure in place was created at the behest of their last validation. The EEC see that this structure is *wholly inappropriate* to the scale of this specialist ADM institution and recommend that this structure be replaced with a scalar one that *actually represents what the institution does well and needs to support*. The EEC request that the Institution simplify and consolidate all of the various current Committees that deal with QAE into one Committee that covers Course/Programme Validation and QAE. This singular Committee – which must have external stakeholder membership - needs to be named after what it *does*. A key consideration when developing this new structure is the removal of the existing forms of effort duplication and conflicts of interest.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

All structures and procedures for administration and governance of our institution are aligned with Laws “*Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(Ι) του 2013*” as they are obtained from the CYQAA website.

Specifically there are 5 Committees under our organisational structure:

- Academic Committee
- Administrative Committee
- Disciplinary Committee
- Admissions Committee
- Internal Quality Committee

The first three committees are provided by the existing Law “*Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(Ι) του 2013*” as they are obtained from the CYQAA website. Link from CYQAA website:

https://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/nomothesia/private_institutions_tertiary_education_law_en.pdf

In this Law it is stated that internal regulations of every educational institution can provide for the establishment and operation of any committee but it should provide the establishment and operation of an/a:

- Academic Committee
- Administrative Committee
- Disciplinary Committee

According to the same Law, chair of these committees is the Director of the institution.

Furthermore, according to CYQAA Council decision taken on its 34th session on the 10th and 11th September 2018, each institution / university should establish and operate an Internal Quality Committee with specific composition and responsibilities. Link to this decision:

<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/news-and-events/announcements/13-dipae-el/dipaeel/anakoinoseis/176-2018-10-08-systasi-epitropis-poiotitas-tmimatos>

The prementioned four committees of our Institution, their composition and responsibilities are a prerequisite and compulsory by the existing Law or CYQAA relevant decisions.

Consequently there is very little room here to consolidate any of these committees (Academic, Administrative, Disciplinary, Internal Quality committee) into one as EEC recommends. Although we see the rationale behind this EEC recommendation, we can't be sure that this can be implemented without violating either the existing legislation and / or relevant CYQAA decisions.

The role of the one and only additional committee of the Institution – Admissions committee – is very straight forward and has been decided to be established for the smooth admission of students, examination of applications of candidate students, decide to offer or not a place to a candidate student, transfer of students etc.

EEC:

3.7 While there is a Plagiarism/ Misconduct Policy / Awareness Training, this needs to be upgraded into an Academic Integrity Policy that covers art and design practice. The ADM sector has seen a steep increase in self-plagiarism (re-submitting the same studio work for more than one course) and plagiarism (submitting studio work created by someone else). The EEC are concerned that Self- plagiarism could be a live issue is the same portfolio is used to assess students on more than one 3 ECTS course. The Academic Integrity Policy, thus, must also cover the submission of AMD artefacts and processes and not just writing.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

QAE has been reviewed, updated and amended according to all relevant EEC recommendations included in its External Evaluation Reports, all of which have been adopted and implemented in detail.

Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as Appendix 1) which includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes including an **Academic Integrity and Freedom – Vigilance against academic fraud Policy** (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 29-32) which covers:

- Expectations
- Academic Integrity
- Academic Judgement
- Academic misconduct (Plagiarism, Self-Plagiarism, Collusion, Falsification or fabrication, Cheating, Contract Cheating)
- Introduction to good academic practice

- Academic misconduct procedure

In this section, Plagiarism detection relating to the submission of practical (i.e. ADM artefacts) and written work is clearly covered (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 30). Furthermore, all the different aspects of Academic Misconduct including **Self-Plagiarism**, Collusion, Falsification or fabrication, Cheating, Contract Cheating are addressed in detail (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 31) in order to secure that all EEC concerns in this matter are addressed.

4. Learning and Teaching

Sub-Areas

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

4.2 Organisation of teaching

EEC:

4.1 Planning the programmes of study

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

4.1.1 The Institution needs to ensure that its QAE processes are more robust.

4.1.2 Students yes; academic and ADM stakeholders, no. There are no external stakeholders involved in the QAE elements.

4.1.4 The Institution needs to ensure that effectively theory and practice are complimentary and intellectually robust, **both** in the History of Art and practice courses.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see our response under “Areas of Improvement and recommendations” 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.4 on same respective EEC comments (pages 39-43).

4.2 Organisation of teaching

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

Fully compliant here.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above justification.

EEC:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution’s application and the site - visit.

The EEC were able to fully explore the learning environment offered by the School and were able to ask questions pertinent to how it manages the planning and design (“curriculum architecture”) of learning and teaching.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The EEC found that the institution was highly commendable in relation to the **quality of its learning environment** (i.e. its purpose-built art school estate).

The number of students in the teaching spaces is very generous and the provision of practical workshops is more than adequate. The school itself is particularly well designed and provides an oasis for ADM students to work in.

The scale of the School, the small number of students and the very high level of contact teaching (50-75%) guarantees that teaching staff have regular and effective communication with their students.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above findings / strengths.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

EEC:

4.1.1 The Institution needs to ensure that its QAE processes are **more robust**. We have provided information on how to do this already in this report. Please see 2.1.1 (above).

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As we have already responded under 2.1.1 above, Aigaia has extensively reviewed our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook according to EEC recommendations (APPENDIX 1) **which now includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy** (APPENDIX 1 page 7) and clear related processes. Specifically, the QAE handbook includes:

- Introduction
- Aigaia School of Art & Design (about)
- **Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy**
- Design & Approval of New Programs of Study
- Modification of Existing Programs of Study
- Assessment
- External Examining
- Academic Integrity and Freedom - Vigilance against Academic fraud
- Student Engagement with Quality Processes / Complaints
- Recruitment and Development Policy

- Policy on Conflict of Interest
- Quality Surveys

The revised QAE is published in our website in the following link:

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In our revised Strategic Planning according to EEC recommendations which are fully adopted, it is now stated that improving the quality of the institution's provisions is its top priority (APPENDIX 10, revised 2-year development plan, page 6).

The revised strategic planning is published in our website in the following link:

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the above updated information will be published on this link by EOB 29 August 2022

EEC:

4.1.2 Students yes; academic and ADM stakeholders, no. There are no external stakeholders involved in the QAE elements and this is a key issue that needs to be addressed. Please see 2.1.12 (above).

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

We assume that EEC is referencing 2.1.2 instead of 2.1.12 mentioned in the above comment.

QAE has been reviewed, updated and amended according to all relevant EEC recommendations included in its External Evaluation Reports, all of which have been adopted and implemented in detail.

Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as Appendix 1) which includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes including the involvement of external stakeholders (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 26-29). Specifically, the QAE handbook includes the following sections:

Introduction

Aigaia School of Art & Design (about)

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

Design & Approval of New Programs of Study

Modification of Existing Programs of Study

External Examining

Academic Integrity and Freedom - Vigilance against Academic fraud

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Policy on Conflict of Interest

External Examining section provides engaging external stakeholders / examiners. External Examining section covers among others the role of the 2 (at least) EES, principles, appointment, selection criteria, induction and reports. Specifically, as stated in the attached QAE Handbook, within the role of these EEs (APPENDIX 1

QAE HANDBOOK page 26) is to be auditors of the assessment process, mentor-support and offer their expertise for academic programs and course review, monitor the academic standards of awards at institution and to confirm:

- The standards for the courses/awards are set and maintained at an appropriate level;
- The standards for the courses/awards are comparable with similar courses/awards within the sector and parity with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is proved;
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- There is consistency between the institution regulations, ESG provisions and relevant national legislation and directives and guidelines of CYQAA
- Contribute to academic programs and course review / preparation - validation of new academic programs.

Within this context, Aigaia contacted several candidates for the two positions of the EEs including the following Academics with experience in Quality Assurance:

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Elinor Renfrew, Honorary Professor, Course Director
- Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Professor, Associate Dean Research, Business & Innovation, Kingston School of Art, Kingston University.
- David Thornhill, PEARSON Senior EE
etc

We are currently in the selection process, discussing and negotiating in order to find the most appropriate EEs for our “Visual Arts” Diploma, Short Cycle, EQF Level 5 for the forthcoming Academic year.

Furthermore, as has been already mentioned Aigaia is an approved PEARSON Educational center since its establishment with center number 90102, link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/find-a-pearson-centre.html?Country=Cyprus&City=Nicosia&QualificationFamily=BTEC>

for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

An External Examiner from Pearson is visiting Aigaia each year. The visits take place once or twice per year and the PEARSON EE looks at samples of work, assessments and verifies the level of education provided according to Pearson Quality Assurance policies.

Since the onsite visit from the EEC, Aigaia went through an External Verification process for the BTEC courses provided, at the end of June 2022, like every year with the PEARSON EE Mr. David Thornhill. During this process we discussed extensively about Quality Assurance and enhancement approaches, the policies and implementation and about internal and external verification.

EEC:

4.1.4 The Institution needs to ensure that effectively theory and practice are **complimentary** and **intellectually robust**, *both* in the History of Art and practice courses. The EEC are not confident that ADM theory is being taught in a way that is robust and up-to date, nor that it is clearly inter- related with practice (via praxis and critical thinking). What does exist presently does not meet the benchmarks established in other comparable ADM Diploma programmes in EHEA.

For example, *History of Art I* course design simply does not correspond with the current provision in the Art History Discipline at the Diploma level within Art & Design/Media (ADM) in the EHEA or beyond. The ‘survey course’ approach is no longer used in ADM programmes; herein the focus is on contemporary art and emerging art historiography methods. Drawing on the conversations we had with students, the EEC unanimously felt that the ‘survey course’ approach is very evidently **not** preparing the students to understand and engage with either. An Introduction to visual culture that uses contemporary art historical tools and examples of current art and art theory should be pursued. (e.g. Rampley, M. *Exploring Visual Culture: Definitions, Concepts, Contexts*, Edinburgh University Press, 2005 is an example of a 101 approach appropriate to this level of ADM.) Within the ADM field, *Introduction* to visual culture courses always include Design and Media (not just archaeology and Fine Art), present global (*rather* than an Italian Renaissance-bias) perspective and are more centered on art historical and visual culture analytical tools than on the ill-perceived need for ‘coverage’.

For example, some of the Introduction courses in the programme resemble the South Kensington system (c19th) - e.g. the still-life drawing studio - and show no hint of post-Bauhaus reforms. This would make them over 100 years behind the curve for comparable foundation courses. Some courses need more attention than others in this respect to make them up to date and relevant.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Within the context of the annual review of the Program and as a consequence of the onsite visit of the EEC and its related recommendations which were fully adopted Aigaia reviewed, updated and amended accordingly the curriculum (APPENDIX 5) and the individual courses (APPENDIX 4) to secure comparability – parity of its standards with similar validated academic programs within the field of Visual Arts.

In this context History of Art courses have been replaced and “Contextual Studies” were introduced (APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES) that aim:

*“to critically engage students in the history and theory of the **Visual Arts**, its scope and contexts, as well as the wider social and material context in culture and creative contemporary practice”.*

The courses aim to prepare students as independent thinkers, capable of selecting appropriate topics and producing sustained pieces of independent studies.

The course continues to place the student in the process of gathering and developing knowledge about their chosen pathway, its history, context and professional and ethical dimension.

Students practice the analytical and discursive skills needed to gain knowledge of principles, objects and methods along the way, to understand the roles, locations and responsibilities of important players while considering the wider relevant ethical issues and becoming knowledgeable about current issues in their chosen pathway.

This process may be approached from the point of view of the producer or consumer, the critic or the professional, the academic or the practitioner”.

(From the Introduction of the “Contextual & Critical Studies”, 3rd Semester course APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES).

As said, “History of Art” course has been replaced with “Contextual Studies” courses that use contemporary art historical tools and examples of current art and art theory according to EEC relevant recommendations which have been adopted and implemented.

The **Rampley, M. Exploring Visual Culture: Definitions, Concepts, Contexts**, Edinburgh University Press, 2005 is also introduced in the Textbooks of the related learning resources of the courses.

Contextual Studies are involved with the whole of the ADM field including Design and Media, present global perspective and are more centered on art historical and visual culture analytical tools.

(From the practical 3rd Semester compulsory course “**MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO VISUAL ARTS**” APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES).

“This course aims to explore ideas, themes, materials and techniques through a multi-dimensional approach to the simultaneous use of various pathways of the visual arts and more.

Multi-dimensional artwork is often challenging and by its very nature forces the viewer to ask questions. These might be about the **social context that art is created, related art theories and the role of art today, artists, presentation spaces, concepts, meanings, ideas communicated”**.

Learning Outcome 1: “Analyse the use of art practices as a means of communication through contextual research in various different disciplines”

Learning Outcome 4: “Evaluate art practices as a means of socio-political critique or commercial promotion”.

The Detailed description of the Contextual Studies courses and practical courses are attached (APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED, UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES pages 2-16).

5. Teaching Staff

5.2. and 5.4 See EEC's comments in the Programme review document.

Also, write the following:

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 1
- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 0 - Number of visiting Professors = 1
- Number of special scientists on lease services = 0 (not applicable)

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Please see our response under “Areas of Improvement and recommendations” 5.2 and 5.4 on same respective EEC comments (pages 45-49) where we also include the above writing to be answered.

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.

There are a large number of staff teaching on the programme with respect to the size of the cohort. The staff:student ratio (SSR) is very low, especially in comparison with other private and public ADM programmes in the EHEA. Nevertheless, the EEA found that the teaching staff of the Institution do not *all* routinely have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications or professional experience for teaching their individual specialisms. No staff as yet have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications or professional experience *for teaching in Higher Education per se*.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

The 12 members of academic faculty are enthusiastic and dedicated and should be praised for the wide range of responsibilities they undertake. The ratio of teaching staff to the total number of students (staff:student ratio = SSR) is impressive and should be upheld as one of the institutions key USPs. The staff:student is more than sufficient to support and ensure the quality of the current Diploma Programme of Study.

There are a large number of staff teaching on the programme with respect to the size of the cohort. The staff:student ratio (SSR) is very low, especially in comparison with other private and public ADM programmes in the EHEA. The institution also uses Visiting Staff very effectively to improve its provision in niche areas (folk art). From what the EEC could ascertain, only one member of staff is full time; the other 11 are part-time ('fractional').

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

5.2. and 5.4 See EEC's comments in the Programme review document.

Also, write the following:

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 1
- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 0 - Number of visiting Professors = 1
- Number of special scientists on lease services = 0 (not applicable)

This relates to:

5.2.

5.4

While the SSR is laudable, the teaching staff of the Institution do not *all* routinely have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications for teaching the individual subjects as described in the relevant legislation nor do they have the required qualifications, sufficient professional experience and expertise to teach the ADM programme of study at Diploma level. No staff as yet have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications or professional experience *for teaching in Higher Education per se*.

The institution appoints a number of visiting staff (part-time) with fixed-term fractional contracts to teach specific courses related to their specialisms. This can be *appropriate to offer a quality programme of study, and is used in the ADM sector*. However, this also generates precarity for staff who are reliant on their 'elective' courses being chosen by enough students to determine that they will run. Visiting staff (part-time) with fixed-term contracts are thus disadvantaged by the course elective system. **The consolidation of the courses (such as *Introduction to... 3ECTS*)** would eliminate this issue and ensure that such staff could be employed on a permanent fractional contract.

The institution appoints a very small number of full-time staff. Full-time staff take on a broad range of institutional roles, teaching, administrating and governing the institution. Administration and governance are understaffed in comparison with teaching and are not yet quite *appropriate to offer the highest quality programme of study* that the institution aspires to provide.

The EEC felt that teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is *not* consistently adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.

The EEC recommend that:

1. Existing staff be supported and trained in-service as teachers and researchers to ensure that their teaching and research matches the standard the School presents through its PR. There are many excellent, free, accredited courses that would also help to support and improve staff as teachers. The EEC highly recommend than all academic faculty complete the following free online courses in due course as part of their professional development training:

a. Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) **(38hrs)** Course is offered by CAULLT - Council of Australasian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching.

b. Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, *coursera*, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning Exchange. **(15hrs)** This would support and fill gaps in the School’s use of learning technologies.

2. Existing Staff be remunerated for time allocated specifically for such training in staff workload plans. (e.g. 38hrs spent on Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching must be remunerated at 38hrs.)
3. The institution finds sustainable means of supporting existing staff to complete higher degrees (Second Cycle, Masters degrees are normative for staff teaching BA students) while they continue to teach.
4. The institution hires new permanent-contract staff with more advanced qualifications (Second Cycle, masters) and engage more high profile visiting artists/designers *specifically* to raise the bar in terms of research culture.
5. The institution supports micro-residents of this advanced calibre as researcher-in- residences at the school (with studio and accommodation support, plus an exhibition).

Aigaia School of Art & Design response to all the above Strengths, Findings Areas of Improvement and recommendations which all are interconnected and should be responded as a group of comments:

Aigaia School of art & design has a clear and a very straight forward system to ensure the teaching competence of our teaching staff.

In the attached APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK, section 10 refers to the “Recruitment and Development Policy” of our institution which among others covers in details our related recruitment policy including teaching staff, staff recruitment processes, job description and person specification, advertising, application processes, shortlisting, selection process, complaints (pages 45 – 49).

Recalling from “Job Description and Person Specification of the same document (page 45):

“ In case of an academic staff post, Aigaia School of Art & Design will ensure by the appropriate Person Specification all successful applicants’ competence:

- ***as established researchers and/or practitioners in their ADM field***
- ***as experienced/trained teachers in ADM***
- ***to achieve the objectives and planned learning of the programmes of study offered by Aigaia and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.***

..... “

Our teaching staff are established practitioners which can be verified by the CVs which have been submitted to the CYQAA as part of the application for accreditation. Just to mention Eleni Panayidou, a very well known and respected printmaker – Director of the Hambis Printmaking Museum in Nicosia, Maria Papacharalambous an established Cypriot fine artist – co-founder of Artos Foundation with presentations in Cyprus and abroad who also teaches at Aegean University in Greece etc.

As mentioned by EEC in their conclusions & final remarks of their program of study report (page 43), one of the strengths of Aigaia is that as an institution also provides education in EQF Levels 2, 3 & 4. Most of our staff begin and develop their teaching experiences starting at those levels and working their way up to Level 5, when it is assessed that they are competent to do so.

Aigaia currently employs 11 members of Academic staff for the Visual Arts, Short Cycle Diploma, EQF Level 5. Out of the 11 academic staff, 7 are full time, 2 part-time and 2 of them visiting lecturers.

We can't be sure what is implied by EEC comment ".... And having exclusive work":

- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 1
- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work = 0 - Number of visiting Professors = 1
- Number of special scientists on lease services = 0 (not applicable)

If it is implied full-time teaching staff (including technicians) having explicit teaching duties in our institution, please refer to EEC comment in Administration section:

"All academic staff in all universities are expected to conduct Administration as a part of their role; so this is perfectly acceptable. The EEC were impressed with how all staff take the administrative aspects of their role very seriously. The very small number of students (15 students) makes this administrative approach adequate for the time being. Surely, if the number of students increases substantially (as stated in the strategic planning presentation), additional specialist Admin to support specific pressure points must be considered."

If it implies full-time teaching staff (including technicians) having extra work outside of their full-time employment in our institution, in our opinion is perfectly acceptable as long as is in line with their employment contract.

In any case, the above EEC numerical findings concerning our teaching staff are far from accurate.

Furthermore:

- Eight (8) Of the members of the academic team hold a Masters qualification
- One (1) member holds a Bachelor qualification
- One (1) member holds a BTEC HND (Higher National Diploma)
- One (1) member holds the 2-year Diploma of Visual Arts

All the above can be verified in the attached APPENDIX 5 REVIEWED, UPDATED & AMENDED CURRICULUM page 6.

As it is derived from the above, all of our teaching staff holds a degree which is at least on the same level that they teach – including our 2 Technical staff who only teach technical aspects of the responsible workshops that are appointed to - and 81.8% of our teaching Staff has a degree which is at least a level higher than the level they are teaching.

This is in line with the provisions of the respective national Law (“Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(I) του 2013”) as they are obtained from the CYQAA website. According to this law no less than 70% of the teaching staff should have an approved degree that is a level higher than the level they are teaching to and the rest 30% of the same level.

However, to ensure that Aigaia fully conforms to all recommendations of the EEC it is again stressed out that our institution provides comprehensive internal staff development and training opportunities for all its staff.

Aigaia also supports and provides **remunerated** training time within workload plans for its staff, and has registered all of its teaching staff to attend the following courses, including those recommended by EEC. This will ensure that their teaching level and experiences are formally up to standard (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48):

- Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) (38 hrs) offered by CAULLT – Council of Australian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
- Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, coursera, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning exchange (15 hrs).
- Introduction to Teaching and Learning for RQF Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Introduction to teaching and Assessing the RQF Higher Nationals in Art & Design, Pearson Education
- Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing Art Design RQF BTEC Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Grading Standardisation Workshop for BTEC Higher Nationals Art and Design (RQF), offered by Pearson Education

Our teaching staff is also trained in practice by progressively being engaged in teaching at lower educational levels provided by Aigaia, before being ready and consistently adequate to teach at Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 or on any other educational programme of higher level provided by Aigaia. As already said Aigaia is an approved PEARSON Educational centre since its establishment with centre number 90102, for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

The Visiting Lecturers are an asset for the Visual Arts education since they are active in their relevant industries and bring valuable experiences to their interaction with the students.

However, as recommended by the EEC all 3 ECTS courses (such as Introduction to..... 3 ECTS) are consolidated.

The reviewed, updated and amended courses and the reviewed, updated and amended curriculum are attached as APPENDIX 4 and APPENDIX 5 respectively.

Staff Mentoring Scheme is provided for all new staff, including a comprehensive induction and the early flagging of staff development needs.

Training of every member of Staff in QAE is provided as part of contract (for new staff) and as a % of their workload.

Training about professional development of the staff is also be a yearly compulsory activity from 22-23.

Staff development as in APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48.

Aigaia school of Art & Design hosts Visual Arts in its premises under the program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες”. Aigaia hosts annually, Visual Arts exhibitions and presentations of guests, alumni and staff at its premises. All our students are encouraged to participate in the organisation and implementation of all such events. Examples are the Hambis printmaking exhibitions and lectures, artists Eleni Meli – Eleana Chrysanthou – Anna Alexandrou exhibitions.

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully adopts EEC recommendation to offer micro-residencies as a way of attracting temporary visiting staff-researchers and intends to realise it under existing program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες” (APPENDIX 3 page 34).

6. Research

EEC:

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

The institution does not pay staff to conduct research. As such it has no research policies.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As far as the support provided to our Staff for their Researcher Development, according to EEC recommendations included in both of its reports (institutional & educational) as from the forthcoming academic year 2022-2023 all of our staff will be allocated **remunerated time** in order to work and research personal themes, topics, processes, techniques, issues and generally develop their personal interests and critically reflect on their personal practice (APPENDIX 1, QAE Handbook, page 48).

They will also be working on curated research subjects given by Aigaia with the scope of publication and presentation.

EEC:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.

The EEC found that **Research** (ESG 1.1, 1.5, 1.6) is not within the Institution's remit or something that would be essential to the provision of the Diploma. Most of the items in this section simply do not apply to this institution.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Even through **Research** (ESG 1.1, 1.5, 1.6) is not within the Institution's remit nor something that would be essential to the provision of the Diploma, the institution nevertheless provides its staff with adequate facilities (studios) and equipment (workshops) to cover many of their research activities.

Through its policy and practices, the Institution encourages research collaboration within and outside the Institution, as well as participation in collaborative projects with local and international ADM researchers.

In these matters, the EEC wish to congratulate and encourage the institution. These two elements are the sound footing for the development of a Research Strategy that is rooted in Researcher Development for existing staff.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above findings / strengths.

EEC:

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The Institution would benefit greatly from a policy for the protection and exploitation of intellectual property, and its consistent application. Benchmarking with ADM institutions that do this successfully – such as OCADU in Toronto – and consulting with external stakeholders in other Cypriot Universities that have intellectual property policies that protect the rights of staff, students and the institution, and enable fair and sustainable strategies for monetisation of intellectual property, is *strongly advised*.

If the institution seeks to create and validate a BA programme, it will have to create and implement a Research Policy and show evidence that staff research is directly improving the quality and ambition of learning and teaching.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design has implemented its Intellectual Property Policy (attached as APPENDIX 12) according to relevant EEC recommendations which fully adopts.

We fully agree that if the institution seeks to create and validate a BA programme, it will have to create and implement a Research Policy. Provided that Research is not something that would be essential to the provision of the current educational program evaluated (Diploma), our Research Policy will be submitted together with the submission of a BA program to be validated, fully complying with this EEC recommendation.

7. Resources

EEC:

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

7.2 They institutions has resources to develop teaching currently, but not research.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

As responded above under Research section, Aigaia School of Art & Design provides support to its staff for their Researcher Development, according to EEC recommendations included in both of its reports (institutional & educational).

From the forthcoming academic year 2022-2023 all of our staff will be allocated **remunerated time** in order to work and research personal themes, topics, processes, techniques, issues and generally develop their personal interests and critically reflect on their personal practice (APPENDIX 1, QAE Handbook, page 48).

They will also be working on curated research subjects given by Aigaia with the scope of publication and presentation.

EEC:

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.

The EEC found that the institution follows sound and efficient management of the available financial resources in order to develop academically.

Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

In short, the EEC found that the institution maintains very good learning resources and that it has the financial resources and sound budgeting to maintain them.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

No recommendations for improvement here from the EEC.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully agrees with the above findings / strengths / areas of improvement and recommendations.

B. Conclusions and Final Remarks

EEC:

Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Level 5 Second Cycle

The main area for improvement lies in the design and maintenance of effective Quality Assurance and Enhancement. The Diploma requires that the institution understand and be able to *prove* parity with other institutions with validated Diploma Level 5 courses. This is where the Quality Assurance and Enhancement approach on the Diploma currently programme falls short. A number of measures can be put in place to rectify this:

Engaging with peer review by inviting in external stakeholders from academic and professional sectors would raise the educational standards of the institution and also enable it to make the most of its existing resources.

Engaging external stakeholders / more experienced academic staff in other institutions to mentor, support and offer 'critical friendship' for Curriculum Design and Development is essential in such a small specialist school. Small specialist institutions in the vast majority EHEA states are required by law to take such measures to ensure their quality standards and, in the majority of cases to *validate their higher education programmes*. Hence, the EEC feel that, at very least, the School must seek to formally engage external stakeholders (including more experienced academic staff) from other institutions in the QAE processes, including the review and validation of its courses and programmes.

Engaging 'external' examiners to review final projects would help raise the standards expected from students. External examiners must have academic expertise; a team *might* also have professional expertise (ideally both).

Implementing both externality measures would significantly raise confidence in the ability of the School to meet, maintain and enhance standards in the Diploma.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully conforms to all EEC above recommendations about Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Level 5 Second Cycle.

QAE has been reviewed, updated and amended according to all relevant EEC recommendations included in both of its External Evaluation Reports, all of which have been adopted and implemented in detail.

Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as Appendix 1) which includes specific Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and clear related processes. Specifically, the QAE handbook includes the following sections:

- Introduction
- Aigaia School of Art & Design (about)
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy
- Design & Approval of New Programs of Study
- Modification of Existing Programs of Study
- External Examining

- Academic Integrity and Freedom - Vigilance against Academic fraud
- Students Engagement with Quality Processes / Complaints
- Recruitment and Development Policy
- Policy on Conflict of Interest

Aigaia's parity with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is secured:

- with the provisions of the revised External Examining section (Appendix 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 26 – 29) which provides **engaging external stakeholders / examiners**
- by the accumulated knowledge and experienced gained throw the valuable interaction and collaboration with Pearson Education for all these years, as an approved PEARSON Educational center since its establishment with center number 90102, link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/find-a-pearson-centre.html?Country=Cyprus&City=Nicosia&QualificationFamily=BTEC>

for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

Specifically, as stated in the attached QAE Handbook (APPENDIX 1), within the role of these 2 EEs (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 26) is to be auditors of the assessment process (including review of final projects), mentor-support and offer their expertise for academic programs and course review, monitor the academic standards of awards at institution and to confirm:

- The standards for the courses/awards are set and maintained at an appropriate level;
- The standards for the courses/awards are comparable with similar courses/awards within the sector and **parity** with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is proved;
- The structure and nature of the assessment permits students to demonstrate their level of achievement and they are related written feedback is provided;
- The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted; and
- There is consistency between the institution regulations, ESG provisions and relevant national legislation and directives and guidelines of CYQAA
- Contribute to academic programs and course review / preparation - validation of new academic programs.

Within this context, Aigaia contacted several candidates for the positions of the EEs with experience in Quality Assurance and we are currently in the selection process, discussing and negotiating in order to find the most appropriate EEs for our "Visual Arts" Diploma, Short Cycle, EQF Level 5.

Furthermore, an External Examiner from Pearson is visiting Aigaia each year. The visits take place once or twice per year and the EE looks at samples of work, assessments and verifies the level of education provided according to Pearson Quality Assurance policies.

Since the onsite visit from the EEC, Aigaia went through an External Verification process for the BTEC courses provided, at the end of June 2022, like every year with the PEARSON EE Mr. David Thornhill. During

this process we discussed extensively about Quality Assurance and enhancement approaches, the policies and implementation and about internal and external verification.

EEC:

Support for Academic Faculty: Learning and Teaching support and enhancement

Academic faculty are enthusiastic and dedicated and should be praised for the wide range of responsibilities they undertake. They need to be supported and trained in-service as teachers and researchers to ensure that their teaching and research matches the standard the School presents through its PR. There are many excellent, free, accredited courses that would also help to support and improve staff as teachers. The EEC highly recommend that all academic faculty complete the following free online courses in due course as part of their professional development training:

Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) **(38hrs)** *Course is offered by CAULLT - Council of Australasian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching.*

Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, *coursera*, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning Exchange. **(15hrs)** This would support and fill gaps in the School's use of learning technologies.

Remunerated time should be allocated specifically for training in staff workload plans. (e.g. 38hrs spent on Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching must be remunerated at 38hrs.) Pastoral care is excellent in this small specialist school. As the school grows, it needs to grow its expertise in Quality Assurance and Enhancement, research and student support and begin to create specialist roles here, employing additional staff to focus exclusively on such work.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia fully conforms to all recommendations of the EEC to provide comprehensive internal staff development and training opportunities for all its staff.

Aigaia also supports and provides remunerated training time within workload plans for its staff, and has registered all of its teaching staff to attend the following courses including those recommended by EEC. This will ensure that their teaching level and experiences are formally up to standard (APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48):

- Contemporary Approaches to University Teaching (HE) (38 hrs) offered by CAULLT – Council of Australian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
- Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology, *coursera*, Offered by University of London, Bloomsbury Learning exchange (15 hrs).
- Introduction to Teaching and Learning for RQF Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Introduction to teaching and Assessing the RQF Higher Nationals in Art & Design, Pearson Education
- Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing Art Design RQF BTEC Higher Nationals, Pearson Education
- Grading Standardisation Workshop for BTEC Higher Nationals Art and Design (RQF), offered by Pearson Education

Attendance is part of their workload and as such is compulsory for all our teaching staff and a prerequisite for teaching on all our higher educational programs from academic year 2022-2023 (i.e APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 48).

Our teaching staff is also trained in practice by progressively being engaged in teaching at lower educational levels provided by Aigaia, before being ready and consistently adequate to teach at Visual Arts Diploma 120 ECTS, Short Cycle EQF 5 or on any other educational programme of higher level provided by Aigaia. As already said Aigaia is an approved PEARSON Educational center since its establishment with center number 90102, for Academic qualifications (IGCSE, GCSE, GCE A' Level) and all BTEC courses including the HND RQF Level 5 Higher National Diplomas in Art & Design which are all currently provided by Aigaia.

Staff Mentoring Scheme is provided for all new staff, including a comprehensive induction and the early flagging of staff development needs.

Training of every member of Staff in QAE is provided as part of contract (for new staff) and as a % of their workload.

Training about professional development of the staff is also be a yearly compulsory activity from 22-23.

All the above about Staff development as in APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK page 48.

All needs in staff appointment are continuously assessed and immediate action is taken for the recruitment of staff when needed, including those needed to grow expertise in QAE, research and student support such as specially trained student counsellors, careers advisers. In this respect, our students' recommendations are seriously taken into account.

Currently, as the EEC mentioned:

"Pastoral care is excellent in this small specialist school....."

"The EEC felt that the School was doing a very good job of managing all of the student support elements that a large institution would have to put in place. The staff do this by taking on multiple roles (both academic and para-academic) as is often the case in small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs). They do this very professionally and the students are justifiably appreciative of their efforts."

EEC:

Support for Academic Faculty: Researcher Development

If a BA programme is on the horizon then the institution needs to begin to develop a research culture. Currently, there is no research culture. In short, without a research culture, it will not be able to run a BA programme.

To create a research culture, the School should start by supporting (paying for) developing staff research competencies. The common route in the EHEA to this effect is as follows:

Consulting the EHEA Researcher Development Framework (RDF). The EHEA's RDF is upheld across Europe (including in many third countries such as Scotland and Georgia). The exemplar of what it includes is the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (UK). Consult this and then work on the following:

TNA - research training needs analysis of each member staff.

What training can be provided for free, at cost? What can the institution afford?

Supporting existing staff to complete higher degrees (Second Cycle, Masters degrees are normative for staff to teach BA students) while they continue to teach.

Hiring new staff with more advanced qualifications (Second Cycle, masters) and engaging more high profile visiting artists/designers *specifically* to raise the bar in terms of research culture.

Supporting micro-residents of this advanced calibre as researcher-in-residences at the school (with studio and accommodation support, plus an exhibition).

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

The Introduction of the BA program is in the heart of our 2 years development plan.

As the EEC recommends, our institution in order to create a research culture, as from the forthcoming academic year 2022-2023 all of our staff will be allocated remunerated time in order to work and research personal themes, topics, processes, techniques, issues and generally develop their personal interests and critically reflect on their personal practice ((APPENDIX 1, QAE Handbook, page 48).

They will also be working on curated research subjects given by Aigaia with the scope of publication and presentation.

The provision by EEC of the common route in the EHEA to this effect, is more than welcome is really appreciated and will be followed immediately alongside with the above steps already on track for the forthcoming academic year 2022-2023, to begin developing a research culture as introducing a BA program.

All needs in academic staff appointment are continuously assessed and immediate action is taken for the recruitment of staff when needed, including those needed to introduce a BA program. It is noted that currently, out of the 11 Academic Staff of Aigaia 8 hold Masters degrees.

Aigaia school of Art & Design hosts Visual Arts in its premises under the program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες”. Aigaia hosts annually, Visual Arts exhibitions and presentations of guests, alumni and staff at its premises. All our students are encouraged to participate in the organisation and implementation of all such events. Examples are the Hambis printmaking exhibitions and lectures, artists Eleni Meli – Eleana Chrysanthou – Anna Alexandrou exhibitions etc.

Aigaia School of Art & Design fully adopts EEC recommendation to offer micro-residencies as a way of attracting temporary visiting staff-researchers and intends to realise it under existing program “Εικαστικές φιλοξενίες” (APPENDIX 3 page 34).

EEC:

Programme of Study

The EEC met with students to hear about the programme, the institution and their own work. While the students were highly enthused about the institution and their tutors, the EEC were not convinced that the students had a sufficient grasp of the current state of the field of ADM. Their contextual knowledge was *not* current and their frames of theoretical and practical reference were not adequate and up to date. This would severely hamper their educational progress if they were to transfer from their Diploma to a BA programme in Cyprus or, indeed, anywhere in the EHEA. The content and ambition of the courses needs to improve to ensure they are kept up to date with the latest developments in ADM so that students are adequately prepared for transition to work or further study. *Replacing* the extant History of Art courses is key to this; **AND** updated ADM theory provision (Visual Culture courses) that is focused on contemporary resources and debates are essential.

The small scale, supportive family structure is clearly very appealing to the current cohort of students. However, this kinship model is also a source of complacency among the student body regarding what they think they know and what they imagine they might need to learn. It creates a bubble that leads to a lack of accountability vis a vis the ADM field and in relation to QAE. Students need to be challenged (dissensus), this means they have to have their worldviews expanded and be asked to step out of their comfort zones. The students need to have support *and* to be given rigorous feedback. The emphasis is very much on support but not enough on rigour.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

Aigaia fully adopted relevant EEC recommendations and reviewed, updated and amended accordingly the curriculum (APPENDIX 5). In this context History of Art courses have been replaced and introduced “Contextual Studies” that aim (APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES):

*“to critically engage students in the history and theory of the **Visual Arts**, its scope and contexts, as well as the wider social and material context in culture and creative contemporary practice”.*

The courses aim to prepare students as independent thinkers, capable of selecting appropriate topics and producing sustained pieces of independent studies.

The course continues to place the student in the process of gathering and developing knowledge about their chosen pathway, its history, context and professional and ethical dimension.

Students practice the analytical and discursive skills needed to gain knowledge of principles, objects and methods along the way, to understand the roles, locations and responsibilities of important players while considering the wider relevant ethical issues and becoming knowledgeable about current issues in their chosen pathway.

This process may be approached from the point of view of the producer or consumer, the critic or the professional, the academic or the practitioner”.

(From the Introduction of the “Contextual & Critical Studies”, 3rd Semester course APPENDIX 4 REVIEWED UPDATED & AMENDED COURSES).

The exclusive unique educational environment that distinguishes Aigaia from any other institution in Cyprus and probably elsewhere, has been proved to be in the best interest of our students throughout the years of our operation and since then has been continuously evolving and significantly improving. We will continue to do so taking into account all constructive recommendations either internally and/or from external stakeholders, especially those relevant recommendations from EEC under the evaluation process of CYQAA.

EEC:

Admin

The Institution should simplify its structures and procedures for administration, assessment and governance to ensure that they deliver what they say they deliver.

The Institution must remove all conflicts of interest from its QAE processes; consider adding external academic members of staff to your Course Review and Approval Panels.

Aigaia School of Art & Design response:

All recommendations of the EEC on Assessment have been fully adopted and our Assessment has been reviewed accordingly. The detailed Assessment implemented by Aigaia according to EEC relevant recommendations can be found in the attached APPENDIX 1 QAE handbook pages 13- 26.

All structures and procedures for administration and governance of our institution are aligned with Laws “Οι περί Σχολών Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης Νόμοι του 1996 (67(1)/1996) έως 53(Ι) του 2013” as they are obtained from the CYQAA website and they perfectly match with the character of Aigaia as a small highly specialised art & design private institution.

As repeatedly was stated and documented, Aigaia has fully adopted all EEC recommendations and has already addressed and removed from its QAE processes all Conflicts of Interest and consequently is in the process of appointing External academic members of staff to its Course Review and Approval Panels.

The role of the External Examiners (*APPENDIX 1 QAE HANDBOOK pages 26-29*) is to:

“External Examiners at Aigaia School of Art & Design are auditors of the assessment process and also mentor, support and offer their expertise for academic programs and course review. Their role is to monitor the academic standards of awards at institution and specifically to confirm that:

- *The standards for the courses/awards are set and maintained at an appropriate level;*
- *The standards for the courses/awards are comparable with similar courses/awards within the sector and parity with other institutions with validated Level 5 courses is proved;*
- *The structure and nature of the assessment permits students to demonstrate their level of achievement;*
- *The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted; and*
- *There is consistency between the institution regulations, ESG provisions and relevant national legislation and directives and guidelines of CYQAA*

Also contribute to academic programs and course review / preparation - validation of new academic programs”.

Furthermore, Aigaia has extensively reviewed its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (attached as APPENDIX 1). With the introduction of a special section in this Handbook about “Policy of Conflict of Interest”, we address all possible related issues to assure that potential Conflict of Interest within the Institution, are promptly addressed and avoided and Conflict of Interest is removed from its QAE process. Specifically, in this section we elaborate on our Policy, its purpose, the principles, related definitions, the procedure determining a Conflict of Interest, disclosure of a Conflict of Interest and resolution of a Conflict of Interest (pages 49-54 of the attached APPENDIX 1 QAE handbook).

C. Higher Education Institution Academic Representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
ALEXIA HADJISTEFANOU	DIRECTOR	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	
Fullname	Position	

Date: 25.08.2022

