

Doc. 300.1.2

# Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: December 10 2020

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
College of Tourism and Hotel Management

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **Programme of study  
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**In Greek:**

Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (18 μήνες, Μεταπτυχιακό στη  
Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων, 90 ΠΜ)

**In English:**

Business Administration (18 months, Master in  
Business Administration) 90 ECTS

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's 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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].**

## **Intoduction.**

The online visit took place on Wednesday 21 October 2020.

The visit started at 10am with introductions and a meeting with the Director of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management (COTHM), Mr Adamides, who gave a short presentation of the Institution.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) then met with: the Academic Director of the college, Dr Hadjistylli; the course coordinator Professor Christoforou; Mrs Stavrou, Head of academic affairs; Mrs Christodoulou, Lecturer; and Mrs Michaelides, Senior lecturer. A 10-minute presentation of the MBA program by Professor Christoforou was then presented, followed by a 20-minute presentation by Dr Andri Hadjistylli. Following the presentations, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions on the structure, content and development of the program.

In the afternoon, the EEC met members of the teaching staff involved in the MBA teaching. The discussion covered academic qualification, staff development, research, workloads, assessment, and resources. Later in the afternoon, the EEC met with three postgraduate students who shared their experiences studying at the COTHM. This was followed by a meeting with members of the administrative team.

The visit concluded with a meeting and general discussion with the director of the college, the academic director and the course coordinator. The discussion focused on clarifying issues on resources, library provision and the development of the MBA program.

Overall, the EEC felt that the online visit was very productive, with all staff of the college being very collaborative and helpful in answering all questions. Additional resources that the EEC requested during the visit were made available online without delay. During the online visit, there were few issues with the quality of the internet connection, but these were dealt without any major disruption.

The representative of the CY.Q.A.A, Mr Lefkios Neophytou did also an excellent job in facilitating the online visit, ensuring that all sessions ran smoothly.

**ANSWER: We thank the EEC committee for their teleconference visit. We are thankful to Dr Lefkios Neophytou for the arrangements made for the teleconferencing.**

## 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.300.1.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, without changing the format of the report:*
  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the deficiencies noted under the quality indicators (criteria)*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc. 300.1.1).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

## 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The MBA is well designed as a generalist program, covering all the main topics and areas in Business and Management necessary for future managers to provide leadership in private and public sector organizations. There are well-defined learning outcomes and the aims and objectives of the program are well-articulated in the documentation. Faculty and administrative support staff enthusiastically support the program and various initiatives for its future development.

The study program includes compulsory courses in the areas of Human Resources Management, Marketing, Finance, Statistics, Entrepreneurship, Organizational Behavior, and Leadership. A thesis is also a compulsory component of the program. The optional courses cover the broad thematic areas of Project Management, Management Information Systems, Economics and Organizational Communication. The design of the MBA program has been developed by drawing on the guidelines of the CYQAA. The COTHM adheres to well-established internal quality assurance processes for the design and approval of programs.

**ANSWER: The MBA is offered by the college for the last ten years. It is a program that was validated by Wolverhampton University right from the beginning. Our graduates could continue their studies at Wolverhampton University at an advance status. They could register at the second semester and do the thesis to get either their MBA or the MA in International Management. The validation expired two years ago. The program was redesigned by the Internal Quality Assurance Committee with the contribution of the lecturers who are involved in lecturing on the program.**

### Strengths

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

The MBA offered by the COTHM has been in existence for many years, but without formal accreditation. The EEC feels that the program is well designed and supported by expert faculty and sufficient resources to be accredited. The college is committed to Quality assurance procedures, which offers reassurances for the quality and sustainability of the program in the longer term.

**. ANSWER: We thank the members of EEC for their good words.**

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

The MBA program strikes a good balance between the development of technical skills and knowledge as well as softer managerial and leadership skills. The program could benefit from a greater integration of research and teaching, with more evidence of faculty research informing the curriculum.

**ANSWER: The college has established as from June 2020 the research center. Already two projects have been completed by our lecturers and submitted for publication.**

The project prepared by Roxana Michaelides < The role of continuing education of local community in the hospitality business > has been accepted for publishing in the Journal of Tourism Futures 2020.

The paper “E-BUSINESS MODEL FOR MEDICAL TOURISM” prepared by DR. Andreas Siamarou, has been accepted in October for publishing in “International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology”

Our researchers are working on more projects.

Roxana Michaelides is working together with Dr. Ali Hyasat, a researcher in the field of Tourism and Crisis Management at Al-Balqa Applied University (BAU) Jordan, on the project <CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS FACING HOSPITALITY INTERNSHIP-A MANAGERIAL VIEW> ,

Roxana Michaelides and Andria Hadjistylli are working together with Mehri Yasami, Prince of Songkla University, Malaysia, on the project <SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT>.

Dr. Pandelis Mitsis is currently running a research project named <DO DIFFERENCES IN HOTEL ROOMS’ PRICES REFLECT THE DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS RECORDED IN TRAVEL WEBSITES?>

Roxana Michaelides is working together with Dr. Marguerite Wotto, Researcher/Trainer at University of Quebec/Montreal, Canada on a BOOK <GUESTOLOGY-GOLDEN RULES FOR HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES>.

RELEVANT Results of the projects will be incorporated in the curriculum to be offered after the publication.

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas: *Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*

| Sub-area | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|---|
| 1.1      | Policy for quality assurance                        |
| 1.2      | Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review    |
| 1.3      | Public information                                  |
| 1.4      | Information management                              |

## 2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

### *Findings*

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The College of Tourism and Hotel Management has a pronounced international orientation in its programs, including its MBA program, in which the entirety of its student body is coming from Southern Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The college collaborates with a number of institutions in several other countries as well, such as Russia, the U.K and Poland. The stated goal for the Institution's administration is nevertheless to enhance its MBA recruitment among the Cypriot and Greek student segments.

The MBA classes are taught in the college premises with the presence of its students normally. When this is not feasible, such as in the case of the pandemic, the teaching method used is synchronous online teaching, with the students attending their classes from their computer. The lectures are recorded and uploaded to the "Edmodo" platform, for those unable to attend the live lecture. Students appear content with these methods used by the college, which apparently suit their needs. Practical training is not part of the program, although the college does use its network from its hotel management programs to offer some job opportunities (mostly summer jobs), within the constraints of the law, since the foreign students typically have no permission to work.

The coursework is highly relevant and resembles that of a standard MBA program. The faculty appears to be working closely with the students, which is a rather easy task considering the small number of students enrolled. The students the EEC spoke with appear to be satisfied with their overall relationship with the college.

***ANSWER: The program was offered face to face at the college's premises. Because of the pandemic, it is offered now on line using the Edmodo and the Cisco Webex platforms.***

***Only practical module lectures are offered at the college premises.***

***The College, apart from the students from Asian countries, has the ability to attract students from Russia, Bellarussia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Estonia and other former Eastern European countries.***

***The accreditation of the program will help us to promote it to the above-mentioned countries.***

***Practical training is not included in the program but we have the contacts with employers to register the students with them to do practical training if this is allowed by the government something for which the Ministry of Employment are not sure.***

### *Strengths*

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

The COTHM enjoys some advantages over its competitors. Its international exposure allows for the transfer of knowledge and practices from other institutions and further the strengthening of its multicultural student community.

The participation of faculty members in the Erasmus program and other types of collaboration with foreign universities and organizations, helps staff become more effective in communicating with their students.

The recent emphasis of the college in research demonstrates its intent on becoming academically stronger in its effort to claim a higher stake of the local MBA "market".

**ANSWER: We thank the EEC members for their good words.**

*Areas of improvement and recommendations*

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

The college needs to increase its intake to create the potential of the students from the peer learning, while helping out its staying viable. The small class size increases the college costs also.

The administration of the college and the program director could expand their potential recruitment pool to other countries as well beyond the southern Asian ones, given the connection they have with other institutions from Russia, Poland and other eastern European countries.

Practical training opportunities would enhance the viability of the program, if the college could develop them further, becoming more attractive to local students as well. The use of the networks of COTHM in the field of tourism could help cultivate a potential pool of employers for general MBA holders also

**ANSWER:** Until now, we were promoting the program to Asian countries because the program was not accredited. With the possible accreditation of the program, we feel confident that we will be able to promote it to Russia and the other Eastern European countries mentioned above. At the same time, we will promote it in Cyprus hoping that we will attract a number of students. We are confident that we can secure for the European countries students, including Cypriot students, practical training with the companies we cooperate with for the Hospitality Management program and other companies.

We know that at present, we do not earn money for operating the MBA and other programs subsidize it. However, we are confident that things will be improved when the program gets accreditation.

| Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas: |  | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|--|--|---|
| Sub-area   |  |   |
| 2.1  | Process of teaching and learning and student-centered teaching methodology | Compliant   |
| 2.2  | Practical training   | Partially compliant                                 |
| 2.3  | Student assessment   | Compliant   |

### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

#### *Findings*

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The COTHM has a stated interest in conducting research and disseminating it in both academic and professional fora. It has a Tourism and Hotel management research center, established in 2020, as the administration informed the EEC members, which under the tutelage of four faculty members encourages the students to participate in research.

The college also is the co-editor of Tourism Today Journal, with two of its faculty members sitting in the editorial board of it.

The publication productivity to date has been rather moderate and there is space for improvement.

#### **ANSWER:**

**The college has established as from June 2020 the research center.**

**The College has started the Journal Tourism Today twenty years ago. For the last five years, the journal is issued together with the Ball State University of USA. Two of our lecturers Andreas Christoforou and Andria Hadjistylli are on the editorial board.**

**The editor of the journal has done all requested changes by SCOPUS in order to register it with them. Please find attached the latest information about the SCOPUS registration.**

#### **ATTACHMENT 1.**

**We believe that by the end of this year Tourism Today will be registered with SCOPUS.**

**Details of the results of the research center are mentioned on pages 3 and 4.**

#### *Strengths*

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

The teaching staff of COTHM's MBA is of appropriate rank and status, with more than 75% of them holding a PH.D. and teaching Full-time.

The development of the new research center by the COTHM will be indirectly helping the MBA program also, by infusing the research cultural values to both the faculty and students.

The participation in programs such as the Erasmus will help the college and the program accumulate experience and knowledge, through mobility of both students and teachers. Teachers of the MBA program, participate in other programs offered by the college and those programs have bilateral agreements with several universities abroad.

The program with the support of the college invites professors from other universities, benefitting both the faculty and students.

#### **ANSWER:**

**The subject of the PhD holders is of high concern to the college. We advertised last year and we received only few applications but without PhD. We advertised again few days ago and again no applications from holders of PhD have been received. However, in both cases, we received applications from people who are on the last stage of their dissertation and we have started cooperation with them. Our application for accreditation of MBA includes two such lecturers who are Christos Ioannou who is doing the supervision of thesis and Elena Panayiotou.**



**HOWEVER, IF THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS THAT HOLDERS OF PhD LECTURERS MUST TEACH THE MODULES WE ALLOCATED TO THE TWO LECTURERS MENTIONED ABOVE, WE WILL NOT HAVE ANY PROBLEM TO IMPLEMENT IT BY REALLOCATING THE MODULES TO THE PhD HPLDERS NAMELY DR PANTELIS MITSIS, DR SOTIRIS HADJIGEORGIOU AND DR LEFTERIS KOLOKASIDES .**

**We attach herewith the advertisement-ATTACHMENT 2 and the PhD holders list. ATTACHMENT 3**

**Every year a number of our lecturers visit European Universities under the Erasmus program. At the same time, a number of lecturers from European Universities visit our college for lecturing. We believe that this interaction increases the knowledge of our lecturers and students.**

#### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

The major issue the college MBA program needs to address is its enrolment, which is difficult to tackle considering the fierce competition characterizing the local education industry. Choices must be made by the administration about the continuation of the program in the near future. The problem may be related to the college's primary image of a hotel management school rather than a general business school. The college may upend this Tourism related school reputation and shift its brand to a more generalist school of business one, opening new avenues for growth, not without a risk of losing part of its reputation nevertheless.

The limited amount of research characterizing the program so far, appears to have been addressed, given the initiatives by the college administration, with the new research center.

The COTHM, may experiment with marketing tools available to try to attain a higher number of students, via more scholarships, lower prices, etc., and focus on long term profitability through scale rather than using pricing comparable to competitor programs.

Another alternative for the program could be the offering of the program in a distance learning mode, making it more amenable to students from Greece and elsewhere, provided corresponding incentives would be offered to attract them. A distance learning program could also be offered in tandem with the conventional one.

#### **ANSWER:**

**We agree with the comments of the EEC members' about the low number of students registered on the program. This we believe is the result of the non-accreditation status of the program. As we have mentioned in pages 5 and 6 we have the contacts with a high number of Universities in Russia and some other countries which are interested to cooperate with us on the MBA program.**

**The subject of renaming the college to a more general name has been discussed several times and we are not sure whether this will serve the long-term interests of the college.**

**The issue of the research has been answered on pages 4 and 7.**

**As far as the suggestion of the EEC to offer the MBA on distance learning mode, we prefer to get the accreditation to offer it on a face-to-face mode first and then to apply again to offer it at a distance learning mode.**



Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

|     | <b>Sub-area</b>                            | <b><i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></b> |
|-----|--|--|
| 3.1 | Teaching staff recruitment and development | Compliant  |
| 3.2 | Teaching staff number and status           | Compliant  |
| 3.3 | Synergies of teaching and research         | Partially compliant  |

#### 4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

##### *Findings*

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The admissions criteria for the MBA program are appropriate. To be admitted into the program, candidates must hold a recognised Bachelor's degree and proficiency in English. For proof of English proficiency, applicants must provide evidence of satisfactory command of English either through the TOEFL or IELTS qualification. The admissions criteria are publicized and are available by the Admissions office and are also available on the website.

Students applying for transfer credit must file a 'Transfer Credit Evaluation form' at the Admissions Office together with a non-refundable fee. Overall, the MBA program complies with all requirements of the CYQAA and European and International standards regarding student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

#### **ANSWER:**

The admissions criteria have been enriched with the following.

##### **1. Professional qualifications equivalent to a bachelor Degree.**

***“Examples of professional qualifications, which are officially recognized as equivalent to a Bachelor’s degree, are the qualifications of the Chartered Accountants, The Chartered Certified Accountants, the Chartered Management Accountants, the International Accountants, the Certified Public Accountants, the Chartered Surveyors, Chartered Architects, and other professional qualifications which are recognized internationally as equivalent to a Bachelor Degree”.***

##### **2. Although our admission criteria includes the requirements of English language, we include herewith the latest requirements of CyQAA, of the English language as follows:**

###### **“ MINIMUM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

- A High School leaving certificate or equivalent qualification is a necessary entry requirement. In the case of overseas applicants, their secondary/high school credentials should be sufficient to allow them to apply for admission to post-secondary (higher) educational establishments of their home country.***
- Very good knowledge of the English Language with a score of 5.5 in IELTS or 50 in TOEFL or B2 in Common European Framework or evidence of English Proficiency of University of Cambridge Exams FCE First Certificate in English. Candidates with IELTS 5 or equivalent are required to take Foundation Courses in English.”***

**THE ABOVE ARE INCLUDED IN THE REVISED APPLICATION INCLUDED HEREWITH AT PAGE 10.**

### Strengths

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

Transparent processes in place to ensure student admissions, progressions, recognition and certification comply with national and international quality assurance standards. Furthermore, the college is an equal opportunity provider offering flexible admissions to perspective students. Support is given in relation to finding part-time or full-time job positions over the summer break which is another strength of the institution.

**ANSWER: We thank EEC members for their good words.**

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

Although there are no specific areas of improvement to recommend, an alumni network would be beneficial in order to keep track of the progress of previous graduates. This would be helpful in relation to enhancing the numbers of perspective applicants. Given the current global reality, continuous updating and upgrading of technology platforms is also something necessary in student progress monitoring and recognition of achievements.

**ANSWER: We agree with the comments made by the EEC members about the need to have a register of graduates. We have designed the attached form to be given to the current graduates to create the register and to keep track of the progress of graduates.**

**We will place it on our website and call upon our graduates to fill it in and forward it to us. ATTACHMENT 4.**

| Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas: | Sub-area                                  | <i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|--|---|---|
| 4.1  | Student admission, processes and criteria | Compliant   |
| 4.2  | Student progression                       | Compliant   |
| 4.3  | Student recognition                       | Compliant   |
| 4.4  | Student certification                     | Compliant   |

## 5. Resources

(ESG 1.6)

### *Findings*

*A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.*

The MBA program is supported by adequate learning, physical, and human resources. Students are satisfied with the physical environment (classrooms, building, and other facilities). Faculty and support staff are equally satisfied with the resources available and they are highly motivated and committed to provide the best possible learning experience for the students. The use of electronic resources and online communication is also adequate and helped running the MBA program during the pandemic.

**ANSWER: We thank the EEC members for their good words.**

### *Strengths*

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

There is a good working relationship among faculty, administrative staff, and students, which contributes to the efficient delivery of the MBA program. Tutors and the staff are friendly and helpful, as students mentioned.

**ANSWER: We thank the EEC members for their good words.**

### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

*A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

The library resources could be improved to include additional databases (besides EBSCO).

**ANSWER: Although we feel that the agreement with EBSCO provides sufficient number of business and management books, we made enquiries with the library of the University of Cyprus to connect with them. They informed us that the way to cooperate was as external associates but our lecturers and students had to be visiting the UC library to get the information they need. They had given us the contact of ΤΕΡΑΚ. We talked to them but the service they could give to us was through the publishers something that we did directly by ourselves.**

**We have signed agreement with PROQUEST for Business Ebook subscription to give more flexibility to both lecturers and students. ATTACHMENT 5**

| Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas: | Sub-area                        | Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 5.1  | Teaching and Learning resources | Partially compliant                          |
| 5.2  | Physical resources              | Compliant                                    |
| 5.3  | Human support resources         | Compliant                                    |
| 5.4  | Student support                 | Compliant                                    |



**6. Additional for distance learning programmes**  
*(ALL ESG)*

**NOT APPLICABLE**



**7. Additional for doctoral programmes**  
*(ALL ESG)*

**NOT APPLICABLE**



**8. Additional for joint programmes**  
*(ALL ESG)*

**NOT APPLICABLE**



## A. Conclusions and final remarks

### D. Conclusions and final remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF*

The program is well-designed to cover all the main areas in Business and Management normally expected to be included in a general MBA degree. Besides the core courses, there is a good range of electives that offer students opportunities to extend their knowledge in specialist areas. Faculty members have expertise in their respective areas and keen to engage with research activity. Administrative staff are dedicated and committed to supporting the students and the program in general. Many staff are working for the college for several years and have seen its progress and development over the years.

The EEC recommends potential improvements in two main areas:

- 1) Develop the research center further to include more members of academic staff (currently four members) and continue growing the network of international collaborators.
- 2) Expand library resources to include more online databases and journal collections.

### ANSWER:

1. **The research centre has started with four members of lecturers. Now Mr Pantelis Mitsis has joined the research centre.**

**Furthermore the research centre at the beginning had cooperation with Universities from Malaysia, New South Wales Australia and Bournemouth University of U.K. SEE ATTACHED PRESENTATION. Now it has expanded this cooperation with a University from Jordan and Canada.**

2. **The college has signed agreement with PROQUEST for the Business Ebook to give more flexibility to lecturers and students.**

## B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

| <i>Name</i>                         | <i>Position</i>              | <i>Signature</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>SAVVAS ADAMIDES</b>              | DIRECTOR                     |                  |
| <b>ANDREAS CHRISTOFOROU</b>         | COURSE COORDINATOR           |                  |
| <b>SOTIROULLA<br/>CHRISTODOULOU</b> | COURSE COORDINATOR<br>TTA    |                  |
| <b>ANDRIA HADJISTYLLI</b>           | ACADEMIC DIRECTOR            |                  |
| <b>ELENA STAVROU</b>                | DIRECTOR ACADEMIC<br>AFFAIRS |                  |
| <b>ROXANA MICHAELIDES</b>           | SENIOR LECTURER              |                  |

**Date:** December 10 2020

