

Doc. 300.1.3

Date: 08/12/2020

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- Higher Education Institution:
Ledra College
- Town: Nicosia
- School/Faculty: School/Faculty
- Department: International Relations
- Programme of study under evaluation
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Διεθνείς Σχέσεις, Παγκόσμια Οικονομία και
Στρατηγική

In English:

International Relations, Global Economy and Strategy

- Language(s) of instruction: English
- Programme's status: New



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws of 2015 to 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>University</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Christos A. Ioannou | Professor | University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne |
| Nikolaos Papadakis | Professor | University of Crete |
| Arndt Brendecke | Professor | LMU Munich |
| Andrea Lambe | Student | University of Cyprus |
| Name | Position | University |
| Name | Position | University |



B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 1.9)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The EEC identified in the initial report under the section Areas of Improvement and Recommendations the following shortcomings. These shortcomings pertain to the programme itself and/or the College. (1) The EEC had no access to the courses' learning material prior to the evaluation. (2) The BA programme is rather teaching-oriented and that could undermine research and its reflection to teaching. (3) A formal internship programme (corresponding to specific ECTS) should be established and incorporated in the study programme. (4) Teaching staff's evaluations by the students affect the teaching process, thus should be further clarified and specified. (5) Further focus on specific insights, parameters and aspects of the role of enterprises in the global economy and even geopolitics, as well as their interaction with the state and economic governance, is recommended. (6) Provisions for the involvement of external stakeholders in the QA policy have not been established. (7) Limited number of elective courses and need to include focused seminars.

Thank you for your response.

The EEC appreciates the fact the Ledra College BA Programme's Academic Team has taken into account the remarks and the recommendations of the EEC.

(1) Indeed, there was a clear deficit concerning the courses' learning material that should be reported to the EEC. The fact that the Ledra College BA Programme's Academic Team took into consideration this EEC's remark and now provides the majority of the courses' learning material is appreciated. Given the study of the above-mentioned material, the EEC can now certify that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS, while the learning material submitted corresponds, at a certain extent, to the needs and demands of this ambitious and demanding BA Programme. However, the EEC recommends the BA Programme's Academic Team to prepare **all** the courses' learning material prior to running the Programme.

(2) The Ledra College BA Programme's Academic Team commits itself that "*when the programme starts, we plan to reduce the teaching workload to help students and the faculty members to get deeper into the research of International Relations.*" Indeed some steps have already been taken (i.e. planning of organizing seminars and conferences on the teaching topics), but there are more to do in order to reduce teaching workload and enhance research, as well as teaching-research synergies. Ledra College's commitment, explicitly stating that "*we ensure that this BA programme will be regularly reviewed in light of the latest research in the field of International Relations,*" is comforting but more explicit commitments need to materialize. The Teaching Staff, consisting of 6 full-time faculty, 4 part-time and 3 visiting is a good starting point, however the Institution would certainly need to recruit more teaching staff during the operation of the BA Programme, given how broad and demanding is such a BA programme. Furthermore, the EEC strongly recommends to develop more initiatives in order to enhance research and teaching-research synergies (i.e. developing a supportive mechanism to facilitate teaching staff to apply for research grants).

(3) As far as the establishment of a formal Internship Programme (corresponding to specific ECTS) in the study programme concerned, the EEC fully understands the current state-of-play (COVID-19 related restrictions) and respects the Republic of Cyprus (relevant) Regulatory Framework.

However, we have been informed that the law does allow foreign students to exploit internship and practical training opportunities.

(4) Regarding the “Policy for quality assurance,” the EEC (in its initial evaluation report) has highlighted the strengths of the policy for quality assurance of the program of study. The clarifications, now provided by the Institution, mainly concerning the relevant articles of the Faculty Handbook, as well as the Peer Classroom Appraisal Form (which includes the appraisal guidelines and the form that the students of Ledra College should fill in) and the Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire, are a step in the right direction. The fact that the Ledra College BA Programme’s Academic Team (based on the comments of the EEC) has proceeded in amending the rules of the Handbook, especially the new paragraph 4.5.1. of the relevant amendment, indeed clarifies several topics which seemed to be fuzzy, but there are still some important but unclear premises. For instance, how is research evaluated? The faculty members need to be fully aware of the precise criteria based on which their performance evaluations will be carried out.

(5) The EEC agrees with the Ledra College BA Programme’s Academic Team’s statement that there are now several courses, which focus on the role of enterprises in the global economy and even geopolitics.

(6) The EEC, in its initial report, has ascertained regarding the “design, approval, on-going monitoring and review” that *“the program of study is designed with overall program objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes, presented in every course’s outline.... while it is subject to a formal institutional approval process and it results in a qualification that is specified and communicated, and seems to refer to the correct level (6) of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and procedures for periodic formal evaluation of the program are in place.”* The main EEC’s recommendation concerned the involvement of external stakeholders in the QA policy. The EEC highly appreciates Ledra College BA Program’s Academic Team’s will and intention to involve external stakeholders in the quality assurance policy of the study program. The fact that they have already involved two external stakeholders in the Quality Assurance process documents the above-mentioned intention.

(7) The fact that the Ledra College BA Program’s Academic Team acknowledges the need to increase the **elective courses** and subsequently commits to increasing them, depending on the needs of the BA, when the program gets in force, is highly appreciated by the EEC. This is a recommendation of vital importance, and the College should fulfill its above-mentioned commitment, even before the BA Programme starts. Further, the Institution explains analytically and documents that it has experience to organize focused **seminars** on the various sectors, courses and areas of the program, while clearly stating that it intends to do so within the framework of the BA Program.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The EEC identified in the initial report under the section Areas of Improvement and Recommendations the following shortcomings. These shortcomings pertain to the program itself and/or the College. (1) There are no opportunities for internships or practical training available to the students of the College. (2) The bibliography seems to be partially outdated. (3) There is limited teaching staff, which limits students' exposure to different pedagogical approaches. (4) There is a marked absence of frontier research in teaching, which is a product of the lack of research-oriented staff. (5) The program study lacks a course on intercultural dialogue and respect, gender equality, social integration of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your response.

(1) We have been informed that the law does allow foreign students to take advantage of internship and/or practical training opportunities. Therefore, the highlighted concerns are surpassed. Let us point out that internships and practical training should not only be directed at places, such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, but also include places, such as multinational companies.

(2) The list of references remains partially outdated, which is worrisome given the need for state-of-the-art exposure.

(3) In the initial report, the EEC highlighted the lack of a sufficient number of teaching staff. We welcome the addition of new staff. However, we would like to know the new allocation of classes across the teaching staff in the programme as well as the teaching load of each member involved in the programme.

(4) An important component of a higher education institute is conducting frontier academic research. The EEC in its initial report found that there is a clear deficiency in frontier academic research in the programme/College. The EEC thus highlighted in this point two aspects: the absence of frontier research, and the lack of research-oriented staff. As mentioned above, the addition of new members to the teaching staff is a step forward. Importantly, the new staff seems to engage in research as evidenced by their publications in peer-reviewed journals. However, many of the journal publications are in low-ranked journals. Moreover, the EEC was not able to locate the ranking of the journal International Journal of Business Management and Commerce. The members thus felt that the chances for frontier research should thus be enhanced.

(5) The EEC's final point on the suggested course was not addressed.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The EEC identified in the initial report under the section Areas of Improvement and Recommendations the following shortcomings. These shortcomings pertain to the programme itself and/or the College. (1) There is no emphasis on presenting cutting-edge scientific developments in the classroom. (2) The teaching workload is prohibitively high, thus, impeding research and grant proposal writing. (3) The dispersion of teaching load across faculty members is not typical and might cause friction. (4) The EEC was not persuaded of transparent procedures in the recruitment and faculty development. (5) Concerns were also raised on the lack of procedures to dismiss untenured faculty. (6) The College should aggressively hire research-oriented young faculty to facilitate synergies in teaching and research that are currently non-existent. (7) There is lack of research dissemination.

Thank you for your response.

(1) Some examples on presenting cutting-edge scientific developments in the classroom would go a long way towards persuading the EEC that this shortcoming has been adequately addressed.

(2) In the initial report, the EEC highlighted the need to reduce the teaching load of the faculty to allow them to conduct academic research. Comparing the College faculty's teaching load to that of other comparable European schools, Ledra College's is clearly at the higher end. Indeed the regulations of CYQAA allow the College to engage faculty in 12 hours-per-week teaching. However, CYQAA also mandates conducting frontier academic research, which is a clear deficiency at your College. Clearly, steps need to be taken to rectify this shortcoming. The EEC is therefore suggesting a way to increase the likelihood of fulfilling the latter important requirement. The EEC understands that some members of the staff only teach 4 hours per week. The question is do these members publish at all? If not, why not increase their teaching load and decrease the load of those that might conduct research but at this point cannot due to the higher teaching load.

(3) In its initial report, the EEC identified a difficulty in conducting due diligence when there is a big dispersion of the weekly teaching load across the teaching staff. Unfortunately, the EEC was not provided with more information to understand whether this issue has been resolved.

(4) The EEC requested transparent procedures with respect to the recruitment and faculty development. As already explained earlier, the EEC welcomes the addition of 4.5.1 in the Faculty Handbook. However, the EEC did not find any information as to how the actual evaluation of performance in research per se will be taking place. As an example, consider a publication by John in Journal A and a publication by Alex in Journal B. Both are peer-reviewed journals. Without a (common knowledge) ranking of the journals how can you evaluate the two members with transparency. Perhaps Journal A is a top 5 and Journal B is a bottom 5. Clause 4.5.1 is an important addition that describes the procedures in carrying out evaluations. The EEC would still like to see how the individual will be evaluated; the College has described the procedure to determine who will evaluate the candidate – not how. Such vagueness will lead the faculty

members to target the minimum. In accordance with standard practices across departments, there should be a list with the rankings of the journals.

(5) This point also echoes on the previous point that there has to be a clear understanding of what is expected of each individual so that once the College carries out the procedures to dismiss an individual, the College will not run the risk of the dismissed exploiting the vagueness in the rules and suing the College.

(6) More evidence should be provided to indicate the College's clear switch in culture.

(7) The EEC welcomes the example with the book and the respective cooperation with other universities; more examples along those lines would be in the right direction.

4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The EEC identified in the initial report under the section Areas of Improvement and Recommendations the following shortcomings. These shortcomings pertain to the programme itself and/or the College. (1) There should be information on the website with respect to the characteristics of the incoming class for each programme. (2) Given the EEC's observation that incoming students seem to be quite concentrated amongst Cyprus, Nigeria and Ghana, more information should be provided (including entry requirements) to attract students from other countries as well. (3) A lot of information has been delegated to specialists, but at a minimum, fundamental admissions' information should also be placed on the website.

Unfortunately, there was no response whatsoever by the College on the above.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The EEC identified in the initial report under the section Areas of Improvement and Recommendations the following shortcomings. These shortcomings pertain to the programme itself and/or the College. (1) The teaching is rather teacher- than student-oriented. (2) A small teaching staff with a high teaching load is responsible for a relatively large range of subjects. (3) Practical experience of staff is considered equivalent with or superior to scientific competence. (4) Book supply via the library and online resources are very limited, which makes own research more difficult. (5) Internships would strengthen both the careers of the students and their own experience.

Thank you for your response.

(1) There is no answer to the first point.

(2) The College has replied that interdisciplinary approaches are fundamental to the study of International Relations. The EEC, however, has not expressed doubts about this, but rather about the attempt to cover a particularly wide range of subjects with a relatively small teaching staff. The reply that faculty staff has teaching experience and has partly held positions as full or associate professors in the past cannot dispel these doubts.

(3) The College in their response explains that further research can be conducted during teaching hours and exemplifies that its practically experienced staff knows what a contract between oil companies is or how a conflict looks like on the spot, and can provide the students with documents stemming from work in institutions of the European Union. This does not diminish the EEC's concerns about how to cover the particularly wide range of teaching subjects based on the experience of a limited staff and to deal adequately with the methodologically complex question of interdisciplinarity.

(4) The EEC reports that a list of new books has been submitted as well as a list of journals and online libraries open to students at the College. The list does not meet the standards of a bibliography, since, not a single author but only titles are mentioned, some of them incomplete. This deepens the committee's concern that the correct use and critical study of scientific literature is not considered important.

(5) The concerns around an internship and practical training programme were addressed by the committee in the earlier sections.



6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

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8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments

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(6) Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

EEC's final conclusions and remarks

The EEC would like to thank the Ledra College for taking the time to address some of its concerns and suggestions. In this report, the EEC has reported in each section, the changes that were required in the initial report, and offers a description of the changes that were made and those that still remain unresolved. One final general remark that the Committee would like to add to the above is that given that the teaching language of the proposed programme is in English, special care should be taken to ensure that any interaction (oral or written) with the EEC (or the CYQAA) is indicative of English proficiency.



(7) Signatures of the EEC

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Signature</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Christos A. Ioannou | |
| Nikolaos Papadakis | |
| Arndt Brendecke | |
| Andrea Lambe | |
| Click to enter Name | |
| Click to enter Name | |

Date: 08/12/2020

