

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 30/08/2019

# Higher Education Institution's response

- **Higher education institution:** Neapolis University
- **Town:** Pafos
- **Programme of study (Name, ECTS, duration, cycle)**

**In Greek:** Προπτυχιακό στην Ψηφιακή Επιχειρηματικότητα (συμβατικό), 4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, (8 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα), 240 ECTS

**In English:** BSc in Digital Business (Conventional)  
4 academic years (8 academic semesters), 240 ECTS

- **Language of instruction:** Greek, English
- **Programme's status :** New programme

**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 and 2016” [N. 136 (I)/2015 and N. 47(I)/2016].**

## 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.*

Let us first express our satisfaction for the very positive comments of the EEC as well as the productive suggestions and recommendations. Though we, of course, recognize the fact that the ultimate decision is always taken by the CYQAA Board, we nevertheless emphasize the overall EEC's attitude to have the program accredited by stating at the conclusions that:

**«The EEC feels that the University and its staff have the necessary experience and expertise to expand on this front and add new programmes to its portfolio. The BSc in Digital Business can be a valuable addition. The existing resources and processes ensure the smooth delivery of new programmes»**

The above very positive comments are also reflected in the overall average of the program which is **8.86**.

Since it is our belief and principle that there is always room of improving the quality of the University and of the said program, we hereby enclose our response **to FULLY** satisfy the EEC suggestions and recommendations, which we found very useful and productive.

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

Although there is an apparent consistency between the current learning outcomes and the courses' content, the lack of core subjects in the curriculum of the programme means that the teaching team will need to revisit the programme's objectives, courses offered and the overall coherency of the programme.

1. All courses carry the same number of ECTS which does not reflect the amount of work expected and invested by students. It will be useful to review the course outlines and ensure consistency in terms of how ECTS are applied. This may be an opportunity to rationalize the courses offered and potentially reduce the number offered.

**Answer:** Although we understand that we could further rationalize the courses offered and potentially reduce the number of courses offered NUP would better prefer to keep the structure as it is and review the issue accordingly based upon the internal quality assurance procedures of the University, and the midterm program review procedures, after 3 years of implementation, including the feedback by the students. However, an enhanced Internship (12 ECTS) course has now been integrated into the program. The same is the case for the Dissertation course (12 ECTS), **see Annex 1, Revised Program Study Guide.**

2. The overall learning aims/objectives and outcomes of the programme will need to be reviewed. When doing so, the teaching team can consider reducing the number of objectives, focusing on core issues. The team can also group them to highlight key areas of interest. These will need to be mapped against the courses to ensure that all of them are met.

**Answer: Done,**

We revised programme's objectives and learning outcomes as follows and a mapping among PLOs and Courses has been realized, **see Annex 2, Programme's PLOs.**

Program objectives have to provide students with:

1. Broad foundational knowledge in finance, marketing and management adequate for a degree in business.
2. An understanding of the tectonic changes that occur in the landscape of marketing, finance and management due to disruptive technologies.
3. Capability to appreciate the Digital transformation underway for most business sectors and industries.
4. Capacity to utilize digital marketing within a larger marketing and / or media strategy.
5. Introduce students to the fundamental building blocks of the emerging landscape of cutting-edge financial technology (Fin Tech).

3. The objectives list will need to include broad business and management ones that will ensure that students have the foundational disciplinary knowledge necessary to tackle more complex issues.

**Answer: Done,**

There are 8 distinct areas of learning outcomes related to broad business and management ones. Upon completing the program, students are expected to be able to:

1. Attain a foundational knowledge in Marketing including consumer behavior so that they may evaluate and implement key concepts related to digital marketing, e-commerce and social media marketing.
2. Appreciate the impact of various disruptive technologies
3. Understand entrepreneurship financing.
4. Recognize stock market and platform technologies
5. Be aware of cyber-security issues
6. Appreciate issues related to Managing and analyzing big data
7. Recognize the basic philosophy behind financial engineering and risk management
8. Understand computer programming principles

4. When the revised programme objectives are available, the teaching team can consider adding new courses that will better reflect the expectations of a business degree. For example, courses in supply chain and logistics or sales / retail management (that will naturally link to the ecommerce course) or human resources management that can pave the way for the digital leadership course. The teaching team can also consider introducing a course in international business.

**Answer: Done,**

NUP proceeded with the following program changes, (*see Annex 1, Revised Program Study Guide*):

1. The course **BUSN306 Corporate Risk Management** became elective.
2. The course **DBA205 Trading Technologies** has been transferred from 3rd semester to 5th (in the place of Corp. Risk Management) to generate space in the 3rd semester for a more basic course, **the BUSN301 Human Resource Management**, which has now been added.
3. The course **FINA 400 International Financial Management** has been added as an elective in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester.
4. The course **CSE04 Distributed Ledger Technologies** has been added as an elective in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester.

5. The above recommendations is one that needs to be considered more widely for all courses. The programme specification needs to ensure that courses develop disciplinary knowledge and skills progressively from one term to another and from one stage to the next.

**Answer: Done,**

NUP proceeded in the above courses changes:

1. The course **ACCN101 Principles of Financial Accounting** has been transferred from 2nd semester to 3rd semester.
2. The course **BUSN203 Business Finance** has been transferred from 3rd semester to 2nd semester (in place of Principles of financial accounting)
3. The course **BUSN 306 Corporate Risk Management** has been transferred to the 5th semester as elective.
4. The course **DBA205 Trading Technologies** has been transferred from 3rd semester to 5th semester (in the place of Corp. Risk Management) to generate space in the 3rd semester for a core course in **Human Resource Management BUSN301**

6. The teaching team can consider adding a small group of electives (in years 3 and 4), offering students the opportunity to undertake courses that are closer to their interest. This can help improve student experience.

**Answer: Done,**

We added the following electives:

1. **BUSN 306 Corporate Risk Management** became elective
2. **CSE04 Distributed Ledger Technologies** added as a new elective
3. **FINA 400 International Financial Management** added as a new elective

7. Given the institutional arrangements and the links with the parent company, opportunities to embed industry specific/practice activities into the curriculum could be explored. This can help students contextualize their theoretical training, gaining valuable practical experience. This can be a great advantage when it comes to enhancing their future employability prospects.

**Answer: Done.** An enhanced (12 ECTS) Internship elective course has been integrated into the programme.

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

1. Although the EEC has seen evidence of formative feedback of related courses, a coherent policy should be implemented across the programme.

**Answer: Done**, a policy of formative assessment is already available and students are aware before the beginning of their courses, see **Annex 6, Assessment Guidelines for Written Assignments - UNDERGRADUATE**.

2. Even though the EEC was pleased to see evidence of industry sponsored dissertation topics, we encourage the teaching team that this becomes a more widespread practice, where possible.

**Answer: Done**, the comment has been noted and the teaching team will be encouraged to incorporate industry sponsored dissertation topics.

3. The EEC acknowledges that the program has both a research methods course and a dissertation course. Both these courses should be mandatory, and the research methods course should precede the dissertation course. It should include quantitative, as well as qualitative methods. The dissertation should be extended to at least 12 ECTS to enable a substantial research effort, including data collection and analysis.

**Answer: Done**. The Dissertation has become mandatory and has been extended to 12 ECTS. The **BUSN412 Research Methods** course has been replaced from the course **METH600 Research design and Empirical Methods** and transferred as mandatory to Semester 4<sup>th</sup>, in the place of **STAT203 Statistics II** course, **See Annex 1, Revised Study Guide**.

4. Another opportunity could be to introduce more extra-curricular activities, such as a hackathon where students are brought together in multi-disciplinary teams to find solutions to problems by integrating various skills and competencies. These can offer an opportunity to achieve the same objectives that currently are served by having the programming courses which can then be removed from the curriculum.

**Answer:** We will be happy to include the said proposal under the 3 years' midterm review of the programme.

### 3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

1. To reduce the teaching load for permanent teaching staff to enable more focus on research that can in turn be reflected on the programme's content.

**Answer: Done**, NUP has a **Permanent Teaching Staff workload Policy**, see Annex 3, to ensure that teaching staff can also focus on research, among other tasks.

2. We would recommend that the pedagogic skills and practices of existing and future teaching staff are further developed (at the point of recruiting them, but also on an ongoing basis) to prepare them for their roles.

**Answer: Done**, the NUP has institutionalized a concrete mentoring program for the existing and future staff to prepare them for their roles. **See Annex 7, Academic Staff mentoring Policy, Annex 8, Interaction Working Methodology.**

The mentoring program is both at the point of initial recruiting, but also on an ongoing basis as well.

It includes:

- a) Formative Assessment requirements
- b) Feedback to students
- c) Interactivity
- d) Research opportunities
- e) Administrative responsibilities.



#### 4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. To consider extending the opening hours of the library.

**Answer: Done**, following the above suggestions, we are extending Neapolis University library opening hours to cover all examination periods. More specific:

- A week prior to each semester's examination period, the opening hours are extended to cover week **days 8:00 – 22:00, Saturday 9:00 – 19:00 and Sunday 9:00 – 17:00**.
- An internal communication system has already been implemented via our learning management system (LMS) platform (Moodle) to provide students direct access to the library. This allows student access to all library relevant information such as news, announcements, events, frequently asked questions and support manuals. In addition, the LMS internal communication system allows students to interact directly (online chat) with library staff.
- Furthermore, **a dedicated e-ticketing system has also been implemented** in parallel to the LMS internal communication system, which enables library staff to handle and address all inquiries and requests.
- Access to online library databases is possible at all times (24/7) and has been enriched via **our virtual private network (VPN) solution**.
- Finally, **separate workstations have been placed outside the library** accessible at all times (24/7) which provide direct access to online library databases.

2. To clarify and standardize the admission requirements

**Answer: Done**, the admission requirements and criteria have been clarified and standardized, **see Annex 1, Revised Study Guide. Chapt 4.1**.

3. Introduce an online seminar for students about time and stress management, e.g., as an extension to S.K.E.P.S.I.S.

**Answer: Done**, this is a productive comment already consulted with S.K.E.P.S.I S to endorse an on line seminar about time and stress management, as part of their induction in the program.

4. To encourage more participation to student exchange scheme such as Erasmus, which can help improve the overall learning experience students get.

**Done**. A comprehensive **Training Program for Students** is envisaged whereby participation in ERASMUS program is fully incorporated. We also intend to bring in experiences from students who have already participated in the program, thus transferring positive experiences and lessons learnt, **see Annex 4, NUP Students Training manual**.

## 5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

The EEC feels that the following improvements can occur:

1. It has been mentioned several times during the visit to the university that the currently small number of the academic community (i.e., student population) and the ability to sustain close connections between students and teachers can help the university address issues related to psychological or pastoral support. However considering the new programmes will increase the student population), such support should be better structured and operationalized.

**Answer: Done**, the comment has been noted and upon a potential increase of student's population, such support will be further structured and operationalized.

2. Improvement on resources relevant to qualitative methods could be possible, by extending, for example, the available software with the addition of tools such as nVivo.

**Answer: Done**, the University already proceeded in the provision of the recommended software tool, ***see Annex 5, NVIVO NUP invoice.***

3. The Department can consider adding a new computers cluster that is accessible 24/7.

**Answer: Done**, a separate workstations cluster has been installed outside the library, accessible at all times (24/7), which allows direct access to online library data bases and information.

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

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

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

## B. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC feels that the University and its staff have the necessary experience and expertise to expand on this front and add new programmes to its portfolio. The BSc in Digital Business can be a valuable addition. The existing resources and processes ensure the smooth delivery of new programmes. Still the objectives, learning outcomes and courses will need to be carefully considered and the necessary changes made first.

The EEC would like to thank the University for its cooperation and wish the teaching team all the success with this programme.

### C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Sklias Pantelis</b>	Rector	

Date: 30.08.2019