

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 04/05/22

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos
- **Town:** Pafos
- **Programme of study
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα στην
Εγκληματολογική Λογιστική

In English:

MSc in Forensic Accounting

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English, Greek
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



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.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) 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 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 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

Dear EEC,

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the positive reaction and comments we have received, among others that the program is overall either fully compliant or partially compliant to the stated criteria and standards. We hereby state our response to all the comments regarding areas of improvement and recommendations.

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

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

1. The number of ECTS credits for Master's thesis is very high, it should be reduced by approximately 20%.

Our comments:

The University claims that reducing the Master's thesis to 24 credit instead of the current 30 credits would significantly reduce a substantial element of the programme related to both the industry element of the programme as well as the potential research dimension that some of the graduates would like to proceed with, e.g. a PhD thesis. Thus, we keep the 30 ECTS as it is.

2. The program should clearly describe the relationship between the learning outcomes and each of the modules that make up the programme. The relationship of each module with the learning outcomes and also the way in which each of the learning outcomes are achieved (connecting each of them with the modules) must appear very clearly in the proposal.

Our comments:

Done. The mapping of the CLOs to the PLOs has now been done for both versions of the programme (Conventional and Distance). See *attached Annex 1_Mapping of CLOS-PLOS*.

3. The course "Financial Transactions and Fraud Schemes" needs more ECTS since its content deals with, among others, issues as relevant to this master as Bribery, Corruption and all types of fraud.

Our comments:

Done. Making the "Financial Transactions and Fraud Schemes" FRE510 into 10 ECTS will create serious problems with the whole structure. To comply with the recommendation of the Agency we have instead removed that section in the module (about 25% of the module) that relates to specific and general accounting issues and the various sub-sections are now covered in the revised MBA550 (see *attached Annex 2_Syllabi*). Thus, the said requirement has been satisfied.

4. The courses "Research Methods and Data Analysis" and "Investigation" are designed from a more investigative approach than professional master. Both courses need to be defined in such a way as to include more practical content and incorporate Big Data, Data Analysis and BlockChain topics.

Our comments:

Done. See modified Syllabi FRE530 and MBA500 in *Annex 2_Syllabi*.

5. The course “**Accounting and financial statement analysis**” is offered as an elective. This course is a central course for the Development of MSc in Forensic Accounting, so it should be a mandatory course. The differences in level between the students who access these studies must be sought by offering complementary courses that equalize the levels of knowledge of all students. In addition, the content of this course must be modified since it appears with a very basic content. The modifications must go along the lines of teaching how to analyze financial statements in depth, insisting on issues such as liquidity, solvency, profitability and developing analysis techniques that allow accounting manipulation or the existence of fraud to be detected.

Our comments:

Done. The course “**Accounting and financial statement analysis**” is now mandatory. The course content has been adjusted accordingly. See *attached Annex 3_Modified Programme Structure*.

6. The course “**European Accounting Law**” is offered as an elective but should be compulsory. Its content needs to be known by any student of the MSc in Forensic Accounting.

Our comments:

There is no such course as European Accounting Law in our application. Furthermore, all important accounting related legal issues are dealt with in FRE520 which, among other things, discusses relevant EU law.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

1. **The research component of the program is relatively high. It should be of clear value to participants what the purpose of this is. Related to this, it should be made clear that the involved teaching staff has extensive experience in research in the area of the program.**

Our comments:

Done. It is clear also as per our response in section 1.1. that the thesis is very much linked to industry and applied related topics. Nevertheless, it also provides participants with the opportunity to pursue further studies. Additionally, it is evident that the involved teaching staff from both institutions has extensive experience in research in the area of the programme. Please see attached *Annex 4_Academic Staff Research Experience*.

2. **It should be made clearer in the program how the compulsory course fit together and whether or not they build on each other. This is crucial in particular for a study that is aimed at a different group of students, i.e., students with extensive work experience.**

Our comments:

Done. Please see *Annex 1_Mapping of CLOS-PLOS*.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

1. Things here are a little bit confusing since we have not understood what is the relationship between the teaching and the research.

What is my point of view is that academics shall apply the best formula for them taking into account the nature of the programme so that they dedicate enough time both to their research (to those that is applicable) and to their teaching process. It is proposed for the academics to combine these two separate parts and create value for them, for the programme and for the institution after all.

Our comments:

The EEC has admitted that *“The number of teaching staff seems to be enough for this programme taking into account that the courses’ number offered is not such big for more teaching people needed”* and *“The number of permanent teaching staff is more than okay since that we met only one academic that is a visitor professor in the programme”*. Additionally, one of the added value elements of this partnership is the fact that the two institutions joined forces in all aspects of the programme, including teaching and research. While at the same time, as the EEC admits there are ample human resources for the programme’s realisation. Thus, it is ensured that the academics have enough time for both their research and their teaching process.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

1. It should be noted that the recognition of credits for studies completed previously will be made by subjects or modules based on the adequacy between the knowledge and skills acquired and those provided for in the master's degree to which you want to access (MSc in Forensic Accounting).

The Master's thesis may not be recognized in any case.

- The Master's thesis is not recognised.

It should be noted whether the recognition of credits is limited to previous "official" university studies or credits obtained in non-official postgraduate university studies, specialization and/or continuing education approved by the Governing Bodies of the University (in which it has been studied) may also be subject to recognition.

- The recognition of credits is limited to only official university studies.

The number of ECTS permissible via accreditation of prior learning stands at 50%. It is very high.

- The permissible number of ECTS via accreditation of prior learning in postgraduate study programmes stands at 30%, not 50%.

The recognized credits will appear in the academic record with the qualification "Pass" in the corresponding subject of destination, and will not compute for the purpose of grading the record.

- Done. See *Annex 5_Transcript*.

It must be indicated whether the previous professional experience of the students may be recognized, taking into account the adequacy between the accredited skills and knowledge. The accredited professional experience must confer at least 80% of the skills associated with the corresponding target subject. It must be defined if this possibility is contemplated, taking into account that said credits should never be a very small number of ECTS.

Our comments:

- We do not recognize previous professional experience of the students.

2. The final exams must contemplate the possibility that they are not written. The reasons are several: firstly because there may be students with physical difficulties that prevent them from writing and secondly because as it is a professional master's degree, other types of final exams must be considered, such as the presentation and resolution of a case study.

Our comments:

In case of students with physical disabilities who cannot take written exams, there is a provision for the exams to be conducted orally. See the following in our Student Handbook (*Annex 6_Postgraduate Student Handbook 2021-2022*):

"1.1 Examination rules for students with special educational needs



After the student has informed the Psychological Support Service and provided the necessary supporting documents, he / she may receive special treatment as to how he / she will be examined in the courses.

The Head of the Psychological Support Service in collaboration with the Secretariat informs the teachers of how the student will be examined in the course.

The Policy and Procedure for Support of Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and the Process of their Integration in the Community (NUP 07.400) applies.” Please also see relevant policy attached (Annex 7_ Support of Students with SN & Disabilities Policy 07.400).

In terms of other types of final exams, alternative forms of assessment have already been applied e.g. open book exams.

5. Learning resources and student support

(ESG 1.6)

1. As an improvement, I would suggest the replacement of the chairs which are not looking so much comfortable especially while working on a computer. The proper chairs for computer labs are office chairs with wheels, mechanisms on the sitting and in the arms' positions so the students have an ergonomic position while working in there.

Regarding the library, it is maybe because of the virtual visit where we could not see everything inside but I have not seen some categorization of the science fields so the students can easily find what they are looking for. The structure is good, the alleys are wide enough and the existence of a good-looking reception at the library adds a prestige to it. The additional labs where are located inside the library are also very important while students need extra space to search for anything they want beyond their courses inside the computer labs.

I would also suggest to have a redesign at the main amphitheatre (the only one we saw) mainly because the roof is not visually friendly having seen all the pipes, air ducts etc in combination with all the cables behind the professor position (under the white board) that are laying there mixed-up.

Our comments:

We thank the EEC for the kind remarks.



6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

1. **Such a course requires education-based on case studies. The EEC Encourage the Institutions to invest on purchasing case studies from leading US universities. You can either introduce a module titled as Case Studies in Forensic Accounting where you will provide one case study per lecture.**

Our comments:

Case studies are already part of the curriculum. The Library also provides students with access to several journal articles featuring case studies, as well as case studies from leading US universities.

2. **Both Neapolis University and University of Western Macedonia are community Institutions. The Rectors highlighted that the aim of the new course would be attract international students. The committee is raising concerns on the feasibility of this plan.**

Our comments:

Attracting students from third countries is a visionary policy of both the Republic as well as the two institutions involved.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

The design and structure of proposed MSc in Forensic Accounting – program joined between the Neapolis University and the University of Western Macedonia is based on the expected market demand. The EEC welcomes the introduction of the new MSc in Forensic Accounting- as it holds the potential of allowing the Universities to expand its provision to new markets, nationally and internationally. The program will be supported by expert and motivated faculty by both institutions, knowledgeable and efficient administrative staff, and appropriate level of capital, library, and IT resources. To ensure the quality and long-term success of the program, the EEC makes the following recommendations:

1. **Establish a formal Learning Unit to oversee technical and pedagogical (aspects of the program and to warrant that program-level learning outcomes are achieved.**

Our comments:

Done. A Pedagogical Planning and Learning Process Unit has been established upon a related decision of the Senate and the Board of the University.

2. **Consider how the two programs can be more differentiated, in ways other than the delivery mode and approach, for example revising some contents of the program modules to ensure that they are aligned with in general with a prestigious Distance Learning program aims, objectives and learning outcomes or; consider the resource and pedagogical implications of running the two programs (i.e., existing conventional MBA and the proposed Distance Learning MBA) simultaneously.**

Our comments:

There is no resource and/or pedagogical implications of running the conventional and the DL programme simultaneously.

3. **Consider and monitor how the MSc in Forensic Accounting will affect admission to the existing programs, especially the years to come since the Universities would like to expand the program to international markets. Any potential change in admission patterns will have implications for faculty and administrative staff workloads as well as implications for library and IT resources.**

Our comments:

There is no foreseeable potential changes in admission patterns.

4. **A concern has been the selection of running the MSc in Forensic Accounting in both English and Greek Languages. This means use of double resources.**

Our comments:

Both institutions have ample resources to cover this potential which, by experience, has never been the case.

5. The committee asked if there is any competitive course in Cyprus and it received a negative response. On a deeper look it realised that the Cyprus Institut of Marketing is providing an MSc in Fraud Auditing and Forensic Accounting. Courses being offered includes

1. FRAUD INVESTIGATION AND FORENSIC ACCOUNTING
2. FORENSIC CRIMINOLOGY AND LEGAL STUDIES
3. CORPORATE FRAUD AND INTERNAL CONTROL
4. COMPLIANCE, ETHICS AND PUBLIC GOVERNANCE
5. FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INSTITUTION FRAUD
6. LITIGATION AND EXPERT WITNESSING

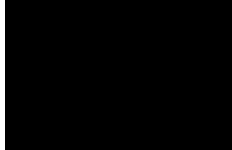
The proposed program can benefit of running the dissertations in line/collaboration with the students' business, jobs, companies, current professional tasks and so on.

Our comments:

The negative response given to the committee was in relation to the eight educational institutions with University status. The Cyprus Institute of Marketing has no University status. We agree that the program can benefit from running the dissertations in line/collaboration with the students' business, jobs, companies, current professional tasks and so on.



C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

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

Date: 04/05/22

