



Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 27/12/20

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Programme 1 – Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)**
In Greek: Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων
In English: Business Administration

Language(s) of instruction: Greek

- **Programme 2 – Ph.D. Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)**
In Greek: Διδακτορικό στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων
In English: Ph.D. in Business Administration

Language(s) of instruction: Greek and English

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. 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

Findings for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

The documentation, presentations and Q&A at the remote site visit provided the EEC members with a very good understanding of the BSc programme. The programme attracts high performing students, largely from Cyprus and it is clear that the faculty members enjoy working with these cohorts. The drop out rate is low and the Department shared the many support mechanisms in place to help students' progression. The Quality Assurance procedures are robust and well developed within the Department, School and University. These also articulate with the structure of Department Council, School Council, and Senate. In addition an application for AACSB accreditation is underway as part of the commitment to quality standards. There is close management oversight of the programme, within a collegiate culture and structure. Faculty and management spoke with evident pride about the Programme and it is a good fit with the mission and ethos of the Department. The use of new technologies, prompted by the pandemic, has been seen as a useful learning and developmental experience by staff. There is dedicated support for data gathering, available to both students and to faculty. The workload and credit system are appropriate. A well-developed alumni network also helps shape the direction of provision as well as providing opportunities for students. Access to internships is one interesting feature of the Department. The internships and placements are in high demand, and involve a nice diversity of organisational settings.

Strengths

Strengths for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

An impressive profile of faculty members and collegiate leadership and decision making. Faculty's wider engagement with current issues in business and management and their applied expertise and collaborations with local and international organizations/companies shape the programme. There is a strong commitment to Quality Assurance activities. The programme has a clear fit with the mission and ethos of the Department, School and University. The programme features research-led course content with strong theoretical underpinnings. At the same time, there is a commitment to develop modules which are relevant to place and time, as evidenced by the Current Issues in Management module, which pivoted quickly to developments and dilemmas at a time of Covid-19.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

We found no substantive problems as such. The department provided a SWOT analysis which showed a thoughtful appreciation of current strengths and consideration of possible emergent issues. There is an awareness of the need to continue to refresh course content, and to take stock of how student expectations might be altered post-Covid-19. The department is relatively small, which brings advantages and disadvantages and it is important that the University supports the capacity of the Department in line with its research and teaching aspirations.

Department's Response

We are grateful to the EEC for their positive comments regarding our bachelor's program. One of our priorities is to deliver courses that are in line with current trends and concerns. To do so, we will continue to update and refresh the content of our courses to address current challenges and topics, including for example, issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the EEC already identified, the pandemic has prompted the use of a series of new technological tools that were seen as a useful learning and developmental experience by the faculty; we will continue to enhance our use of these new means. We are also in full agreement with EEC's conclusion on the importance of the University supporting our Department's research and teaching aspirations

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

Findings

Findings for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

It was evident from discussions with staff and students that processes of teaching and learning support students' personal, intellectual and social development. We were impressed with the flexibility shown during the pandemic in terms of modes of delivery, supported by ICT staff and resources, and the willingness of staff to take on these new ways of teaching. We heard from the students that they enjoy the interactive modes of pedagogy. It is also clear that faculty appreciate the insights and perspectives offered by their students. The ICT resources, such as Panopto and Blackboard, are modern and up to date and faculty spoke positively about their experiences of using them. A culture of mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship was evident from the discourse of faculty and students in our meetings with them. The three main specialisms of Management, Marketing, and Operations Management include flexible learning paths in the programme with considerable elements of student choice. We saw both depth and breadth. The four year programme allows room for flex. In line with wider quality assurance processes, appropriate procedures for dealing with student complaints about teaching and learning are in place. Students are encouraged to be involved in research and this is supported by faculty and a dedicated ICT officer who facilitates data collection. Assessments correspond to appropriate frameworks and there is healthy autonomy for faculty in choosing the assessment strategy for their modules.

Strengths

Strengths for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

The programme has very considerable strengths including its clearly articulated goals, its emphasis on intellectual development and the desire to produce socially responsible citizens who will flourish in complex organizational settings. It attracts a high caliber of students and challenges and develops them through a welcome emphasis on critical thinking. There is a healthy number of students who go on to study for higher degrees. There is a good diversity of assessment strategies in line with learning objectives. ERASMUS opportunities in tandem with internships and placements enhance the student experience.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

Again, we identify no substantive problems but encourage the department to capture the learning from the changes to delivery and assessment necessitated by Covid-19. We saw good signs of a culture which embraces the best of the recent innovations.

Department's Response

We would like to thank the EEC, once again, for the positive comments regarding the teaching and learning approach of our program and its emphasis on student development. We fully agree with

the recommendation of the EEC to capture the learning from the changes to delivery and assessment necessitated by COVID-19, and we remain committed to doing so, in order to further enrich our teaching and learning excellence culture.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Findings

Findings for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

The Accreditation Committee met with all teaching staff involved with the programme. All of them hold a Ph.D and have very strong qualified cvs with publications in top listed journals. During the discussion, the academic staff seemed to be engaged and professional.

In addition, they seemed to be pleased with their working conditions and the overall University working environment. They appeared to take teaching seriously and to be supportive of the initiatives regarding research (i.e. they all seemed to acknowledge the value of doing research for an educational institution and they confirmed that research publications in top listed journals are among their strategic aims).

Also, teaching staff seems to be in favour of participating in exchanges through the Erasmus plus mobility program.

Strengths

Strengths for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

We found it very good that there is an equal balance of young and experienced faculty on board. The faculty seemed to be well integrated and on good working terms. The experienced faculty, in addition, have been with University of Cyprus for a long time, which means there seems to be a good work environment that is beneficial to the Bachelor program.

Furthermore, it seems that the outcome of teaching is being monitored and taken seriously by the institution and that any issues or problems are professionally and effectively taken care of. There is also a process of “self-evaluation” of the faculty regarding their own courses which was often reported and mentioned during our field visit.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

Although the workload of staff was reported to be not too high, we see a hard working culture in the group and thus the Accreditation Committee would encourage the assignment of more members of teaching staff.

Department's Response

We are glad that the EEC had the opportunity to meet with all our faculty and discuss issues pertaining to the research and teaching culture of the department. We fully agree with the EEC's comments noted above and concur with the EEC's recommendation for the assignment of more faculty members.

4. Students

(ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

Findings

Findings for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

Admission criteria are set by the Government. Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place and we note the very high admission criteria. We understand admissions policies are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner in line with the institution's criteria and processes. These regulations are pre-defined and published. These include recognition of periods of study and prior learning. Admission requirements are set by the Government. The majority of undergraduate students enter the University of Cyprus based on their marks and ranking in Pancyprian Examinations organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. There are also clearly-defined and published additional admissions criteria, relating to, for example, special criteria and Panhellenic examinations.

Strengths

Strengths for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

The criteria and processes appear to be clear and transparent. The demanding educational attainment levels for admission means that programme benefits from high performing students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

Nothing substantive arising. It was noted that the language requirements may somewhat limit the ability to recruit from a more international student base, and that for some this may also limit the experience of students to mix with a more diverse set of learners. However, the active involvement in ERASMUS schemes may mitigate this, and we recognize that this policy is beyond the scope of the Department and School.

Department's Response

We agree with the EEC's comments. Indeed, the language requirements may limit our ability to recruit and benefit from a more international student base, however, we agree with the EEC that our heavy involvement with the ERASMUS programs is a mitigating factor.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Findings for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

This was a remote visit but we were able to view videos of the campus and speak to faculty, students and administrative staff about teaching and learning resources. We found that these were accessible and supportive of the objectives of the study programme. Prior investments in learning platforms such as Panopto paid dividends during the pandemic, and staff and students were positive about their experience of using such resources. The physical resources, such as Departmental premises, study facilities, and IT infrastructure, are excellent. The new library is a world class venue and there are very good linkages with the Department to ensure that resource provision is appropriate and refreshed on an ongoing basis. There is an impressive infrastructure of human support resources, such as counsellors and other advisers. We were impressed by the caliber of administrative staff and their commitment to supporting students and faculty members. The work of the Department is nicely embedded within wider University resources, such as the library and the counselling and health services provision.

Strengths

Strengths for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor)

The physical resources are of a very high standard. In addition it is evident that the University invests in wider mechanisms for student support. We noted the high levels of commitment and enthusiasm among the Department's own administrative staff. Our conversation with students provided us with many examples of how students value this support.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Business Administration (4 years, 240 ECTS, Bachelor) The pandemic has stretched the capacity of support services staff, given the new demands. We heard of the impressive 'family ethos' among Department members. It is important that the University continues to adequately invest in the provision administrative support, in line with the ambitions of the Department, and the changing needs and circumstances of students.

Department's Response

We concur with the EEC's assessment regarding our administrative staffing needs and its recommendations to the University regarding adequate investment of administrative support for our Department.

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

Findings

The PhD program is designed in a careful way, procedures of admittance, supervision and evaluation are clear. Very importantly, it has clear criteria which the potential students need to meet for admission. Most importantly prospective students have a good level master degree, and write a preliminary proposal on the topic of their choice which needs to fit to the supervising capacity in the group. The procedures to follow in the teaching and research periods during the PhD program are well described and are consistent to the overall strategy of a high quality research group. There are possibilities for full-time and part-time candidates and the process and timelines are clear though a bit more flexible for the part-time students. We got a thorough explanation of two forms of thesis' structure, and review/publication demands. The structure of the committee to evaluate the candidates is clear as well as the criteria to pass.

Strengths

The program is still relatively young, the first defense is expected next year, but the structure of the program and supervising capacity is in line with international standards, in particular such as in good USA based universities

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The program seems to develop well. However, the strict structure which in many aspects we see as a strong point, may have a weaker point which needs to be taken into consideration. Following the strict phases of first teaching program (60 ec) and to continue after exam with the research phase may be reducing the factual time available for the Phd student to do empirical work. This may lead to an over emphasis on secondary data. We plead for flexibility in the timelines of research to live up to the generally expressed engaged scholarship attitude of the department.

The program structure does allow for a longer stay than four years so in principle there is space to do so.

Another advice would be to use the manifold contacts with SME's on Cyprus to connect to societal issues relevant to such actors, which may lead to new sources of funding research where PhD students can work on high level with the companies in the specialities of the students and supervisors.

Department's Response

We agree with the EEC's comments in regard to our PhD program. The recommendation to uphold a combination of structure and flexibility in the program is very useful. This has already been discussed and will be safe-guarded by the Committee of Graduate Programs, which carefully monitors the progress of each doctoral student and makes relevant recommendations where necessary. The recommendations of the Committee are always forwarded for a final decision to the Departmental Council.

Also, while some doctoral students already collaborate with local organizations and some do secure relevant funding to do so, we will continue to encourage such collaborations that can further add to the relevance and societal value of our PhD program.

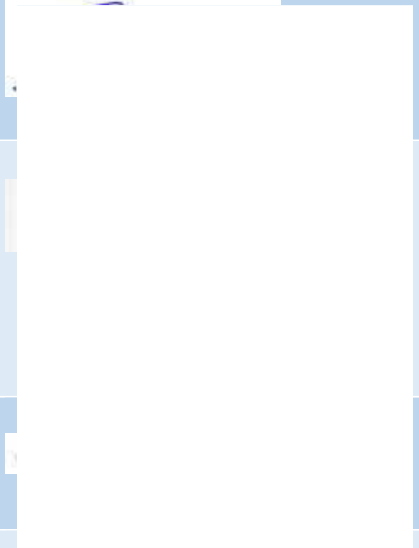
B. Conclusions and final remarks

As from our assessment may show we have found a department and two programs which are well developed. The staff quantity may not be very large, the quality certainly is as reflected in publications in top journals and good teaching ability, considering the results in their career and satisfaction of students from this school. Also the workload of staff was reported to be not too high, although we see a hard working culture in the group, so this is always a point of attention for higher management and to take care of sufficient resources for the group to sustainably deliver these high quality programs. The PhD program is to deliver its first PhD, and has promise to become a good asset of the department. The facilities which we saw on video and about we heard from staff and students is excellent. The capacity to adapt and resilience shown in the pandemic period is of high level. A slightly worrying point may be the relative low level of autonomy on budget.

Department's Response

We are grateful to the EEC for the positive comments about the Department and the two programmes they evaluated. We appreciate their hard work and detailed insights and endorse all of their constructive comments.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Andreas Soteriou	Chair, Department of Business and Public Administration	
Alexia Panayiotou	Vice Chair, Department of Business and Public Administration, Undergraduate Programs Committee	
Leonidas C. Leonidou	Graduate Programs Committee	
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Date: 7/1/2021

