

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 08/09/2025

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Open University of Cyprus (OUC) and Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)

- **Town:** Nicosia and Limassol

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

In Greek:

Διδρυματικό Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών (ΔΜΠΣ) στη Διεθνή Ναυτιλιακή Διοίκηση (18 μήνες, 90 ECTS, MSc, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

In English:

Joint MSc International Shipping Management (18 months, 90 ECTS, MSc, E-Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English, Greek
- **Programme's status:** New programme of study
- **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 300.1.1/1 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. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The documentation from of the courses matches well with the programme end terms, however some elements of the teaching could be brought up more strongly in the course learning goals, to highlight their importance and strengthen the links between objectives, end-terms and course learning goals. This is especially so for: a. Decarbonisation and sustainable shipping b. Dealing with upcoming regulations c. The presence and need for interdisciplinarity to tackle this.	Following the recommendation of the EEC, the three identified issues have been addressed within the two core Semester 1 modules, namely ISM511 International Maritime Economics and ISM512 International Ship Management. Specifically: • Decarbonisation and sustainable shipping, • Dealing with upcoming regulations, and • The presence and need for interdisciplinarity in ship management are now explicitly incorporated into the content, learning outcomes, and assessment components of these two modules. The interdisciplinary nature of the MSc in International Shipping Management is highlighted through the integration of economic, managerial, legal, and environmental perspectives across these and other modules and the choice of modules in the program. In addition, the above are also highlighted in the programme's intended learning outcomes: <i>Interdisciplinary Approach:</i> To encourage the integration of interdisciplinary methods for a holistic understanding of shipping issues, drawing from multiple scientific fields <i>Ethics and Sustainability:</i> To instil a commitment to ethical practices and sustainability, emphasising the transition to a green economy within the maritime sector.	Choose level of compliance:

	Accordingly, we also added the following: <i>Awareness of Current and Emerging Regulations:</i> To critically understand the development, implementation, and implications of current and forthcoming international maritime regulations, and their impact on industry practices. Further details of these revisions are provided in Annex 1, Annex 2, Annex 3.	
Once the programme is up and running, we would suggest to create an industry advisory board, to ensure that the materials remain up to date and as routed in practice as they are today.	In response to the EEC's recommendation to establish an industry advisory board once the programme is up and running, we would like to note that the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Open University of Cyprus has already set up the Faculty of Economics and Management Advisory Board (FEMAB). FEMAB is composed of accomplished business leaders, senior executives, academics, educators, and entrepreneurs from various sectors of social and economic life in Cyprus, as well as academic personnel from the Faculty of the Open University of Cyprus who hold significant leadership roles in research, education, and teaching. The primary purpose of FEMAB is to offer advisory and timely guidance to the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Open University of Cyprus. The Board convenes on an annual basis under the leadership of the Dean of the Faculty. Its members, drawn from both the public and private sectors, actively engage in meetings to ensure that our Faculty remains aligned with the latest developments in economics and management and responsive to	Choose level of compliance:

	industry demands. Within this framework, FEMAB conducts a comprehensive review of curriculum offerings and provides advice, opinions, and guidelines regarding the research, educational, and social activities of the Faculty. This oversight ensures that our programmes incorporate the required skills and competencies demanded by the rapidly evolving landscape, while also enhancing the promotion of our graduates and the visibility of our work. Moreover, FEMAB plays a pivotal role in facilitating the Faculty's engagement with businesses and organisations, fostering mutually beneficial relationships that advance our strategic objectives. The external members of FEMAB include: Nicos Asimenos, Manager Corporate Centres, Bank of Cyprus Thalia Bellali, Professor, Alexandrian Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki Elena Chatzikakou, Director, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Elena Christofidou, Educator, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute George Z. Georgiou, Managing Partner, George Z. Georgiou & Associates LLC Maria Heracleous, Special Scientist, University of Cyprus & member of Cyprus Economy and Competitiveness Council Nikolas Karamouzis, President of Grant Thornton Tax and Business Advisory Solutions	
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	Lambros Kyriakides, Director, PwC Cyprus Despo Lefkariti, CEO, Delema McCann Cyprus Lucy Nicolaou, Group HR Director, Pafilia Property Developers Constantinos Vorkas, Director, SafeFood Laboratories Michael Vorkas, Advocate/Legal Consultant, Managing Partner Michael Vorkas & Partners LLC As advised by the EEC, once the MSc in International Shipping Management is operational, the Faculty will strengthen FEMAB by inviting additional members with specific expertise in shipping. One individual has already been approached, Mr. Panayiotis Agathocleous, Limassol Port Manager at the Cyprus Ports Authority, who will contribute invaluable insights and experience from the maritime industry. A second individual from the shipping sector will also be invited to join the Board to ensure continued alignment of the programme with current industry developments and best practices.	
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

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Consider to make some of the interactive assignments or written assignments small group exercises to ensure a sense of student community.	In response to the EEC's suggestion to incorporate more small-group work to strengthen the sense of student community, we have modified two interactive activities in each module to be group-based and to ensure greater interactivity between students. For example, in one activity students are asked to provide an individual answer to a question and then comment on at least one reply from another student. In another, students are paired to work in groups of two to collaboratively address an interactive question (See Annex 2-7). These adjustments are designed to enhance engagement, foster peer-to-peer learning, and build a stronger sense of community within the programme.	Choose level of compliance:
It is advised to consider changing the ratio between the report and the oral defence / presentation of the thesis project. As the increased use of AI improves the reporting style and as such more emphasis could be placed on the defence part rather than assessing the report.	In line with the EEC's recommendation, we have revised the assessment weighting for the thesis project to place greater emphasis on the oral defence/presentation. Specifically, the weighting of the written report has been reduced from 80% to 60%, while the oral defence/presentation has been increased from 20% to 40%. This adjustment reflects the growing influence of AI tools in written work and ensures that greater importance is given to the student's ability to defend, explain, and critically reflect on their research in an interactive setting (See Annex 8). It should also be noted that the University's systems include AI-detection functionality within Turnitin, which is systematically applied to all written reports. This ensures that academic integrity is	Choose level of compliance:

	safeguarded, while the increased emphasis on the oral component further strengthens the robustness and fairness of the overall assessment.	
It is also advised to closely follow the teaching staff to ensure that the teaching staff keeps on: a. integrating as much as possible their own papers/research projects, b. and to ensure that real applications are used to explain the theory.	Research-informed teaching and learning are central to the MSc in International Shipping Management. The academic instructors of the programme are actively engaged in advanced scientific research in their respective areas of expertise. They regularly participate in national and international conferences and research projects, publish in high-quality scientific journals, and provide consulting services to the shipping industry. Both the Department of Shipping at the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) and the Faculty of Economics and Management at the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) ensure that these research outcomes are systematically integrated into the curriculum and reflected in the course materials. To strengthen this further, specific instructions have been provided to teaching staff that the programme requires: a. the integration of their own research outputs, including publications and ongoing projects, into teaching and learning activities; and b. the consistent use of real-world applications, case studies, and industry examples to illustrate theoretical concepts. These expectations will be emphasized and reinforced annually in the Teaching Staff Preparedness Meeting, ensuring continuous alignment between cutting-edge research, pedagogy, and industry practice.	Choose level of compliance:

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Although the programme clearly capitalizes on the ease and versatility of complete online delivery, such programmes always have some difficulty in forming a cohesive academic community and in facilitating regular interaction among students. This could give rise to isolation, or lack of motivation and abandoning the studies. It is recommended to consider any of the suggestion below for further improvement of the programme: - o Having more formal live sessions (e.g., interactive webinars, office hours, or discussion-based tutorials) to have active interaction among students and teachers. - o Encouraging collaborative learning through teamwork, peer feedback exercises, and topic-based discussion forums. - o Creating virtual informal communities to enable students to socially interact and build relationships beyond the learning activities (e.g., interest-based chat rooms or student lounge). - o A buddy or mentoring programme, aimed at new or international students. These actions would maximize the student experience through greater involvement, reducing isolation, and enhancing student retention in the online learning environment.	The programme already provides five (5) two-hour live synchronous sessions plus one (1) revision session per module, which is in line with international best practices in online and distance learning provision. The programme also offers weekly office hours by tutors to further support the student's independent learning. To further enhance interaction, we have integrated team-based interactive exercises and topic-based discussion forums into the modules as per comments above. In addition, a dedicated Programme-level Module named "ISM (Programme Information and Communication)" has been created to act as the common communication area (community) of the Programme (see Annex 9). All registered students of the Programme are enrolled in this Module and Programme Directors can share important information, run topic-based forums, facilitate student introductions, provide relevant content, and support the building of relationships beyond the core learning activities. In addition, through this Module, students can find fellow students and interact with each other in various ways; asynchronously via instant messages and forums and synchronously via chat. Furthermore, students are actively encouraged to form and use Teams, Viber, and WhatsApp groups to collaborate and interact informally. Finally, we have introduced systems which now allow us to monitor	Choose level of compliance:

	content engagement for quality assurance purposes which also allows us to intervene if there is lack of responsiveness from students. These measures directly address the need for more collaborative learning, groupwork, and informal communities, thereby reducing isolation and fostering a cohesive academic environment.	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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There is a need to be aware of the resourcing of the administrative staff and support as the programme will grow in the future.	We are fully aware of the administrative staff and support requirements of the programme as it grows. Resources are already in place at both the Open University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology to address this. At OUC, additional secretariat support (two positions) has already been requested by the Faculty of Economics and Management to cover this and other new programmes. This plan has been approved by the University's leadership and is currently under examination by the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth. Furthermore, as the programme is self-funded, there is flexibility to bring in external resources if required. To further create capacity, OUC is currently advertising five additional administrative positions as part of a restructuring process, which will generate more programme-level support: https://www.ouc.ac.cy/index.php/el/the-university-4/oucvacancies/employment-positions-administrative/theseis-jul	Choose level of compliance:
Well-being issues of students might require more psychologists in the future as well.	The Open University of Cyprus already has in place an Office of Counselling and Psychological Support (counseling@ouc.ac.cy), which brings in external specialists to support students with emotional, social, and learning-related difficulties. As demand increases, we can increase support as necessary. In addition, each Faculty now appoints a dedicated Personal Tutor, introduced to students during the Welcome Induction at the beginning of the semester. The Personal Tutor meets with students and provides tailored guidance to help them manage their studies effectively. To further support students, tutors have also created dedicated information areas on eClass, which include practical	Choose level of compliance:

	resources and videos on managing stress, handling academic workload, and addressing learning difficulties. We are also able to engage psychologists from the Cyprus University of Technology and make use of CUT's comprehensive counselling services. The Cyprus University of Technology provides a rich set of support structures through its Center of Student Development, which assists students facing challenges that affect their academic performance or well-being. The Centre offers guidance, practical solutions, and individualized support in collaboration with experienced professionals, ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources to overcome difficulties and succeed in their studies.	
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
Attracting international students beyond the Hellenic world will pose a challenge given the limited budgets. This maybe of importance in the future as the programme becomes embedded and goes from strength to strength. Further strengthening the aspects below could differentiate it from the competition, ensure continued relevance and increase the potential and popularity overall: 1. Embed the external partners advisory board in a formal manner with regular meetings, points of action etc. This will enable synergies between the partners to be strengthened.	As mentioned above, the Faculty of Economics and Management has already established the Faculty Advisory Board (FEMAB), which formally convenes under the Dean's leadership and provides structured guidance on curriculum, industry alignment, and external engagement. FEMAB includes senior leaders from diverse sectors, and is now being strengthened with representatives from the shipping industry, such as the Limassol Port Manager at the Cyprus Ports Authority, with another shipping expert to be added once the programme is up and running as per the suggestion above. Embedding the MSc in International Shipping Management within this structure ensures continued relevance, strong industry synergies, and greater international visibility, thereby supporting efforts to attract students from beyond the Greek-speaking world. See: https://shorturl.at/u8H9g	Choose level of compliance:
2. Students should be encouraged to provide a reflexive account of their learning at the end of their programme to strengthen academic growth and provide valuable insights beyond the course contents.	Up until now, the University has been conducting module-based evaluations. In line with the EEC's suggestion, we will now also carry out an end-of-programme evaluation, which will specifically encourage students to reflect on their overall learning journey. This will strengthen academic growth, provide feedback on the programme, and generate valuable insights for continuous improvement. For instance, the following questions will be included in a survey which will be distributed to students following completion of studies:	Choose level of compliance:

	1. <i>Looking back at your studies, what are the most important skills, insights, or perspectives you have developed during the programme?</i> 2. <i>How do you see yourself applying what you have learned in your professional or personal context?</i> 3. <i>In what ways did the overall programme (beyond individual modules) help you grow academically and professionally, and how could it be further improved?</i>	
3. Ensure a sense of community in the cohort by developing interactive, online group exercises, even if only 2-3 students interact per activity/assignment.	As noted above, we have now integrated team-based interactive exercises and topic-based discussion forums within modules, alongside a dedicated Programme Module Area where students can introduce themselves and build connections. These, together with informal collaboration through chat, Teams, Viber, and WhatsApp groups, ensure opportunities for small-group interaction (2–3 students or more) and foster a stronger sense of community within the cohort.	Choose level of compliance:

C.

D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Prof. Photis Panayides	Programme Director	
Prof. Constantinos Leonidou	Deputy Programme Director	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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