

Response to the  
**External Evaluation Report**  
(BSc, MSc SHF, PhD)

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

*Areas of improvement and recommendations*

***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The evaluation committee expressed some concern about the lack of teaching capacity on the shipping side of the program. The regular staff of the department offering the shipping set of courses is small, and much of the teaching is currently done by teaching specialists. While this has some advantages with regards to the outreach to the industry, for instance, for internship placements, for the review and renewal of the program this will ultimately become a problem. The committee was assured new positions are currently being filled.

Response: Currently the department comprises one resident faculty member and another special teaching scientist in Shipping. For this reason the additional teaching needs in the area of shipping have been largely covered by external teaching special scientists. The special scientists are carefully selected to have excellent background in maritime studies (most of them with a PhD in Maritime Studies) and extensive working experience in the shipping industry. We believe that this combination of high level academic qualifications and professional experience enhances the vocational aspect of our programmes, complements the academic rigour and helps in the integration of the department with the shipping industry and the employability of the department's graduates.

Beyond these advantages of having special scientists in our programmes (a practice that the department will continue to adopt), the department is in the final stages of recruiting three (3) new staff members for shipping related positions. We expect that the three new members will contribute extensively to the shipping part of our programme, in the areas of teaching, research and administration.

***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- The committee observed that this program is largely similar to the MSc of Shipping and Business, which is different only in a few courses and paying less attention for quantitative research methods. After extensive discussion on the pros and cons of maintaining two MSc's, the committee nevertheless recommends reconsidering this choice, and develop one general shipping and finance MSc that can cater for the entire annual cohort of 30-35 students.

Response: The two programmes are designed to attract the maximum number of students interested in shipping studies with minimum delivery cost for the department. The MSc Shipping and Finance programme attracts students with good academic background in finance and shipping (or mathematics/statistics, logistics, or engineering), and the MSc Shipping and Business programme is suitable for students with academic background in general business (ie., marketing, management, and related subjects ) or other more theoretical disciplines like Law, Education, Media and Communication and others. In fact, the past two years have witnessed increased interest in MSc In Shipping and Business as evident by the number of applications. Therefore, having these two distinct Masters programmes with the aforementioned overlap has the following advantages:

- a. our programmes are open to a broader set of disciplines thus expanding the pool of applicants.
  - b. economies of scale as about half of the courses are common among the two degrees.
  - c. the expansion of the shipping/business component of the programme is difficult to materialize with the currently available resources but will remain in the agenda as a priority once the faculty vacancies have been filled up.
- If the department chooses to maintain these two master programs (Shipping & Finance and Shipping & Business), it is strongly recommended to differentiate the programs more, and to correct the bias towards finance that is currently present in both programs. This bias can be attributed to the current lack of teaching staff for the shipping courses.

Response: The department decided to keep both masters. Some changes in the curriculums are in the pipeline (replace some finance-oriented courses with shipping/business-oriented ones) to correct the bias mentioned and differentiate the programmes.

- The committee observed that the intake of the own BSc students into the MSc is limited. This has to do with the career prospects of the BSc students in the Cypriot industry. Nevertheless, the BSc students should be a relevant stream in the intake of the MSc program, even if this is after a few years in the industry.

Response: Indeed most of our BSc graduates pursue employment in the Cypriot industry straight after completing the MSc. The department acknowledges that our BSc students would make very suitable candidates in the MSc prospective intake. We are committed to make our MSc programmes appealing to our BSc Shipping/Finance graduates through introducing more specialized modules that would provide deeper knowledge over and above that obtained in their undergraduate, launching new

modules in corporate financial management and pursuing more targeted promotion to attract our BSc students.

- The committee would also like to point out that the viability of MSc programs such as this one are greatly enhanced if the majority of courses are taught in English. This will also enhance exchange of students, both incoming and outgoing, as well as the attraction of teaching staff of the finance and shipping courses.

Response: The official language, set by government law, in our programmes is Greek. It is therefore impossible to change the teaching language to English. However, the department has already worked towards preparing a master programme to be delivered in English (i.e, as a self-financed programme) and would be ready to do so once the resources are available. This will help the department to increase its visibility with regards to foreign students and staff candidates.

- Finally, the committee observes again that writing a thesis is not compulsory. Where this seems defensible in a BSc setting, for an academic MSc this is much less the case. As a convincing counter-argument, the teaching staff explained that in many courses, writing and academic attitude are assessed as part of the course requirements. Furthermore, the industry also does not put much value on this particular skill of students in the program. Real academic work of the students, however, might be a way of bridging the gap between the teaching staff's own research and their teaching. As such, the committee feels this point has to be made in this review.

Response: The MSc programmes attract students that mainly aim to follow a professional career in the industry (not to continue with doctoral studies). These students endeavour to gain as much theoretical and practical knowledge as they can, to be able to successfully compete with other candidates that they may be more specialized on this field (i.e. have also a BSc degree). Upon implementing an optional dissertation route we revised the assessment and teaching approaches to incorporate empirical research projects and case studies that train students and enable them to understand how research achieves best practices. Swapping the dissertation with more specialized courses is strongly beneficial for the students that are about to get in the job market and compete for a position. We believe that the choice of exit route (thesis or more courses) should be left to the students and should be individually assessed according to their needs, abilities and goals. Of course, a student that may wish to follow an academic path can and is strongly advised to proceed with the thesis.

### ***PhD in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The committee considers the educational requirement of the PhD program to be too generic and similar to the course catalog of the MSc programs. Of course, some of the PhD students will have to receive some training in the field of Finance or Shipping, or in research methods, but of these only the research methods and a

finance course (topics in Capital Markets I & II) are specifically designed for a PhD student audience. This should also be done with all teaching in the PhD program to reflect the deeper knowledge and understanding the PhD candidates need to develop along the way.

Response: The educational component of the PhD programme has been designed with the objective to maximize the advanced level of knowledge required for research while faced with the constraint of a small cohort of new PhD intake per year (maximum 5 students) and a twofold direction (finance/shipping).

In response to the comments of the committee, we are committed to redesign the compulsory course requirements to a) enrich the level of knowledge offered and b) fit the academic profile of each student. First we intent to revise and limit the elective modules in order to have a more targeted and advanced list of courses. It will be left at the discretion of the supervisors whether the student should attend these modules or be offered exemptions. Students that have already concluded an MSc degree in a relevant field can proceed directly into research after successfully completing the three PhD dedicated modules.

Second, we aim to introduce two additional PhD level block modules to be offered in the Summer semester to support the research skills and specialist knowledge of the candidates. This addition will expand the list of PhD dedicated modules from three to five.

Finally, to accommodate some degree of flexibility the supervisory team would be responsible for setting alternative tasks to the candidates in lieu of the listed modules to fit the profile of the candidate and the specific PhD research area. These tasks will count towards the taught ECTS.

- The redesign of the courses specifically for the PhD program might also remedy another area of improvement, which is that the program is conducted largely in Greek. For a PhD program, in the world of shipping and finance, this is not acceptable.

Response: This does not really apply to our PhD programme and in this aspect it differentiates itself from the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. All PhD courses are based on English bibliography and material. The thesis is typically written in English to reflect the international nature of the field.

## **2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment**

### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

### ***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The students largely find work in the shipping and finance industry of Cyprus. It is therefore a pity that not all students can be placed in internships in the industry and have to resort to the alternative of either writing a bachelor thesis or taking replacement courses. It is recommended to engage the industry even more than now and secure these extra internship positions for the majority of the students.

Response: The department is working hard to secure a large number of placements in order all our students to enroll in the practical training scheme (internship) of our BSc programme. The department is in continuous collaboration with the Cyprus Shipping Chamber, a number of government offices, financial institutions and the corresponding office of our University to increase the number of placements.

### ***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- The committee recommends strengthening the academic character of the program by encouraging students to write a master thesis, or to write a strong academic internship report for the internship placements. Also, the supervision of these activities should be intimately tied to the research interests of the teaching staff in the department.

Response: As recommended our aim is to encourage students to write a master thesis, or to write a strong academic internship report for the internship placements. We are always highlighting the importance of being engaged in research. We believe that the students are able to assess the benefits of this engagement and choose accordingly. Indeed, the supervision of these activities should be intimately tied to the research interests of the teaching staff in the department.

### ***PhD in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The committee finds that the teaching program, which consists of only a few dedicated courses together with the existing course catalog of the MSc falls short of what one might expect for a PhD program. Both the compulsory course load, as well as the courses offered specifically for PhDs need to be reviewed and redesigned to fit the specific academic profile of the PhD student. Research time needs to be expanded in order to deliver PhD candidates that fit in the international setting for employment in academia. A more extensive discussion about the PhD program can be found in Section 6 of this report.

Response: It is indeed true that the research component should be by large outweighing the taught component of the PhD programme. To put more emphasis on research we are offering exemptions to candidates for the non-compulsory modules. We have also decided to bring forward the enrollment to the comprehensive exam to the third

semester of the first year of the programme with a completion date of the end of the fourth semester. It should be however noted that the comprehensive exam can be considered as part of the research component of the PhD as students are required to delve deeper into the literature and methodologies that they will use for their PhD work.

### 3. Teaching staff

#### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

##### ***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- There are staff shortages in the area of Shipping which is supported only by one FT faculty member. The course management team articulated the challenges they face in recruiting in this area. On a positive note it is anticipated that the currently advertised position will attract a sufficient number of quality candidates.

Response: see response in #1.

##### ***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- One suggestion that the Department could explore going forward, would be to invite visiting academic experts to deliver a module or modules during a term. This may help in terms of transferring specialist skills and nurturing relationships with experts from other universities.

Response: As recommended the department will request from the university the permission to recruit visiting positions specialized in specific topics in shipping and finance that are not currently offered by current staff.

- Although all faculty members are active researchers it is not directly obvious how they bring their research findings into the classroom. There is innovation in how individual modules are assessed yet the lack of a compulsory dissertation means that some students may graduate from the MSc without ever carrying out independent research.

Response: The fact that a student may not choose to pursue a dissertation does not mean that the student didn't get the necessary research component needed to proceed with its next personal steps. The courses are synthesized with projects that enable them to engage in research activities. Often the projects are derived from the faculty members' research interests, although at a reasonable level of difficulty in order to be pursued by students. Additionally, our faculty members usually share the findings of their new researches during their lectures and try to link them with the courses' learning outcomes.

### ***PhD in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- Teaching on the PhD program relies mostly on resident faculty. However, since some of the specialist modules are common across the MSc and PhD programs, and some of those modules are taught by visiting faculty and practitioners, the management team has to ensure that teaching and course content for those modules is appropriate for a PhD-level program.

Response: The department is committed to maintain the level of the programme to a PhD standard and providing quality training for the PhD candidates. Restricting the number of courses offered will ensure that the content and quality of the taught modules is closely monitored and developed.

- The Course management team articulated the policy of non-hiring PhD graduates. Although this policy clearly has its own merit, at the same time, given the shortages in key niche areas, internal hiring may be considered under certain circumstances, provided that the proper procedures and safeguards are in place.

Response: The Department does not have such recruiting policy regarding our PhD graduates. Recruiting strictly follows all good recruiting practices as stated by the government law and the rules and regulations of the University.

## **4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations***

#### ***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- Although the course is a popular choice, members of staff are encouraged to continue promoting and marketing the course to the local community. Creating awareness about the Shipping sector and the potential benefits it offers is an essential part in this process. To that extent the expansion of placements and internship will also offer additional benefits in terms of attracting more students and improving their employability prospects.

Response: All members of staff will continue promoting and marketing our programmes in the community. Also the department will continue hard work to secure a large number of placements in order all our students to enroll in the practical training scheme (internship) of our BSc programme.

#### ***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- The course management team must increase its effort to “translate” the large number of applications or, at least the number of offers to quality candidates, into student admissions. This committee is concerned that the significant overlap between the two courses does not enable either of them to flourish so the management team may need to consider the alternative of having one MSc with two streams (Shipping & Finance and Shipping & Business).

Response: As suggested the department aims to minimize, as much as possible (according to our budget), the overlap between the two MSc programmes. The MSc in Shipping & Business will include only one basic Finance Course and the rest will be substituted by Business-related courses. The two programmes are accepting applications from students with different academic backgrounds and different prospects from the acquisition of each MSc degree.

### ***PhD in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The requirement for Greek language significantly restricts the potential pool of applicants for the PhD program and the Course team must find innovative ways to circumvent this going forward.

Response: Albeit valid for our BSc and MSc programmes, this requirement does not really apply to our PhD programme. All PhD courses are based on English bibliography and material. The thesis is typically written in English to reflect the international nature of the field.

- They must also be more flexible in terms of hiring and collaborating with PhD students and offer, to the extent possible, additional incentives for participation at conferences and for developing International publications.

Response: All academics in the department do their best to support their PhD students in developing their external profile of through participation in conferences and doctoral consortia, engaging them in conferences that the faculty organizes and/or co-hosts and encouraging them to present their work at an international level. The department offers funds to cover at least one conference per year for each PhD student and encourages them to attend more than one if possible. The faculty intends to continue their efforts towards creating incentives and encouraging PhD students.

- The introduction of scholarships is a step in the right direction for attracting more high-quality students.

Response: In its first year in effect, the introduction of scholarships seems to have succeeded in attracting high quality candidates. We are committed to preserve it as an integral part of the PhD program.



## 5. Learning resources and student support

### *Areas of improvement and recommendations*

#### ***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- There is a lack of human resources in 'Shipping/Maritime' module. Most of the Faculty members have a background and present teaching and research interests in Finance and Commerce. A recruitment process is ongoing, yet the pool of candidates for teaching courses in Greek is by default limited. Relaxing the unwritten requirement of not recruiting ex-PhD students with a potential to achieve international recognition is encouraged. It is understood that for the moment they are restricted from even applying for positions at CUT.

Response: response in #1 and #3.

- It would be strategically important that the University starts thinking about an exclusive building for the Department or/and School, in order to better accommodate all present activities, create the feeling of an integrated community, avoid any potentially disruptive relocations and, not least, facilitate any plans for future expansion.

Response: This depends on the University's plans and strategy. As department we will do all necessary steps to inform the University and relevant stakeholders regarding our needs for our own building and facilities.

- Adding administrative personnel serving exclusively the Department, rather than the Department served by personnel handling the entire University population would undoubtedly benefit the quality of the services offered to students attending the programs offered by the Department. The personnel handling these issues is knowledgeable and devoted but serves a large number of students.

Response: This is a University issue. The department partly agrees with this comment. One secretary is not enough to handle the big number of UG and PG students. For this reason the department will request an additional full-time secretary. At the same time, the department recognizes the importance of having an IT personnel in the building/department. This will help to resolve timely both research and teaching IT problems facing every day. Therefore, the department will request from the University an exclusive IT staff for our department who will be based in the department's premises.

- While access to both hardware and software are currently adequate emphasis needs to be given to the continuous upgrade of hardware, and the maintenance of software subscriptions. The same stands true for the Departmental subscriptions at

the, rather costly, databases that are essential for performing business cases at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and research at doctoral level.

Response: The issue with the databases is a budgeting problem that mainly depends on the University since the cost of most financial databases is very big. As department we take every year all necessary steps to inform the University and relevant central services (as this relates to the annual budget of the Library) regarding our needs for databases.

Regarding hardware and software needs, these are partially funded centrally by the University. The department is willing to use departmental funds (generated from tuition fees) to cover part of these needs (if necessary).

#### ***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- The areas of improvement and recommendations are similar to the ones made as part of the evaluation of the BSc program offered by the Department.

Response: See comments for BSc.

#### ***PhD in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- The areas of improvement and recommendations are similar to the ones made as part of the evaluation of the BSc program offered by the Department.

Response: Response: See comments for BSc.

- A further recommendation is the expansion of the seminars program, in terms of both number visits by industry and academia and balancing the topics, so as to cover all disciplines studies (i.e. finance, commerce, shipping).

Response: All faculty members have the opportunity to invite academic colleagues from around the world whose work is relevant to the department's research disciplines, i.e. finance, commerce, shipping, economics, econometrics, computational statistics. The department is committed to continue this practice regarding and to ensure there is a balance among topics.

## **6. Additional for doctoral programmes**

#### ***Areas of improvement and recommendations***

- This is a four (4) year programme, with the first half of it based on the attendance of elective courses that are part of the MSc degrees offered by the Department: three (3) full semesters are devoted to course attendance and examination. Research activities are developed only during the second part of the program. Only 50% of the

ECTS (120 out of 240) are Research Part / Dissertation Preparation and Submission / Public presentation and defence of the doctoral thesis. Overloading the four years program with courses offered as part of a postgraduate degree, results in quite a few questions and, to the view of the EEC, does not benefit the programme.

Response: The committee has raised an important point. As explained above we are committed to refine the programme with a view to expanding research time (exempted modules, alternative tasks, timing of the comprehensive exam brought forward) to two and half/three years. In regards to the ECTS, 60 are assigned to taught modules, 60 to the comprehensive exam which is aimed at preparing the candidate for the specific research topic at hand and 120 to the dissertation conduct, writing up and submission. These initiatives will be further assessed and developed by the PhD programme committee.

- One of the limitations relates to the quality of applications:
  - (a) First, candidates that have already concluded a postgraduate (MSc) degree at another University and would like to proceed with doctoral research studies are, essentially, asked to return to class for attending a part of another MSc program rather than heading to doctoral research activities as they wish. Supporting their needs by offering a course on qualitative and quantitative research methods is different from asking them to attend.
  - (b) PhD students who have attended the MSc courses offered by the Department, i.e. have successfully attended at least three (3) of the offered electives, and wish to continue for doctoral research need to attend more electives before proceeding to research. This minimises the potential of recruiting the best of these students.

Response: The proposed changes outlined earlier aim at pitching the level of the programme at a PhD level and providing the flexibility to opt out of modules or undertake alternative tasks suggested by the supervisory team to fit the profile of the student and expand the pool of prospective candidates. We are committed to keep our entry criteria high and offer positions to few high quality applicants.

- A related challenge that needs to be addressed is that, as it stands, the PhD program appears to create a positive framework for studies in finance, however its attractiveness for students aiming to a PhD in Shipping is rather questionable:
  - (a) For reasons detailed in other parts of the evaluation report, the MSc programmes offered by the Department are heavily focusing on one of the finance disciplines rather than shipping. The two compulsory courses for those enrolling at the PhD program offer one such example. One of those courses is “Topics in Capital Markets”. The second one is “Research methods”. While the second one is valuable (and one of the strengths of the programme), it is questionable whether a quality candidate wishing to pursue a PhD in shipping would be attracted by this. Overall, a good candidate willing to develop doctoral research in shipping/maritime/transportation/logistics/port and related research would have a rather limited interest in attending too many courses in finance, and vice versa.

(b) The research interests of eight out nine resident faculty members focus on issues other than in shipping/maritime related issues.

Response: Taking into account the remarks of the committee we plan to expand the shipping content of the PhD curriculum. Moreover, the supervisor can swap the elective modules for alternative specialized tasks. Going forward, the prospective recruitment of additional shipping faculty which is ongoing will allow us to offer more shipping oriented PhD coaching.

- Another issue for improvement relates to the seminars given by visiting lecturers and professors and/or industry for PhD students are also rather uni-directional, focusing on finance. While it is understood that the characteristics of the national/local community might result in challenges for identifying suitable people to invite, taking advantage of the presence of a strong maritime community in Limassol and enhancing the shipping/maritime dimension of the seminars program would be beneficial.

Response: We will take this on board and make a conscious effort towards identifying and inviting experts in the shipping as well as finance field as speakers in the seminar series and striking the right balance in terms of research field.

- A major improvement, which, to the best of our understanding, is currently restricted by legislation relates to the language in which the doctoral thesis needs to be submitted. The program is restricting PhD candidates to submit a doctoral thesis in Greek. The potential of submitting a doctoral thesis in either Greek or English would benefit both in terms of the quality of the interested candidates and in terms of quality of conducted research. With Cyprus being a small in population country (largely bilingual), this option would expand the potential pool of candidates beyond Cyprus and occasionally Greece.

Response: This requirement does not really apply to our PhD programme. All PhD courses are based on English bibliography and material. The doctoral thesis can be written in English as well.

- Other areas for potential improvements:
  - (a) Databases – there is a trend towards improvement, as detailed by the leadership of the University (Rector, Vice-Rector), but also the staff of the Department. Efforts to secure access to more would be more than welcomed as it would contribute to research activities.
  - (b) Working-Stations for PhD Candidates: A PhD program always benefits from the active interaction of PhD candidates. It was realised that the space available to the Department is currently limited, generating question on the space that might be devoted to an enlarging PhD community. Allocation of space to the particular program by the University.
  - (c) Further collaboration with other universities in developing joint research activities at doctoral levels.

Response: These are very important points and we all agree that they play a major role in promoting a research culture and creating the necessary and appropriate conditions for high quality research. As the committee observed we are committed to work towards these goals.

#### **D. Conclusions and final remarks**

The External Evaluation Committee would like to re-iterate a number of positive points that came out of this review. In particular, the following aspects are points of strength on which the Course management team should build upon further in order to guarantee future growth and success:

- A strong academic team and a correspondingly strong research culture.
- Courses that are well organised, (with some further notes - see below) that are attuned to the needs and requirements of the local market thus providing students with solid theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
- Strong links with the local shipping and finance clusters that enhances the employment prospects of graduates.
- Sufficient administrative support (student affairs, IT, Library personnel).

This committee also recognises the challenging environment on which these courses operate. In particular the use of Greek as the teaching language restricts both the potential pool of students as well as the potential pool of academics applying for academic positions. In that respect, the management team has to be as flexible as possible in terms of overcoming these obstacles.

Response: The official language in our programmes is Greek (set by government law). The department is willing to explore the possibility to convert at least one of the existing master programmes solely in English (i.e, as a self-financed programme).

Similarly, physical resources seem to be somewhat limited and the programs would benefit from being housed in a dedicated building.

Response: This mainly depends on the University's plans and strategy. As department we will do all necessary steps to inform the University and relevant stakeholders regarding our needs for our own building and facilities.

Specific comments about the courses can be found below:

#### ***BSc in Commerce, Finance and Shipping***

- A very well organised course that attracts some of the best students finishing high school in Cyprus and provides high quality teaching and learning support to students.

- The course is popular with students as well as potential employers from the local shipping and finance communities.
- Members of staff are fully engaged and provide good pastoral care and career advice
- Administrative support is efficient.
- An internship programme that adds value to the degree.
- Overall the program is fully compliant in all respects but would benefit from the expansion of personnel in the niche areas of shipping and commerce. In addition, broadening the internship scheme will also provide additional benefits and better employment prospects for all graduates.

Response: The coordinator of the BSc programme and all members of the department would like to thank the members of the external committee for the insightful comments.

### ***MSc in Shipping and Finance***

- Most positive aspects from the BSc program also apply to the MSc.
- The program is popular attracting a high number of quality applicants. It is, we were told, the most popular program at the University.
- However, only 15% of those applications is converted into student enrolment. This is a cause of concern and something that the management team must investigate and analyse further. They must make the effort to convert offers made to admissible students into actual enrolment.
- This committee also believes that the differentiation between the two MSc (i.e. Shipping & Finance and Shipping and Business) is not sufficient, and the management should reconsider the available options.
- Also, the balance between the Finance and Shipping elements of the program is very much weighted towards finance and there is less emphasis on Shipping.
- Finally, we should also emphasise here the importance of sustaining and expanding subscriptions to databases.

Response: The coordinator of the MSc programmes and all members of the department would like to thank the members of the external committee for the insightful comments.

### ***PhD in Shipping and Finance***

- Well organised and well supervised program by capable and suitably qualified resident faculty.
- The committee feels that the program is overloaded with teaching activities that are mostly suited to MSc students, rather than focusing on research.
- The taught component of the PhD needs to refocus on modules that are suitably attuned to the needs and requirements of a PhD program.
- The program also creates a positive framework for studies in Finance. However, its attractiveness for students aiming for a PhD in Shipping is rather limited.

Concluding, this committee feels that all departmental activities would benefit from being taught in English, expanding number of Faculty in niche areas (particularly shipping) and having dedicated use of own facilities for teaching and administration.

Response: We thank the committee for the constructive comments that will help promote the quality of our programme. We are committed in taking a series of actions towards addressing the issues raised. More specifically we are committed to,

- Expand the list of PhD level modules and ensure an advanced and targeted educational component.
- Limit the number of module requirements.
- Provide more flexibility in regards to the educational requirements to fit the profile of the PhD candidates.
- Extend the research time by bringing forward the comprehensive exam and aiming for a completion of the taught component in 1.5 years.
- Expand the shipping content of the compulsory PhD modules.
- Request additional in house administration support for our postgraduate programmes)