

07.14.318.029

Doc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Conventional-face-to-face programme of study

Higher Education Institution: Frederick University

- **Campus:** Nicosia- Limassol
- **School:** School of Business and Law
- **Department / Sector:** Department of Business Administration
- **Programme of study under evaluation Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Διοίκηση (3 ακαδημαϊκά ετη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό (PhD))

In English:

Management (3 academic years, 180 ECTS, Doctorate (PhD))

- **Language of instruction:** English

Programme's Status: Currently Operating

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.300.3.1) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the department 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. 300.3.1).*
- *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, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Please refer to section 6 of this Document where we provide our comments in response to the Committee's recommendations

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment

(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Please refer to section 6 of this Document where we provide our comments in response to the Committee's recommendations

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- a. While research is appreciated and encouraged, there is space for improvement in terms of how research is evaluated. In broad terms, quantity receives equal credit as quality. Although this approach has virtues as quantity has a quality of its own, focusing on higher quality publications informed by international metrics could further enhance the reputation of Frederick University in the long term.

Department's Response:

After careful consideration of the committee's suggestions, the Department updated its research policy in a Departmental meeting taking place on the 7th of June 2021 (attached Annex 1). The updated policy of the Department offers guidance and sets targets for its faculty members that relate to key performance indicators (KPIs) in the following:

- The number of publications as listed in Scopus
- High impact (quality) publications as measured by SJR index in Scopus
- Submitted funding proposals & funding
- h-index (measured in Scopus)
- Citations (measured in Scopus)
- PhD supervision (Number of students)

The Department has measured and assessed all KPIs listed above for each faculty member and has set overall targets in each KPI for a horizon of 3 years. These KPIs and each faculty member's contribution is evaluated every year against these targets. Specifically relating to publications, faculty members are expected to contribute to the research output of the Department with a focus on Scopus ranked publications. The expected output of each member is at least one Scopus ranked publication per year. In order to provide merit for high quality research output, the Department measures high rank publications for each faculty member based on SJR with high impact publications considered when a rating $SJR \geq 1$. The $SJR \geq 1$ appears highly correlated with other international rankings such as ABS.

Following the committee's suggestions, the department decided in the meeting of 7th of June 2021 to also adopt the guide for quality of publication-journal based on the Academic Journal Guide published by the Chartered Association of Business Schools. The journal list is a list widely used by academic business schools internationally. The list can be found here: <https://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2021-view/>

The list uses the AJG rank (1-4 with 4* for reserved for few leading journals in respective fields). The Department aims to also complement and measure the quality of publications of members according to this index.

Clearly, in line with the University's strategic plan to become an internationally recognized research-based institution, the Department proposes to use the above criteria to provide further transparency and clarity to faculty for research evaluations, in addition to the explicit criteria and guidelines for promotion set by the University. With regards new recruitments, these criteria will be applied where priority will be placed on high quality research output.

- b. Along the same lines, more encouragement, incentives and support for research activities among faculty is recommendable (e.g., increase of the research budget). The transition from college (i.e. teaching-focused institution) to university (i.e. research-based institution) seems not to have fully materialized yet (which is understandable as this is typically a lengthy process), and research output for more of the faculty members must be stronger. A means could be to find ways to reduce the required teaching load, which is 12 h/week (even though the department has managed to reduce it to some extent.). Another means would be to make the criteria for research evaluations more transparent and quantifiable. As well, supervision of doctoral students could also receive explicit credit towards one's workload.

Department's Response:

Further to comment 3a above to accommodate for the fact that the University is still in transition from an era of teaching to an era of research focus, the Department is focusing on building the necessary culture of research and adding further support mechanisms for developing research output of existing and new members. More specifically the following support mechanisms are provided:

- Reduce faculty teaching load. The University's teaching load reduction scheme is applied in the case of faculty who are engaged in research activities, participate in research projects or supervise PhD students. This scheme will release time for faculty to develop their research agenda and build up their research output. Furthermore, the Department's decision to proceed with the recruitment of visiting faculty to strengthen program development and delivery, contributes to the teaching load reduction of resident faculty and further concentration on their research activities.
- Increase research support mechanisms. It has been identified that many colleagues are reluctant to engage in funded research initiatives due to the administrative load this often entails. For this reason, a new research officer has been hired in the Research and Interconnection Service to offer support in this direction. Administering research projects, editing research proposals, and enhancing/facilitating the development of research networks are some of the duties of the new research officer.
- Offer opportunities for internal funding to encourage faculty members that require financial assistance to develop their research ideas. Notably, faculty members can take advantage of the decision taken by the Senate in Fall 2020 to fund competitive research proposals. The Senate has allocated a portion of the University's Research Fund to an internal funding scheme through which members of staff can apply for internal small-scale financial support. The call was announced in January 2021 and several faculty members submitted proposals in their field of expertise.
- Encourage/ fund a greater number of visits from external academics and other collaborators to promote research engagement and identify areas for collaboration with resident faculty. To this end, the research seminar series can provide a platform for faculty members, as well as, invited speakers of international calibre, to present their research work. The use of online technology contributes in limiting the travel costs for invited speakers. For example, it is noted that the Department has already put in place arrangements with two visiting faculty members, one from the University of Miami (in the field of Management /Entrepreneurship) and one from the University of Kent (in the field of Digital Marketing) to enrich the programme teaching with their specialized knowledge and expertise and to provide research seminars to faculty members and PhD students of the Department. See Annex 2 for specific information.

We believe this type of initiatives can have a positive impact in initiating potential research collaborations.

- Increase the funding for participation in Scopus indexed conferences that lead to publications. It is noted that the University already allocates a budget to the Department for such activities.
- Further encourage the use of European funds and in particular European COST actions. A number of faculty members already participated and expressed their interest to continue. They have also shared experiences with other faculty members to increase participation in this important form of European funding.

Furthermore, the University already has procedures in place for the evaluation of its academic staff. As per the Mission, the Regulation and Rules and of the University, the academic staff are evaluated based on four (4) pillars:

(1) Teaching, (2) Research, (3) Administrative Work, (4) Contribution to society.

These procedures are publicly available at the University's website ([Link](#)) and indicate specific criteria for the evaluation for each rank. These criteria include publications in peer reviewed journals, funded research projects, international recognitions, doctoral studies supervision, contribution in teaching and administrative work of the University, professional achievements and social contribution.

The University's Council has decided to further expand and specify the evaluation criteria and at the 150th Senate Meeting, after a first discussion the suggested framework of evaluation of each pillar was:

Teaching

- Student evaluation reports for the last 3 years
- Educational material that has been developed since the last evaluation
- Samples of two (2) detailed course descriptions
- Presentation of a sample course on the online learning platform
- Participation in training programmes
- Design and development of innovative courses

Research

- Total number of publications

- Number of scientific publications since the last evaluation
- Percentage of publications submitted, that appear in international databases (eg. Scopus, Web of Science)
- Number of Citations
- Scientific recognition
- Research Work Autonomy
- Research projects
- Funding
- Laboratories
- Doctoral Student Supervision
- Creating / leading a research team

Administrative Work

- Election to an academic position such as Head, Dean etc
- Participation in Senate / Council Committees
- Participation in Departmental Committees
- Committee Chair
- Program of Study Coordinator
- Participation in the planning and submission of a new programme of study
- Participation in the design and delivery of training programmes
- Participation in activities for the development of the University

Social Contribution

- Participation and planning of programmes and actions for the society
- Representation of the University in National Committees
- Representation of Cyprus in European and International Committees
- Organizing events, open to the public
- Commons Participation (ex. Non-scientific articles, media presence etc).

The Rector's Council has been authorized to finalize the evaluation criteria in order for the process to be initiated before summer 2022.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Please refer to section 6 of this Document where we provide our comments in response to the Committee's recommendations

5. Learning resources and student support

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- a. Access to more databases would be a welcome addition. This could be on subscription fee basis or through bilateral agreements with other Universities in Cyprus. Especially in doctoral programs (say in Finance) such access can be a game changer.

Department's Response:

The University of Cyprus Library is the sole higher education institution in the Republic of Cyprus that purchases access to highly specialized databases such as COMPUSTAT and CRSP achieved via subscription to WRDS (Wharton Research Data Services, Wharton University of Pennsylvania). It follows that their subscription is not facilitated by CALC – the Cyprus Academic Libraries Consortium - which is consortium of Cyprus universities where Frederick U. is a current member. We intend to explore the possibility of arriving at a special arrangement with University of Cyprus Library to cater for the remote access requirements of our students and researchers although this may not be possible based on the current agreements with providers. We also plan to raise the issue within the CALC consortium and explore whether some solutions can be reached at the consortium level.

- b. The University will need to ensure that the adequacy of resources is maintained and updated in light of changing student numbers (especially if the year-on-year increases are realized) and in light of ongoing advances in academic knowledge, and developments in professional practice.

Department's Response:

The Committee's comment is already taken into consideration during the planning stage of the required resources (such as, academic materials, subscriptions to journal databases, IT resources, staffing levels across the University, etc), taking place on annual basis, to cater for the changing needs arising as a result of various circumstances, such as, changing number of students, staff availability, advances in academic knowledge, developments in professional practice. In addition, the University is expanding its infrastructure; in particular, the Limassol campus is currently undergoing re-innovation and further modernization to keep-up with the changing needs and ensure adequacy of facilities. Further expansion plans for the campus are planned for the coming years in anticipation of any future needs as a result of increasing student population.

- c. The uncertainty about 'face to face' teaching post-Covid19 faced by all education institutions means that the University will need to ensure that it has 'fail safe' contingencies in place to ensure that students can access materials and learning remotely at any times when this is necessary.

Department's Response:

We appreciate the impact of the uncertainty created as a result of the pandemic and we are proud of the speed and effectiveness with which the University has responded in addressing the emerging challenges. Significant investment has been made to enhance the IT infrastructure facilities and remote access capacity, deploy training programs for students and staff, setup virtual computer laboratories and more. For example, the university undertook the development of several hybrid classrooms that enable the seamless blending of teaching delivery and two-way communication with students both physically and virtually present.

Even before the pandemic, the University adopted a policy of shifting investment in educational resources to electronic ones. The library investment has shifted from 80%

physical resources to 80% electronic resources over the past five years and had an almost 100% increase in its budget. Access to key academic electronic resources such as Elsevier and Springer is provided to all community members through VPN although an electronic solution for access to textbooks has not yet been found.

The University has invested in infrastructure and practices that allow for flexibility and has put in place contingencies to ensure its students can continue to learn remotely at times when this becomes necessary. For example, some online functionality using ZOOM will be maintained in the transition period for students that due to the pandemic may not be able to attend classes. The experience acquired in prior semesters of using the online quiz/ exam functionality will prove to be useful in the future. Classrooms are equipped with flexibility to adapt to hybrid mode of teaching where some students attend face to face while others (due to pandemic restrictions) may only be able to attend remotely using the in-class available screens. It should be noted that this technology has been tested during the pandemic so there is significant accumulated experience in the Department.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes

(ALL ESG)

- a. Standardize the types and quality of Master programs that count for admission to the 3rd semester of the doctoral program. The recommendation here is twofold. We will demonstrate with two examples.
 - i) For a number of reasons, an MBA from a leading university say from the UK typically equips a graduate with a different (superior) set of skills than an MBA from say a local College in Cyprus. This needs to be reflected explicitly in the admission criteria. Perhaps, you could compile a list of universities.
 - ii) An MBA graduate (regardless from where the degree comes from) has a different training than say a graduate with an MSc. in Finance. As a result, if both graduates enter the 3rd semester of the program, this may create inconsistencies in terms of the student profile and, hence, it could create obstacles in module delivery. Indeed, one could argue that an MBA graduate's training would be better suited for a DBA.

Department's Response:

In their findings for PhD in Management, the committee notes in their evaluation report (page 9): "The admissions criteria are common to comparable programs". In response to the above comment 6.a, below we provide a clarification for the process we apply to evaluate and select the successful candidates, including the five doctoral students currently on the Programme.

According to the minimum academic requirements for admission to the PhD in Management, eligible applicants must hold a Bachelor's or Master's Degree, *granted by an institution recognized in the country where it operates*. Since the field of Management is very broad and covers a wide spectrum of academic business disciplines, the type and quality of Master programmes that count for admission to the 3rd semester of the Doctoral programme is a criterion that we use and it is *already in place* and has been implicitly applied by the Doctoral Programme Committee for the evaluation and selection procedure of our PhD students. Hence, one of the important criteria we use to evaluate the academic qualifications of the candidate is the type and quality of the Master degree and *its relevance* to the area in which the candidate is interested in conducting research. Indeed, we agree with the committee's

comment that “an MBA graduate (regardless from where the degree comes from) has a different training than say a graduate with an MSc in Finance”, and for this reason, of course, we apply the above criterion during the decision process of whether or not an offer can be made to a candidate on our PhD Programme to carry out research in a specialist management discipline. For example, one of our PhD students in the field of Accounting (currently in his final year of studies), holds a Bachelor in Economics from AUEB (Athens University of Economics & Business) and an MA in Accounting and Finance from Lancaster University, a specialist Master relevant to his PhD research. He was admitted to the PhD Programme based on this specific Master qualification. It is noted that in such cases, an MBA graduate’s training would not be an appropriate Master for PhD research in the area of Accounting or Finance.

- b. As discussed above, most current students do not aspire to follow academic careers. While this is not an issue per se, the EEC notes that this is more common in DBA programs. While the first cohort is small and likely not representative of the cohorts to follow this is a point to be monitored.
- Indeed, a core quality indicator for doctoral programs is the placement of their graduates in academic posts. As such, we urge the university to consider adding an ambition to follow an academic career as an admission criterion.

Department’s Response:

In their findings for PhD in Management, the committee notes in their evaluation report (page 9): “Overall, the program seeks to equip its graduates with analytical qualities that can prepare students for academic careers and leadership positions”. Indeed, our PhD Programme is comparable to other international programs in the field of Management with well-defined admissions criteria, academic requirements and quality assurance procedures. It is by no means a DBA and should not be perceived as a DMBA. Importantly, it is not designed as such.

It is noted that the first intake of the PhD Programme is a small cohort of five PhD students. As the Committee observes, some of them do not aspire to follow academic careers. One of them is an experienced College Accounting Lecturer from Crete, interested in progressing his academic career. There are several reasons why candidates wish to pursue PhD studies, some may not aspire to become academics while others opt for this route as a

means of further boosting their careers. It is worth noting here, that pursuing an academic career was the reason and motivation of submitting application for many of the applicants that were initially interviewed for a place on the PhD Programme.

We agree with the Committee's comment that a core quality indicator for doctoral programs is the placement of their graduates in academic posts. Clearly, this indicator can be evaluated for cases of well-established PhD programmes with a large number of graduates and significant data available so that statistics can be used in a meaningful way to draw conclusions. An equally important indicator of course is the quality and type of a wider range of end destinations of graduates at industrial or research organisations. As the committee correctly pointed out, the first cohort of our PhD Programme is small and likely not representative of the following cohorts. Indeed, as the number of students grows, we expect that the profile of our PhD graduates in terms of their end destination will be in line to that of other similar programmes offered by other universities. In any case, it is our intention to closely monitor this point as the programme matures.

- c. Following up on the previous point on placement, a key determinant of placements is the research activity and status of the student's supervisor. As such, it is imperative for students to be supervised only by faculty that are indeed research active and, preferably, of high status. Given that the research activity of the department is somewhat uneven across faculty, this is a point to be monitored.

Department's Response:

We share the committee's view as expressed by the above comment.

In their findings for PhD in Management, the committee notes in their evaluation report (page 9): "Importantly, the specializations of the supervisors map onto the topics of the dissertations. When expertise is not available in house the University draws upon external academics and this is also appreciated by the EEC".

Indeed, the above finding of the committee is verified by the rules and principles applied by the Doctoral Programme Committee in the process of appointment of appropriate supervisors. Students on the Programme are expected to be supervised by faculty who are research active and publish in the area where their supervisees are carrying out their PhD research. In the case where expertise is not available in house, the School draws upon

external academics who have an established research record in the area of the student's dissertation. For example, the research field of a current student (working on Building dynamic capabilities in public sector Organizations of Greece during the design and implementation of RIS3) did not match any of the specialization areas of resident faculty, hence, a research active external academic from Greece, who is also a visiting professor at Frederick University, was called in to supervise the student.

Furthermore, in cases where the student supervisor is less experienced or less research active, the supervisory role is strengthened by the student's 3-member Research Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC consists of the student's research advisor, who chairs the committee, and two other members with extensive knowledge in the research area of the student's dissertation. At least two members of the RAC must be at the rank of associate professor or professor and at least one committee member must have supervised PhD students who have successfully completed their studies in the past. Each student on the Programme is assigned a 3-member RAC that approves the research proposal of the student and oversees progress throughout the student's Doctoral Studies.

We agree with committee's comment that the research activity of the department is somewhat uneven across faculty. Indeed, the Department has identified several challenges in promoting the research efforts of its staff to become research active. Under a broader university plan, the Department has identified a series of research related KPIs so that members of staff can relate to tangible and quantifiable targets as well as a series of support mechanisms to help in that direction. A detailed relevant response has been provided in section 3 of this Document.

- d. Doctoral supervision does not receive credit towards faculty's workload. Given the responsibilities that such supervision carries, the EEC strongly recommends that doctoral supervision should receive explicit, quantified, credit.

Department's Response:

Indeed, taking on board the above recommendation and as detailed in our response to comment 3.b in section 3 of this Document, the Department has taken various decisions to offer incentives, support and promote the research culture and activity among faculty. To this end, the University has already introduced a teaching load reduction scheme aiming to reduce resident faculty's teaching load, mainly for those faculty members who are engaged

in significant research activities or participate in research projects or supervise PhD students. In particular, as more faculty members are encouraged to be involved in the supervision of Doctoral Dissertations and as the number of PhD students grows, bearing in mind the responsibilities that doctoral supervision entails, it has been decided that the latter should receive explicit credit in faculty's overall workload. For this purpose, the University has put in place a formula so that teaching load, project thesis supervision and doctoral supervision receive explicit credit in a quantified manner.

- e. The requirement to publish (or submit to conferences) 2 papers has benefits but in the EEC's assessment and experience it often leads to significant shortcomings. Namely, it often pushes students to publish in lower ranked journals instead of aiming for higher quality outlets. As such, the committee recommends for this requirement to be revisited..

Department's Response:

We share the view that the above academic requirement of the PhD Programme has benefits but it may also lead to significant shortcomings. This requirement is part of the PhD Regulations approved by the University Senate in October 2014 for all Doctoral Programmes at Frederick University. According to the Regulations, prior to submitting the Doctoral Thesis, a candidate must have: (i) At least one published paper or in-progress paper considered for publication in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journal or conference on a topic related to his / her Doctoral Thesis and (iii) At least one relevant paper presented at an international conference.

Taking into consideration the above comment highlighted by the external evaluation committee, and as part of the internal quality assurance process of the Department, the Doctoral Programme Committee intends to revisit the academic requirement in relation to publications, during the next major review of the Programme which is expected to take place next year.

- f. 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:

Indeed, one of the core aims of our PhD in Management is to develop students' knowledge, skills and expertise, to perform high quality theoretical and applied research in a wide variety of business-related and multi-disciplinary areas. We agree that new sources of research funding as a result of links and collaborations with companies (local or international), offer potential for the expansion of the PhD Programme and attracting PhD students. Furthermore, such collaborations, bring in bilateral benefits for both the Department in terms of enhancing the reputation of its PhD Programme, while research output can provide solutions to specific company problems. We share the view that dissemination of research findings can benefit society and make the Department and the University visible to the wider community.

An example of the above which, is already in place, refers to the case of the PhD student accepted on the Programme in Spring 2021, working in the following research area: "The Contribution of Port Authorities to the Management of Risks and how this can be improved – Creating a Risk Management System for the Cyprus Ports Authority". This PhD student works in research projects undertaken in the area of risk management, generating research funding for his PhD studies.

7. Conclusions and final remarks

- a. The doctoral program in management at Frederick University is in its starting phase.
- b. The EEC appreciates that significant progress has been made since the launch of the program including drawing upon external expertise, rigorous quality assessments and **program structure consistent with comparable programs**. As any new program, there is also space for improvement. Indeed, we have identified a number of areas where we see that further development are recommended. We have elaborated on those mainly in section 6. These include refinements in admission criteria and process towards completion, explicit recognition of faculty effort for doctoral supervision, and strengthening of processes to ensure program graduates increase their chances of academic placements.

Department's Response:

In conclusion, we would like to thank all members of the Evaluation Committee for their useful insights and constructive recommendations and ensure them that, wherever possible, we have incorporated their suggestions for further development and improvement of the quality of the programme under evaluation.

In this Document, we provided response on all the points raised by the committee, including those summarized in the above concluding remarks of the committee.

Indeed, the PhD Programme in Management at Frederick University is in its early stages. As a final note, we wish to state our commitment for continuous improvement of the programme. We believe that the current evaluation process has contributed in this direction, and once again, we would like to thank the Committee members for their recommendations and the useful discussions held during the online site visit.



B. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
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Prof. George Demosthenous Rector

