

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 03/05/2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

In Greek:

Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (4 έτη / 240 ECTS,
Πτυχίο, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

In English:

Business Administration (4 years/240 ECTS,
Bachelor of Business Administration, E-Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek/English

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **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.*

Introduction and overall assessment

We refer to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the assessment-accreditation of the BBA Bachelor of Business Administration, E-Learning program, which was prepared following an on-site visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on January 31st, 2023.

We would like to thank the EEC members for their thorough and insightful work as well as their inspiring and encouraging comments during the evaluation of the BBA program. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation. All full-time faculty teaching in the programme were present on-site during the evaluation. Program part-time faculty and Special Teaching Staff were also present as well as students and graduates (online).

The EEC report is extremely positive with the highest scores (5 out of 5) and all assessment areas were marked as “Compliant”.

As reported by the members of the EEC, the BBA E-LEARNING is a properly designed distance learning environment that is coordinated and taught by enthusiastic and committed lecturers.

We do appreciate the committee’s recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our BBA E-learning program and we will be addressing those in the corresponding section of this response.

In the following sections, we break down the comments and suggestions of the Committee and we provide our comments (if any) and the actions taken to address the comments. In order to simplify and make this response report easier to read, we state the EEC findings and strengths for each section together and then we summarise the constructive feedback of the Committee and our response.

Based on the EEC evaluation report, we are looking forward to the re-accreditation of our BBA E-Learning program.

Below, the findings and strengths reported by the EEC in its assessment are presented followed by its constructive feedback and our responses/actions.

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
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We appreciate the EEC positive comments on the logical sequence and coherence in the program with core modules offered in the first year, providing foundational knowledge required and becoming a platform on which to stage the rest of the program. In addition, very encouraging are the EEC's comments on the teaching staff's collegiality and collaboration towards the development of the modules, exam and other forms of assessment through peer review process. Positive remarks were made also on the final examination double marking practices.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *The program learning outcomes and program content should be realigned so that they are compatible. For example, learning goal 2 seeks to develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills and leadership potential, but there are only 3 modules with management, 1 with entrepreneurship and none with leadership in the title. The same can be said for other program learning outcomes. It is recommended that the program team undertake a comprehensive revision of the learning outcomes.*

2) *The objectives need to be narrowed down and be more focused, so that they correspond with the subjects taught. The objectives and learning outcomes of each course should be considered within this respect and evidence should be provided when it comes to the various assessments used in the courses and their contribution to the learning objectives.*

Action/Response

- 1.1. We agree with the EEC comment on the program L.G 2: *“Develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills and leadership potential”* and we replaced MIS-450 Digital Transformation Management course with MGT-335 Leadership in Organizations. The MGT-335 Course Syllabus is attached in PDF format and the revised BBA E-Learning program path is presented in Appendix I). Following the EEC's recommendation to revise the BBA E-Learning program learning outcomes, we comprehensively reviewed the program learning outcomes in relation to all courses and we decided to remove L.O 2.1: *Work in and manage multicultural teams* for which there was indeed limited training in the courses offered (Revised BBA E-Learning program Learning Outcomes:

- Appendix I). Regarding the compatibility between the remaining Learning Outcomes, we are confident that there is a sufficient number of courses and material that reflect on them. Evidence on the mirroring is presented in BBA E-Learning Program Courses/Learning Outcomes Matrix: Appendix III).
- 1.2. Regarding the EEC’s second point, which is somewhat unclear whether the EEC with the term “**Objectives**” refers to the program Learning Goals, we believe that the program learning goals are sufficient, precise, relevant and inclusive for all courses. Please see Appendix III that presents a matrix for call program courses and learning goals.

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

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We acknowledge the EEC’s positive comments on the good practice of the program continuous evaluation of the quality assurance by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations. The EEC positively sees the e-learning mode to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time students with professional and/or family duties, who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. In addition, commendable are the provision of provision of personalised feedback in the assignments submitted and during the teleconference sessions, as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-assessment (even if they were not shown during the meeting) are considered best practice.

Finally, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by the collaborative activities and discussions organised in online teams and acknowledges the provision of weekly study guides, which make it possible for the students to determine the work to be done every week, are also considered best practice.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if gamification strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process.*

2) *The University could use more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems, and conversational pedagogical agents can be used to support immediate and automatic feedback to students helping them to monitor their progress.*

3) While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and the online teamwork among students were perceived as potentially problematic as the programme expands. This is likely to become a bigger challenge if the program continues to expand internationally and is attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the University would support and coordinate this type of collaboration; the EEC therefore recommends continual adaptation of the distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.

Action/Response

- 2.1. We are in the process of evaluating software that enables gamification elements to be incorporated in Moodle (our Learning Management System). This software comes with a wide range of features to gamify content i.e. lecturers can award points, create leaderboards, and celebrate milestones. We are also in the process of implementing the use of “Badges” in Moodle. Badges are a good way of celebrating achievement and showing progress. Badges may be awarded based on a variety of chosen criteria and may be displayed on a user's profile. Gamification strategies are not extensively used since the Moodle platform offers alternative pedagogically appropriate tools for student motivation and engagement during the e-assessment process. Certainly, the University will consider the purchase of simulations for the specific program.
- 2.2. We reviewed intelligent tutoring systems which are effective tools for giving feedback to large courses where the lecturer does not have the time to attend the immediate learning needs of each one of his/her students. In our case, our e-learning courses have a limit of maximum 30 students per section and each lecturer is limited to teaching a maximum of 2 courses/sections per semester. This policy gives enough time to lecturers to offer personalized feedback and closely attend to the learning needs of each of the students in the course. It also substantially increases the levels of student-to-lecturer interactivity and the lecturer's presence in the course, elements that have been shown to improve student retention and learning outcomes. Furthermore, currently there are several tools in Moodle for students to review their progress in each course. For example, students can monitor which of the elements of the course they reviewed and completed in Moodle (a feature imbedded in all our courses). They can also review their progress through the Moodle course “gradebook”.
- 2.3. Regarding EEC third comment, we would like to emphasize that the vast majority of learning activities of the program are asynchronous. For each course, every week there is a recorded lecture for each topic of the course outline and often several other activities such as Forum Discussions, WiKis, Formative Assessment, Quizzes etc. All of these activities are available and can be completed at any time at the students' convenience. The synchronous WebEx sessions are provided following the DIPAE Guidelines and they are 3x3 hour sessions throughout the semester. In all cases, faculty members make an effort to schedule their WebEx sessions based on their

audience availabilities. As the program continues to expand internationally we will of course remain flexible in WebEx scheduling.

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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We appreciate the positive comments of the EEC for the well- structured pedagogical and technical support mechanisms offered for all faculty teaching e-learning courses. In addition, the EEC acknowledged the School's good repository of e-learning training and development resources for the faculty.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) *The University is encouraged to continue investing in developing teaching and learning supports for online learning and to explore innovative new technologies and methodologies which will enrich the faculty teaching and student learning experience.*
- 2) *The University could articulate all aspects of faculty workload in a single place. In turn, workload management could be organised in a more structured and transparent system*

Action/Response

- 3.1. Indeed, the University has been investing in developing teaching and learning supports for online learning, and explore, research and implement new technologies and methodologies. This is implemented through a number of relevant units which were presented during the EEC visit i.e., e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit, Technology Enhanced Learning Centre, Online Learning Support Unit, Faculty Training and Development Unit.
- 3.2. We agree with the EEC comment on faculty workload. We, as a Department, already manage faculty workload by scheduling conventional and e-learning courses in advance. In addition we monitor faculty workload and we strive that each faculty

member's workload corresponds to his/her ranking. Also, at university level, there is an ongoing effort to monitor and manage the workload of all faculty members.

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

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The EEC commented on the actively sought and fairly reliable student feedback offered throughout and at the end of each course through the utilization of online anonymous surveys with a very high response rate (55%). The EEC considers the low drop-out rate of less than 10% as a relevant strength for the program and acknowledges that BBA E-Learning students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio and that student feedback is very positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) The University is encouraged to adopt more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI, and specifically Machine Learning, to monitor and predict student performance and dropout, in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in the context of the University's plans to increase its academic portfolio and the number of online students

Action/Response

- 4.1. We already use sophisticated Learning Analytics reports to monitor students at risk. These reports are available and are utilized by faculty members and administration throughout a course. Using the information from these reports, we constantly work towards supporting at risk students, something that is evident by the very low drop-out rates at the University of Nicosia. Additionally, we are constantly monitoring and testing intelligent new learning analytics systems and tools. This is done by the heads of the Technology Enhanced Learning Centre, the eLearning Pedagogical Support Unit and IT Unit.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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The EEC considers the ePSU unit, as a best practice, due to its structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The committee acknowledge the ePSU unit can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the teaching provided, while providing a good foundation for faculty members engaging with distance learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *Based on the study guides provided by the University, the EEC recommends that they are kept separate to the LMS. It is also recommended that they include more information in order to guide online students through the course, such as a detailed learning methodology and bibliography, both required and complementary, self-assessment exercises, and recommended study guide, so that online students can plan their study effectively. The EEC would like to draw attention to this point in order that the study guides would be updated based on the recommendations above.*

2) *From the feedback collected in the meeting with the students, the EEC would like to suggest to make teleconference sessions shorter and/or organise short breaks in the middle if they last more than 2 hours in order to make these online sessions more effective in terms of learning absorption and fruitful discussion and collaboration*

Action/Response

5.1. Please note that for each course there is a detailed Course Outline and Course Study Guide that are uploaded on the LMS at the beginning of each semester. These documents are updated every time the course is offered. The Study Guides of the program courses have been attached to the DIPAE Application and are available for review.

5.2. We fully agree with this comment. Invariably, in a 3-hour session a break is always given but we will make sure that this is communicated to all teaching staff so as to follow consistently this policy. Regarding shorter sessions some faculty already follow this approach for their WebEx sessions but for a university wide policy change further discussions are needed, always in alignment with the DIPAE guidelines.

Conclusions and final remarks

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In this report, the EEC has provided feedback on the program evaluated. The report includes the main findings, showcases the program's strong points, and suggests ways to improve.

Overall, it was positive to see a group of enthusiastic and committed coordinators and lecturers who teach in their area of expertise, within a properly designed distance learning environment. As it became apparent based on the formal presentations and interviews with teaching and administrative staff, there is a high level of enthusiasm and passion and willingness to make the programme succeed.

The EEC hopes that this feedback will guide future growth and contribute to the success of the program. If the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education requires any clarification on the report, the EEC is available to assist. Finally, the EEC would like to express its gratitude to the CYQAA coordinator for his efficient and effective management of the evaluation process

We would like to express our appreciation to the EEC members for the very positive evaluation, as well as their constructive comments for the program. We are satisfied with the EEC members' evaluation of the program as fully compliant in all categories, with a very high score. Furthermore, we are pleased to know that the EEC members commend on the collegial academic and administrative staff, as well as its ongoing growth and improvement. We have provided clarifications to EEC's comments and addressed all recommendations.

The BBA e-learning program hosted by the Department of Management, the biggest Department of the School of Business, is further strengthened by the EEC's recommendations and it is hoped that they will be a valuable resource for the University and the program team.

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B.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

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Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Prof. Angelika Kokkinaki	Dean	
Prof. Despo Ktoridou	Head of Department / Program Coordinator	
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