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ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 15/05/2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
  University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

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

  In Greek:

  Διοικητική Πληροφοριακών Συστημάτων (4 έτη / 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο)

  In English:

  Management Information Systems (4 years/240 ECTS, Bachelor of Science)

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

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 BSc Management Information Systems (MIS) program which was prepared following an on-site visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on February 17, 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 BSc program as well as their excellent report. 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 as well as students and graduates.

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

Overall, the EEC was impressed by the quality of the programme. Specifically they found the program timely and relevant and its objectives and learning outcomes well aligned. The EEC positively commented that the program is sound, informed by research and the recent technological advances in digitalization and their impact on business and management.

We do appreciate the Committee's recommendations for improvement, which will enhance the quality of our BSc 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's 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 BSc MIS program.

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

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

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We thank the EEC for the extremely positive comments on various aspects of the programme such as the balanced program design which is characterized by a good mix of common core skills and more advanced new technology, business model and technology management courses; the fact that the program is kept current with specific reference to the new course in AR/VR technologies; and the fact that the program coordinator is very much liked by students and faculty which is considered a great asset for the program.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *The collection of key performance indicators should be made more systematic.*
2) *There are some illogical prerequisites on courses. Students noted that there are pre requisites for some advanced courses that one cannot include to the programme. There should either be an exemption for them, or these need to be dropped. It is recommended that for any course that is listed in the programme specification, students are able to meet all the prerequisites.*

☑**Action/Response**

1.1. We agree with the EEC's comment on a more systematic collection of the key performance indicators (KPIs). The School of Business has a strategic plan which is updated annually and identifies KPIs for the entire school. Aligned with the School of Business Strategic plan, the Department of Management has developed its own strategic plan and KPIs.

1.2. In relation to the second comment, we would like to initially note that the BSc MIS program offers several courses which have prerequisites or other requirements such as a minimum number of credits that a student must have completed prior to enrolling in a specific course. MIS course prerequisites are implemented to measure student comprehension and preparedness and are considered as core skill sets or competencies that must be demonstrated before tackling a course that requires foundational knowledge. In addition, all courses have been approved by Department Quality

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Assistance Committee and the University Curriculum Affairs Committee. The rationale for all courses with prerequisites is evident in the course outlines. Following the Committee's feedback, however, the prerequisites of courses have been reviewed again by the Program Coordinator and the Course Leader and it has been decided that the following prerequisites would be added to the relevant courses (See Table 1). For Updated Course Syllabi please refer to Appendix I.

Course Code and Name	Added Prerequisite (s) Code and Name
MIS-435 Business Intelligence	MIS-302 Database Management Systems
MIS-470 Business AR/VR	COMP-111 Programming I, COMP-113 Programming II
Mis-256 Web Based Applications Development	MIS-151 Business Software Applications

Table 1. Added Prerequisites

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

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We are very proud for our program receiving excellent comments for being aligned with international standards of teaching and learning. The committee praised the program's pedagogical methods, modes of delivery, and particularly the variety of learning outcomes derived from the coverage of the programme. Specifically, the EEC commented on the teaching and learning process that combines a balance between practice and theory and uses modern tools and educational technologies.

For the EEC, assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner and it allows students to receive feedback and demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.

Excellent comments have also been made for the BSc MIS program teaching faculty. Faculty members proved to have the necessary knowledge and skills for the range of subjects they teach and most importantly students acknowledged their knowledge, enthusiasm, and friendly approach.

Finally, the Committee positively commented students acknowledging the combination of technical and business skills that give them an edge when compared to other programmes.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) Computing and programming skills are perceived as the hardest to acquire by students who do not have a technical background. It is important that students' different abilities in computer programming are considered. seriously through some preparatory exercises. The EEC notes that the issue has been highlighted by other programme reviews. It is therefore recommended that a strategy and tools be put in place to support new students in achieving the basic level of programming skills to perform well from early stages of the course.

2) Students highlight that the enthusiasm and the approach to teaching and learning (particularly in terms of their involvement in the process) varies by teacher.

3) The workload and level of difficulty in some pieces of assessments (e.g. projects and final exams) does not always match the weight of that assessment towards the overall grade for the course.

☑**Action/Response**

2.1.　We acknowledge the EEC's comment on the programming skills required for the BSc MIS students. We agree with the EEC's recommendation *"It is therefore recommended that a strategy and tools be put in place to support new students in achieving the basic level of programming skills to perform well from early stages of the course"*. The University offers "tutoring" opportunities for all students and the Department is committed, in collaboration with the program Coordinator and the Academic Advisors, to monitor student progress and provide necessary assistance. In addition, the "tutoring" services and the process of how and where to apply for a tutor will be suggested to be communicated to ALL BSc MIS students not only at the beginning of their studies but throughout the semester.

2.2.　We thank the Committee for this comment. We firmly believe that the teaching style and commitment of the great majority of teachers are commendable. Student evaluations are closely monitored every semester and any deficiencies in teaching delivery are addressed through discussion, consultation and training. In certain cases, when the potential for improvement is deemed minimal, part-time lecturers' contracts are not renewed. We are committed to maintaining and enhancing the aforementioned approaches to ensure that the program's teaching quality is of the highest quality.

2.3.　We thank the Committee for this comment. We believe that in the great majority of cases, assessments are well designed and correspond to the weight they are given. We do however commit to review the assessments and their weights more closely and take corrective action when there is potential for improvement. We will also be open to hearing students' comments on this topic, both formally, for example through formal evaluations, and informally, and take corrective actions.

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3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

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We appreciate the positive comments of the EEC for the BSc MIS program teaching faculty. The committee found the faculty gender balanced, proactive in teaching current topics in such a fast paced developing field and actively involved in related research that has increased significantly over the last five years.

The very positive student feedback on the program courses and teachers was positively commented by the Committee. Finally, the EEC acknowledged that the small cohort size and the closeness of students to the program coordinator allow for rapid direct feedback.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) The students commented that teachers in all subjects should teach relevant and new mate rial especially in rapidly developing subjects and all of them should show enthusiasm towards their subject.

☑**Action/Response**

3.1. We agree with this comment. BSc MIS faculty members are experienced academics with extensive research output in the subject they teach. In communication with the Program Coordinator, who has IT technical background, faculty members update their course material every semester. This ensures that the material is up to date. We will remain vigilant in identifying cases where material and teaching enthusiasm could improve and will take all actions needed to improve the content and delivery of the material.

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

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The EEC commented positively on the small student cohort considering this an asset for the program as it allows better contact with the students and monitoring their progress. In addition, the EEC remarked very positively on the spirit of students and faculty community and considered this as "a very strong and positive aspect of the program". The Committee also commented positively on the mix of international and local students and the good mix of competencies and experience this creates.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) *The number of students in the programme is quite small and slightly larger student cohorts would strengthen the programme and give a more solid base. The programme is still relatively young so this issue may rectify itself over time, but broader advertising of the programme could also help.*

2) *Graduation rates are low and should be monitored and processes should be improved to ensure a higher graduation rate in the future. Again, this may rectify itself over time, but the programme should pay attention to the reasons behind delayed or interrupted studies, and act when feasible*

☑**Action/Response**

4.1.   The comment made by EEC regarding the number of the students enrolled in the programme has been duly noted. Increased enrolment in this programme is an objective for both the Department and the School. We aim to achieve this by increasing advertising and other promotional activities for the programme. Some of these are outlined below.

The University of Nicosia engages in an integrated promotional communication campaign for the BSc MIS program. The promotional tools used by the department of Marketing, local and international admissions are as follows:
- Digital marketing campaigns through the university's website, portal and social media
- Physical and virtual open days where faculty and admission staff are presenting information about the university and the specific program
- Service agent presentations
- Attending Educational Fairs
- Visiting other affiliate universities and encourage student mobility

In addition, the Department is in direct communication with both local and international recruitment units and they develop campaigns (Scholarships,

Competitions, Events) every semester to promote the program. Some examples for Scholarships offered over the years are:

- Scholarships offered by UNIC for studies in Management Information Systems (BSc) 2019-2020. https://www.unic.ac.cy/ypotrofies-panepistimioy-leykosias-sti-dioikitiki-pliroforiakon-systimaton-bsc-in-mis/

- Scholarships offered by UNIC for studies in Management Information Systems (BSc) 2020-2021 https://www.unic.ac.cy/scholarships-offered-by-unic-for-studies-in-management-information-systems-bsc/

- Scholarship Competition "Digital Transformation: Is It Only About Technology?"
- https://www.unic.ac.cy/cot-s23/

In addition, for the past few years the Program Coordinator engages MIS students in organizing the following annual colloquiums:

- "Handshake with ICT", 2014-1019, University of Nicosia Premises. (The aim of the series of hands-on Workshops is to encourage young boys and girls aged 13 to 18 to apply their technological skills and explore their future professional choices, so that they can respond to the modern, complex and demanding working environment. The Colloquium runs under the aegis of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports).
- "TOGETHER We Fight Against Internet Crime" 2017-2023 registered under the International Internet Safety Day yearly on February. (The series of hands on workshops, based on real scenarios, aim for parents and children ages 12-16 TOGETHER to learn how to fight against Internet crime. Runs under the aegis of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, and the Cyprus Commissioner for Children's Rights).

4.2. Regarding the concern raised by the EEC about low graduation rates, several strategies will be implemented and existing processes will be enhanced to improve support to our students.

Firstly, we will be implementing a student tracking system to monitor their progress and identify potential roadblocks or weaknesses that could delay their graduation. Secondly, we will enhance our academic advising and support services to students to help them stay on track and overcome any challenges they may face. Lastly, we will further focus on intervention strategies, such as offering academic coaching and mentoring programs and peer tutoring.

We are committed to providing the necessary resources and support to our students aiming to further increase the overall completion rate.

5. Learning resources and student support
(ESG 1.6)

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We thank the Committee for the positive comments on overall student support, pedagogical support, peer tutoring and the observation that the university has adequate mechanisms to provide necessary assistance to students with disabilities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

1) The student comments during the visit indicated that the students were not always aware of the services offered to them by the university and the programme. Clearer (and repeated) communication to the students about the services would be needed as well as a clearer demarcation between the services offered by the university and the programme (e.g., academic advisor, faculty tutor, etc.), as these seemed unclear. The same applies to the students' awareness of opportunities for internships.

☑**Action/Response**

5.1.   We would like to thank the EEC for this comment. The University of Nicosia recognizes the importance of effective communication with students about the services available to them. We believe that it is crucial to provide clear and repeated communication to students about the services offered by the university and the program. To this end, we have implemented various channels of communication, including emails, newsletters, social media, and our website, to inform students about the services we offer and their benefits.

Furthermore, we understand the importance of demarcation between the services offered by the university and the program, and we are constantly reviewing and improving our communication strategies to ensure that students are aware of the difference between these services. For instance, we provide academic advisors to assist students with academic and personal concerns, while faculty tutors are available to provide subject-specific academic support.

Regarding internships, we are committed to providing students with opportunities to gain practical experience in their respective fields. We communicate these opportunities through various channels, including job postings, newsletters, and career fairs. We also

provide guidance to students on how to apply for internships, as well as support throughout the process.

In conclusion, the University of Nicosia recognizes the importance of clear and repeated communication with students about the services offered by the university and the program, and we are committed to ensuring that students are aware of the resources available to them, to achieve their academic and career aspirations and provide a positive learning experience.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

We are very proud of the quality of our BSc MIS program and the fact that it received the highest score (5 out of 5) and ALL five assessment areas marked as "Compliant".

We would like to express our appreciation to the EEC members for the very positive evaluation, as well as their constructive comments for the BSc Management Information Systems program. We are satisfied with the EEC members' evaluation of the program as fully compliant in all categories, with excellent comments that the program is sound, informed by research and the recent technological advances in digitalization and their impact on business and management.

Furthermore, we are pleased to know that the EEC members commend the program's strong position, its highly committed and 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 BSc MIS program hosted by the Department of Management, the biggest Department of the School of Business, is further strengthened by EEC's recommendations and it is hoped that they will be a valuable resource for the University and the program team.

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	*Position*	*Signature*
Prof. Angelika Kokkinaki	Dean	
Prof. Despo Ktoridou	Head / Program Coordinator	
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