

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American University of Beirut- Mediterraneo (AUB Mediterraneo)
- **Town:** Pafos
- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)
In Greek:
Πτυχίο Πολιτικού Μηχανικού και Αειφόρου Σχεδιασμού [4 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 244 ECTS, Πτυχίο (BSc)]
In English:
“Civil Engineering and Sustainable Design” (4 academic 244 ECTS, Bachelor of Science)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**
In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report **without any interference** in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

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

The EEC's findings with reference to this section are:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Partially Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

The EEC is thanked for their findings and identified areas of strength, namely their commendations regarding AUB Mediterraneo processes, the collaborative environment between the administration and academic staff, students and technical personnel.

In the below we address the comments re. improvements and recommendations related to Sections 1.2 and 1.3

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
1- It is recommended that the process for approval of new programmes in any subject area investigate professional body requirements if appropriate. If a decision is taken that these requirements are not to be followed for any particular reason, that should be a formal decision rather than an unexpected side effect. Programmes should still meet expected international standards as expected by CY-QAA.	1- Every effort was made to amend the program structure to ensure that while it meets the applicable international standards as expected by CYQAA it is also in line with the minimum expectations of the local professional body (ETEK). Please check comments 2 for more details and the responses in the Conclusions Section.	Choose level of compliance:
2- The programme structure should be adapted to include steel structures and structural dynamics / seismic design as compulsory courses. The visiting team believe this can be done without detrimentally affecting the ethos of the university and programme.	2- In response to the recommendation of the EEC, the program structure was revised/adapted to include CIVE 412 (Steel Design) and CIVE 616 (Earthquake Engineering) as part of the <u>core requirements</u> . Also, the designation of CIVE 302 (Data Science for Engineers) was changed to a Math/Basic Science designation, which allowed for dropping MATH 203 (Numerical Computing) as a requirement. Also, the CIVE 402 (Civic Engagement) course was dropped as an independent compulsory course. The	Choose level of compliance:

	civic engagement component that is needed in the general education requirements will be satisfied in the capstone projects of the CIVE 401 course. Finally, and also as a result of the recommendation of the EEC a course on Coastal Engineering (CIVE 644) was added to the electives list. All these changes are reflected in the revised program plan (attached powerpoint file), the list of required and elective courses (annex 1) course descriptions/syllabi (annex 2)	
3- The website needs to be developed as soon as possible to include the required programme information, but also other key information about AUB-M. While some areas of the website are well designed and clear, others are not yet at this high standard. AUB-Mediterraneo staff indicated that the upgrading of the website is ongoing.	3. We acknowledge the EEC recommendation for the urgent need to finalize AUB Mediterraneo website to ensure it reflects key programme information as well as other institutional details. The website is currently being amended and revised to include all the information required. The goal is to produce a website as complete as, and up to the standards set by, the AUB site (www.aub.edu.lb). As the EEC noted, this task is not complete, but it is well underway and we are committed to completing in the coming weeks. It is important to note that since the EEC's visit the sections related to policies (under the Rector's page) and programs (under the page of the Registrar) have been overhauled to ensure clarity, consistency and alignment with AUB's main website.	Choose level of compliance:

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

The EEC's findings with reference to this section are:

Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:

Sub-area	Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant
2.2 Practical training	Compliant
2.3 Student assessment	Compliant

We thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions. We have made every effort to address the comments pertaining to 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
1- The course descriptions need to be revised in order to provide up-to-date and in detail information on the course learning outcomes which should be clearly linked with programme learning outcomes, the assessment and all other aspects of the educational process. Furthermore, course descriptions should also clearly articulate the share of each assessment method in the overall grade	1- we appreciate EEC's observation regarding the need to revise course descriptions to ensure they provide up to date information on learning outcomes, their alignment with program learning outcomes, and assessment methods. The course descriptions were revised to include the requested information (Refer to Annex-2, and Annex 3)	Choose level of compliance:
2- The EEC encourages the Department to further explore its relations with the local industry in order to assist the industrial placement of its students for the needs of practical training course. Accordingly the option of internships should also be explored by University as it is currently practically absent	2- As part of the programme structure, all students are required to complete an 8-10 week guided internship during the summer of their third year (through the CIVE 400-Approved Experience course). The university will assist (as is done in AUB) all students in identifying and obtaining internship placements aligned with their academic and professional goals, through its contacts with the local, regional and international partners with whom it has developed long-standing and strong relations over the past decades with the assistance and support of alumni and friends of the university. AUB Mediterraneo will rely on the AUB network but also has started and will continue to identify, approach and secure relations with local industries.	Choose level of compliance:



	The involvement and support of the local members of our advisory board is invaluable in this regard.	
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The EEC's findings with reference to this section are:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

The EEC is thanked for its findings and identified areas of strength, namely their commendations regarding AUB Mediterraneo processes for recruitment and promotion of teaching staff, the enthusiastic and collegial environment, the strong international presence and collaborations already in place despite the early stages of building the university human assets, and the support mechanisms already in place for faculty members.

In the below we address the comments re. improvements and recommendations related to this section

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
While it is understood that the Department cannot recruit new faculty members before the accreditation of the new programme, the EEC strongly believes that it is absolutely needed for the Department to develop a detailed strategic staff recruitment plan with a time horizon of at least the next four years. Besides recruitment, other options can also be regarded in the plan such as secondment from AUB and, preferably, use the option of visiting professors, while ensuring that at least 70% of the faculty will be full-time engaged	We are keenly aware of the need to start and then ramp up our hiring for the CESD program in advance of its launch and in subsequent years until we reach the desired in-house capacity, with most if not all the members of the academic staff dedicated to the program being full-timers, all the while noting/relying where needed on the secondment option from Beirut. As outlined in our original report (sections 7, 8 and Tables 1 and 2) and in our presentation, the plan calls for the following: ⊕ Year 1: Current CESD faculty members (on campus: Sadek and Chakra); Advertise and recruit 2 Full Time Faculty and one Lab Manager/Instructor to Join in Year 2	Choose level of compliance:

	+ Year 1 CESD Drs. Sadek; Chakra; Seconded Faculty AUB AY 25-26 Advert./Recruiting CESD 2 FT; 1 Lab Manager/Instructor ⊕ Year 2 Recruit 2 Full Time Faculty members to Join in Year 3 ⊕ Year 3 Recruit 2 Full Time Faculty members to Join in Year 4. ⊕ As noted earlier, throughout this process of building local capacity, we will rely on AUB Secondment, visiting appointments and Part Timers to supplement the academic staff and contribute to building and strengthening the program.	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

The EEC's findings with reference to this section are:

Sub-area	Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant
4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2 Student progression	Compliant
4.3 Student recognition	Compliant
4.4 Student certification	Compliant

We thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions. We have made every effort to address the comments pertaining to 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
1- It is understood that there is a system in place for recognition of academic achievements of students during their study at AUB-M, such as Dean's list, distinction and high distinction in the graduation certificate. It is recommended that such recognitions and the corresponding criteria are clearly detailed in the programme description.	1- The academic evaluation and recognition criteria for the Dean's honor list and distinction/high distinction in the degrees granted are all well documented in the "Student Guide" as they apply to all students of AUB Mediterraneo and all our programs. The Student Guide can be found at: https://aubmed.ac.cy/Documents/Study-Guide-Prospectus.pdf	Choose level of compliance:
2- Also, to echo the recommendation in section 1 of this report regarding consideration of possible adjustment of the course programme in view of the minimum requirements stipulated by ETEK, it would be helpful, for student recruitment and for the progression of ongoing students, that several possible career paths be mapped out, so that students who aspire to become a professional engineer in different areas of specialisation, or otherwise, will have a clear perspective of the degree programme and the course structure and how to organise the choices of elective courses.	2-While the CESD program was revised to include the minimum requirements of ETEK in terms of core courses, elective courses, and laboratory courses (ref. our response in section 1), this program is not designed for students to specialize within the BS degree. If students want to become professional engineers that are <u>specialized</u> in one area of specialization, they will have to do that above and beyond the 244 ECTS that are mandated by the CESD Program. The students will be guided throughout their studies by the baseline programme (powerpoint file attached) and their academic advisor who will mentor and assist them in selecting their electives to match a desired career path and/or specific area/track of interest.	Choose level of compliance:

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The EEC's findings with reference to this section are:

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Partially compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

We thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions. We have made every effort to address all the comments pertaining to 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
1- It is recommended that the planned installation of laboratory facilities is kept on track and monitored by CY-QAA, with advice from the EEC team if needed. The first cohort will need laboratories in September 2026 so a check on facilities before the summer of 2026 should be undertaken	1- Labs will be fully operational before the start of the Fall semester of Year 2 of the program as per the recommended date of the EEC. As outlined in the application and our presentation during the visit, lab equipment is currently being refurbished and sourced from AUB and in parallel procurement for new equipment is being finalized with orders scheduled to be placed immediately following program approval, with anticipated delivery and installation to be completed well before the deadline we set at start of Fall Semester - Year 2.	Choose level of compliance:
2- It is recommended that plans for practical experience, and the issue of how this is impacted by visa availability be drawn up. The first cohort will only need to complete their practical experience in the summer of 2028 and the numbers in this first cohort are likely to be small so should be easy to manage. There will be a few years to develop these plans	2- The EEC is thanked for its recommendation. We are well aware and well placed to deal with the practical experience needs and student placement (ref. our earlier answer Section 2). The issue of Visas will be dealt with on a case by case basis, offering individualized support to students based on their placement location and visa needs. The variety of options anticipated (Local, Europe, Arab Gulf and Africa, and the United States) will allow for placement of all AUB Mediterraneo students. For comparison, AUB Beirut is able to place roughly around 400 to 500 engineering students each year in such programs with the help of the AUB alumni network, associated firms and partners in the region and the world, in addition to participation in training placement programs	Choose level of compliance:



	such as IAESTE which we will be a part of as an AUB Campus.	
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

NOT APPLICABLE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

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

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
1- The university has only been operating for about 2 years, with some buildings only open for a few months. The bachelors degree in Civil Engineering and Sustainable Design is a proposed programme and there were therefore no students available and the facilities were not fully completed at the time of the EEC visit. In spite of that, the EEC has a high degree of confidence that AUB-M will be able to deliver the programme in accordance with CY-QAA requirements and students should have an excellent overall experience.	1 Thank you for your confidence in our ability to deliver the programme in accordance with CYQAA requirements. We remain dedicated to ensuring that all infrastructure, staffing and academic support are in place to provide students with excellent experience, aligned with AUB standards and CYQAA expectations.	Choose level of compliance:
2- The proposed syllabus is unusual for a civil engineering related degree and this is down to the strong ethos of AUB-M which is maintaining the American liberal arts approach of its parent institution, AUB. Because of the strong links between the two institutions, there is a high level of support and experience for AUB-M, much more than would normally be expected for a new university. AUB is a highly ranked international institution with over 150 years of history and the reputational risk to AUB should AUB-M fail to provide a high quality teaching experience and high quality graduates would be severe, and this potential reputation risk helps to ensure that AUB-M will be well supported by AUB to achieve its aims.	2 The reviewers are correct in that AUB will do everything it can to ensure that AUB-Mediterraneo will be well-supported to achieve its mission. This deep connection ensures that AUB Mediterraneo students benefit from the academic rigor, infrastructure, experience, quality assurance systems of AUB, significantly mitigating the risks typically associated with new institutions. AUB will never risk its reputation.	Choose level of compliance:
3-Most of the recommendations and concerns about partial compliance in the report are linked to the Civil Engineering and Sustainable Design degree being a new degree and this means full staffing and full facilities are not needed or in place now (therefore not fully compliant at the	3-Noted.	Choose level of compliance:

time of the visit) but need to be in place in a staged approach over the next few years. The plans for these to be in place should be monitored to ensure CY-QAA compliance and a good student experience.		
4 The key areas that need development to ensure full compliance are: • The website needs to be updated with the new programme information but also needs overall development to include procedures. • There should be a plan developed and implemented to ensure staffing is in place before a particular new year or topic is taught, and that staffing is in line with CY-QAA requirements. • There should be plan to ensure that the planned laboratory classes can be delivered. The physical space is in place, but equipment and staffing need to be in place before the laboratory classes are taught in the 2027/28 academic year.	4 The key areas that need development to ensure full compliance will be addressed as follows: • The website will be updated with the new programme information and any missing procedures (refer to our earlier answer) • A plan is developed to ensure staffing is in place before a particular new year or topic is taught, and that staffing is in line with CY-QAA requirements. (refer to our earlier answer) • There is a plan to ensure that the planned laboratory classes can be delivered by ensuring that equipment and staffing are in place before the laboratory classes are taught in the 2027/28 academic year. (refer to our earlier answer)	Choose level of compliance:
5- The only area of recommendations not down to the new University and programme is linked to some of the essential topics in the syllabus and how this leads to ETEC accreditation and expected international standards. Some recommendations are made in this area, and there are more detailed recommendations in the associated but separate ETEC report.	5- The two core courses that were identified by the reviewers and the ETEK report (CIVE 412-Steel Design and CIVE 616-Earthquake Engineering) were added to the CESD curriculum as core compulsory courses. This ensures that the CESD program meets the basic requirements of specified by ETEK. In addition, the CESD program also satisfies the elective courses to be selected from lists A to G in the ETEK document. These courses are reflected in: • CIVE 460 – Transportation Engineering and Design (6 ECTS) • CIVE 541 – Engineering Hydrology (6 ECTS) • CIVE 550 – Environmental Engineering and Design (6 ECTS) • CIVE 421 – Engineering Project Management and Economics (6 ECTS)	Choose level of compliance:

	• GEOL 227 – Climate and Earth Sciences for Engineers (6 ECTS) • Three CIVE 6nn – Electives (ex. Coastal Engineering, Urban Transportation Planning, Prestressed Concrete, Special Topics in Concrete, Numerical Methods in Structural Analysis, Applied Foundation Engineering, Soil and Site Improvement, Construction Methods and Safety Management, Building Construction and Estimation, Wastewater Treatment and Laboratory, and Environmental Biotechnology) (6+6+6 ECTS) The CESD program also includes a heavy and rich laboratory component that is distributed in 6 core required courses, which when combined satisfy the ETEK lab requirements: • CIVE 370 – Sustainable Construction Materials and Technologies (7 lab sessions) • CIVE 340 – Fluid Mechanics and Hydraulics (4 laboratory sessions) • CIVE 301 – Remote Sensing and Digital Mapping (4 laboratory sessions) • CIVE 460 – Transportation Engineering and Design (4 laboratory sessions) • CIVE 430 – Geotechnical Engineering and Design (12 laboratory sessions) • CIVE 550 – Environmental Engineering and Design (8 laboratory sessions) The above laboratory components when considered as a collective ensure that the CESD program meet the minimum ETEK requirements. Finally, we believe that the current BS Degree in CESD is not designed nor should it have the capacity to allow students to specialize in one of the areas of civil engineering. The option of taking 8 courses in any given specialty sequence is not feasible nor advisable in our program given that the program also aims at satisfying ABET and the AUB General Education requirements. If graduates from the CESD program would like to further specialize in one of the civil engineering tracks, they will	
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	need to go for a master's degree or take additional course beyond the 244 ECTS.	
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Wassim El Hajj	Rector	
Salah Sadek	Dean of the Faculty of Engineering	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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