

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

Date: *Date*

- **Higher Education Institution:**
American College
- **Town:** Lefkosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Business
- **Department/ Sector:** Business
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In English:

Business Administration (12 months, 90 ECTS,
Masters, Distance Education)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English/Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):** n.a. (only elective courses)

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. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Philip VERGAUWEN	Dean (Sep '21), Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management	Université Libre de Bruxelles (B)
Pedro DE FARIA	Chair Department of Innovation Management and Strategy, Professor Innovation Management, Faculty of Economics and Business	University of Groningen (NL)
Pantelis PAPADOPOULOS	Associate Professor of Educational Technology (Distance Learning expert)	University of Twente (NL)
Stephanie MORGANE	Professor and Director of Accreditations, Organizational Behaviour, Accreditations	University of Aberdeen Business School (UK)
Markellos POTAMITIS	Student	Cyprus University of Technology (CY)

B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.

Introductory Comment

The academic members of the EEC commend the American College for the completeness of the Institution's reply showing clear steps in the right direction. The American College took the EEC comments and suggestions seriously and has taken significant steps towards (further) improving the programme.

The EEC commends the American College with the efforts it took to integrate the EEC's recommendations into the instructional design. The current programme is promising and differs significantly from the image drawn during the virtual visit.

The EEC is convinced that the on-line programme is or will be stronger as compared to the set-up discussed at the time of the visit.

The EEC recommends the American College to pursue the continuous improvement efforts, specifically with respect to incorporating new on-line tools into the programme and its courses.

For more detailed comments per section, **see the feedback report below.**

All improvements seem appropriate. The EEC repeats its suggestions as to mainly two areas where there may still be some need to consider further action in the context of continuous improvement:

- (1) concerning the College's strong connections with the industry: The EEC recommends the College to continue to give full support to students and graduates to become connected with the Institution's strategic partners. The Career Office is well equipped to allow

(post)graduate students (both in the conventional and distance learning MBA) to fully exploit the market and industry linkages for the purposes of research, including coursework (projects) and their final year thesis.

- (2) concerning skill assessment, peer interaction and future-proof approach: the Institute now manages very well, but when student numbers (start to) increase, the College will have to further formalize processes and activities related to these issues.

The EEC, therefore, repeats the American College's overall national and international standard compliance, and is satisfied with the response of the Institute with respect to the partial compliance related to the Distance Learning aspects of the programme. In conclusion, the EEC finds that the American College's study guides for interactive e-learning activities in a virtual environment are in line with the CYQAA's expectations on the matter and the programme overall satisfy the requirements and standards for accreditation.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Change/Improvement:

Following the suggestion of the EEC, the College Council has decided on 1 September 2021, to replace one of the participating students in the Quality Assurance Committee with a Distance Education student, as to bring the views of distance education students (see Annex 1 - Organization, Administration and Faculty Handbook, page 5; Annex 2 – College Council minutes). Additionally, the College Council has decided to add one external stakeholder from the field of Business in the Business Department's Quality Assurance Committee (see Annex 1 - Organization, Administration and Faculty Handbook, page 6; Annex 2 – College Council minutes).

EEC Comment: This is a positive step, from past experience the committee will need to be very flexible regarding meeting timing and encouraging of real input from the Distance Education student, to ensure that attendance continues.

Change/Improvement:

The design, on-going monitoring and review of the program now ensures true collaborative learning and learning assessment by including group projects, group simulations, peer assessment (student to student), and activities that don't just test knowledge, but also enhance the skills and competencies of graduate students. Further, these motivate students to dynamically participate in the learning process, through interactive content (e.g. interactive activities, interactive case studies and simulations (see Section 5, Annex 3a - Simulations and Interactive Digital Case Studies and Annex 3b - Interactive Tools), that offer variety, immediate feedback, and practical application (real world examples).

EEC Comment: The College significantly increased the range and volume of dynamic and interactive tools, providing the opportunities for a richer learning experience (particularly the case study simulation). This change is very welcomed (and necessary for the required skill development) and will give the students a much enhanced experience ensuring that important aspects of group and teamwork are supported in the MBA.

Change/Improvement:

The Review and Evaluation report prepared by the program coordinator must include performance indicators in the following areas:

- a) *Admissions, Withdrawal, Progression and Graduation Rates for two academic years*
- b) *Regarding admissions, the percentage of students accepted to students applied will be considered*
- c) *Regarding Withdrawal, Progression and Graduation Rates, the following will be taken into consideration:*
 - I. *Percentage of students who withdraw at the end of every year*
 - II. *Percentage of students who progress to the following year at the end of every year*
 - III. *Percentage of students who fail to Graduate at their final year*
 - IV. *Percentage of students who graduate*

EEC Comment: An important improvement that will ensure the programmes can be fully evaluated and further improvements considered.

Change/Improvement

The College has updated any out-of-date part of our material. Faculty members are informed to be punctilious in keeping all learning material current.

EEC Comment: This is vitally important in today's learning environment as the world changes so rapidly. This improvement is welcomed. It may be worth holding 'peer observation' of each other's learning materials to assist in keeping up to date.

Change/Improvement

In respect to student interaction, communication, and collaboration within a course this occurs in multiple ways, through synchronous and asynchronous learning tools:

- *Initially, faculty provide students with a course outline and a study guide, provide all necessary course information, including means of communication, coursework requirements, material provided, assessment criteria, etc.;*
- *All learning material (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, articles, videos, exercises, interactive content, etc.) and coursework upload on the online learning platform for students to access on their convenience;*
- *For the purpose of benefiting the entire class, a News Forum is setup up in Moodle. In this forum, instructors post news and announcements related to the course e.g. when the semester/session starts, before each graded summative assignment submission; relevant information sharing; clarifications; reminder for deadlines; general guidelines; when semester/session ends); (and the remainder of updates on page 5).*

EEC Comment: All of these improvements are welcome and will enhance the student experience.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Change/Improvement:

The College encourages the interaction and collaboration of students. Thus, we have structurally included team-work and cooperation of students into the practical training and learning experience which is also formally assessed by faculty in each module.

EEC Comment: This is a vital change that will greatly enhance the student learning outcomes linked to ability to work with others, as expected on an MBA

Change/Improvement:

With respect to the “future-proof” specificities of e-learning we have taken the following measures related to different modes of e-learning delivery and student interaction and collaborative learning approaches (all based on the EEC comments):

- a) We have enriched the available interactive tools faculty can use in the learning process, by adding interactive videos, interactive books, multimedia presentations, flashcards, and dialog cards (see Section 5 of this report; Annex 3a - Simulations and Interactive Digital Case Studies and Annex 3b - Interactive Tools).*
- b) We have augmented the e-learning delivery, pedagogical methods and student interaction approached with simulations and digital interactive case studies in the form of serious gaming (see Section 5 of this report; Annex 3a - Simulations and Interactive Digital Case Studies and Annex 3b - Interactive Tools).*
- c) We have requested faculty to focus more on collaborative work and team activities, utilizing all available interactive tools, simulations and digital case studies, as well as coursework activities such as assignments and projects. All coursework (assignments, interactive activities, simulations, etc.) and final examinations are developed so that to examine competencies, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and not just knowledge. Furthermore, all coursework will be developed so that to promote collaboration and interaction between students. Consequently, students will be mainly assessed on their critical assessment and evaluation skills, both individually and in groups; testing knowledge will continue to be part of the assessment process, though bearing a much lower weight. By all means, all assessed coursework and final examinations are aligned with the learning goals of each related course*

EEC Comment: Again, these actions will greatly enhance the student experience and ability to gain the much needed teamworking skills required for an MBA.

Change/Improvement

Student-teacher interaction is now strengthened with the addition of more interactive activities (see Section 5 of this report; Annex 3a - Simulations and Interactive Digital Case Studies and Annex 3b - Interactive Tools) encompassing further communication and feedback by instructors. Moreover, implementing the suggestions of the EEC, there are now 8 online meetings throughout the 13 weeks of study whereas students meet instructors to discuss the course core elements. In addition to that, students can meet one-to-one with instructors to interact on course materials such as notes, assignments, announcements, and more. Similarly, student-student interaction and collaborative learning is also enhanced through collaborative activities among students, such as group assignments, group simulations, and interactive group case study analysis. The number of live online lectures have doubled and the duration of each lecture is reduced to 30 minutes each. The lectures include transitional interactive activities and focus on discussion on the elements covered in the course content.

EEC Comment: The addition of new instructional tools and material is indeed a significant improvement for the programme. Providing a higher number of live sessions and shortening the duration of the lectures are also positive actions. All in all, the measures taken will increase and enhance collaborative learning.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

EEC’s final recommendations and comments on the HEI’s response

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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Change/Improvement

Review and Evaluation report prepared by the program coordinator must include performance indicators in the following areas:

- a) Admissions, Withdrawal, Progression and Graduation Rates for two academic years.
- b) Regarding admissions, the percentage of students accepted to students applied will be considered.
- c) Regarding Withdrawal, Progression and Graduation Rates, the following will be taken into consideration:
 - I. Percentage of students who withdraw at the end of every year
 - II. Percentage of students who progress to the following year at the end of every year
 - III. Percentage of students who fail to Graduate at their final year
 - IV. Percentage of students who graduate.

EEC Comment: As noted above, this is an important improvement that will enable more careful monitoring of the programme and potential required changes.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Change/Improvement

(details of substantial improvements in access to and use of interactive tools as detailed on pages 12 and 13) and - However, to further engage students in an inquiry-based process, based on the EEC recommendations we have added highly instructional interactive tools, which include a variety of interactive activities (Interactive Videos, Interactive Books, Course Presentations, Flashcards and Dialog Cards), simulations and digital cases studies (see Section 5 of this report; Annex 3a - Simulations and Interactive Digital Case Studies and Annex 3b - Interactive Tools).

EEC Comment: This is an impressive range of improvements and assuming faculty are supported and trained in using these appropriately will greatly enhance the student experience and the programme overall.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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7. Eligibility (Joint programmes) (ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

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C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

EEC's final conclusions and remarks

The EEC commends the American College for all improvements and, therefore, repeats the American College's overall national and international standard compliance, and is satisfied with the response of the Institute with respect to the partial compliance related to the Distance Learning aspects of the programme. In conclusion, the EEC finds that the American College's study guides for interactive e-learning activities in a virtual environment are in line with the CYQAA's expectations on the matter and the programme overall satisfy the requirements and standards for accreditation.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Position	Signature
Philip VERGAUWEN	Dean (Sep '21), Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management	
Pedro DE FARIA	Chair Department of Innovation Management and Strategy, Professor Innovation Management, Faculty of Economics and Business	
Pantelis PAPADOPOULOS	Associate Professor of Educational Technology (Distance Learning expert)	
Stephanie MORGANE	Professor and Director of Accreditations, Organizational Behaviour, Accreditations	

Date: December 8, 2021