

Doc. 300.1.3

Date: 25 April 2022

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- **Higher Education Institution:**
A. C. American College
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** School/Faculty
- **Department:** Computer Science
- **Programme of study under evaluation
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Computer Science (4 Academic years, 240 ECTS,
Bachelor)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Languages
- **Programme's status:** Choose status
- **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. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Christina Lioma	Professor	University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Xianghua Xie	Professor	Swansea University, U.K
Paolo Ciancarini	Professor	University of Bologna, Italy
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University
Name	Position	University



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.

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

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The College has addressed satisfactorily the point about the publicly available description of the formal composition of the quality assurance committee, of the regularity of its meetings, and accessibility of their respective meetings.

The College has addressed satisfactorily the point about student representatives being absent from the Quality Assurance Committee, and also about student representatives being elected freely by the student body and not selected by faculty.

The College has addressed satisfactorily the point about the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

Information about which specific courses are offered in which specific semester and year, applied to all courses of this program, is still not available to the EEC. The EEC requested this information for all courses, and instead received partial information (only for courses that are linked to each other, but not for all courses). This is a core point for assessing a program. This point has not been satisfied. This is very surprising. Most academic institutes have this information readily available in tabular form, and some even display it on their website.

The content of the three elective courses in the English language is not higher than the level of the English language competence that students should have upon admission, according to the English language requirements. This point is not satisfied.

About the point of 13 out of 20 elective courses being unrelated to the topic of the program, the College offers the explanation that it follows the US educational system. However this practice clearly contradicts the programs of the universities that the College drew inspiration from when designing the program, as well as the curricula recommendations of professional organisations in Computer Science, such as ACM and IEEE. The College has taken steps to address this issue, by increasing the amount of major requirements to 132 ECTS and decreasing the amount of general education electives to 54 ECTS (from 66 ECTS previously). This point is therefore partially satisfied.

The point about updating the textbooks of CSC410 and CSC102 has been satisfied.

The point about adding an industrial internship module has been satisfied.

Regarding the point about collecting, monitoring and analysing information on the career path of students, the College states that they will intensify their efforts to do so. No information is provided as to how and when this will be done. Therefore this point is partially satisfied.

Regarding the point about collecting, monitoring and analysing information on the student population, information on nationality has been provided, but not on gender. Therefore this point is partially satisfied.

Regarding the point about collecting, monitoring and analysing information on student progression, success and drop-out rates, some information has been provided for the last 4 years, despite the program operating for more than 20 years. This point is therefore partially satisfied.

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

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

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(on EEC findings)

The point about the teaching methods being conventional and traditional has been satisfied, as the teaching methods have been reviewed and integrated with more modern approaches.

The point about the competence in Computer Science of the instructors has not been satisfied, as the answer only mentions Table 4 of the original proposal where we see only 5 instructors (out 17) with degrees in Computer Science or similar.

The point about visiting guest speakers has not been satisfied (admittedly, it will be in future after the pandemic terminates).

The point about students' activities in class has been partially satisfied, as personalized learning experience should create a specific experience based on personal traits.

The point about the lack of internship has been satisfied.

(on EEC recommendations)

The recommendation about overcoming traditional teaching has been satisfied.

The recommendation about the scarcity of expert instructors in Computer Science has been partially satisfied, as a new expert instructor has been recruited, but adding at least another would be very useful (aiming at reaching a majority of instructors with degrees in CS).

The recommendation about team based activities has been satisfied.

The recommendation about varying the assessment methods has been satisfied.

The recommendation about report writing has been satisfied.

The recommendation about team-based projects has been recorded but not yet satisfied.

The recommendation about introducing best practices from other well reputed schools has been recorded but not yet satisfied.

The recommendation about inviting external experts has been recorded but not yet implemented, as it will be at the end of the pandemic.

The recommendation about introducing an explicit thesis activity has not been satisfied. A typical thesis for a 4-years BSc in Computer Science should be at least 30 ECTS. For instance, at the University of Edinburgh (one of the Schools quoted as a model by the American College answer) the 4th year Honors project takes 40 ECTS. See:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/informatics/undergraduate/our-degrees/degree-overview>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

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

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The College has an ambitious growth plan after obtaining the accreditation. This is not reflected in staff recruitment planning, that is as student numbers multiply only 2 members of staff will be added 3 years after accreditation. The College's response does not sufficiently address EEC's concern on staffing.

The issue that EEC raised in regard to academic job advertisement has not been satisfactorily addressed. In fact, the revised example of advert as shown in Annex 11 is woefully inadequate. It does not even contain the minimum amount of information on job description, career pathway, and it has no information on Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

The revised staff handbook regarding faculty ranks, promotion, and procedure contain some further information. However, criteria are still not sufficiently explained. Generic texts are used to accompany criteria 4-7; there is no actual explanation of what is expected from staff. Appeal information is not provided. Hence, this issue is only partially addressed.

The 12 hours teaching delivery per week is for research focused faculty and additional 3 hours will be added for "Less Research" track staff, according to the handbook. The EEC maintains that this load is too high to accommodate research and other activities, considering commonly twice as much time is required to prepare for teaching delivery, marking and dealing with student queries. This effectively leaves hardly any time for research during the two teaching blocks. The issue is more pronounced when taking into account that the members of the Computer Science Department have to cover a wide range of topics due to low staffing

EEC welcomes the increase in staff research budget.

On the issue of staff training, EEC is satisfied with the response.

The College states, in the response, that "research is essential" to the College. However, with this high teaching load and low staffing, EEC remains concerned about the College's commitment to create an environment that encourages research and empower staff to collaborate with other institutions on research.

(on EEC recommendations)

Starting to increase staffing 2 years after accreditation is not considered sufficient in addressing the issue. Staffing resources should be in place first before the expansion.

Research budget increase is welcomed by EEC. However, EEC is concerned about 12 hours per week teaching delivery for research focused staff and 15 hours per week for less research focused staff.

On staffing, EEC is still concerned about the business planning.

On the issue of promotion, procedure and criteria, the College provided some further information and amended the handbook somewhat. However, the staff handbook still contains limited information on criteria, for instance, as explained above.

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

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

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The point about whether the College admits only international students by design has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about how the College handles academic student heterogeneity has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about the gender ratio of the students has not been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about options after failing an exam and their accessibility has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about retaking courses to improve one's grades before graduation has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about admission procedures and the involvement of academics has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about progression rules has been satisfactorily addressed.

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

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

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The point about including Linux OS has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about upgrading the laboratory equipment has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about guiding students regarding work permit has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about the self-sufficiency of the program has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about offering personal storage to students on the server has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about career services offered to students has been satisfactorily addressed.

The point about student mobility has been satisfactorily addressed.



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 has carefully studied the response of the institute. It is encouraging that several points have been addressed and therefore satisfied. However, a significant number of points still remain either partially satisfied, or not satisfied at all. These points are laid out in the report, each of them accompanied by the rationale of the EEC as to why they are partially or not satisfied. Overall, the EEC concludes that the institute should continue the efforts that were initiated by addressing the drawbacks and weaknesses that were initially pointed out by the EEC, and address the remaining points that are currently either partially satisfied or not satisfied at all.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Christina Lioma	
Xianghua Xie	
Paolo Ciancarini	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: Click to enter date

