

Doc. 300.1.3

Date: 13/3/2020

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

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

In Greek:

Δίπλωμα στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (2 Χρόνια, 120 ECTS, Πρώτος Κύκλος)

In English:

Δίπλωμα στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (2 Χρόνια, 120 ECTS, Πρώτος Κύκλος)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English / Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

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 2019” [N. 136 (I)/2015 to N. 35(I)/2019].

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Dimitrios V. Kousenidis	Professor	Aristotle University
Christos Kolympiris	Professor	University of Warwick
Dionisis Phillipas	Professor	ESSCA School of Management
Ntzimanis Dimitrios	Student	TEPAK
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) 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, 1.8, 1.9) **EEC's comments on the external evaluation report**

The content of the program could be rebalanced in order to include more elective courses in expense of the general education courses. We propose free elective courses that cover topics such as sustainability, digitalization, financial markets, IT, fintech, and so on. This would ensure that the recent educational and societal trends are reflected in the program of studies. To strength the international dimension of the program which is rather weak, it could be enriched by inviting more visiting professors and practitioners from abroad and from companies who could help in the development of the quality of the program and in the strengthening of the profile of the program and staff through collaborations. Moreover, the program can be enriched with the introduction of visiting companies and an internship program.

HEI's response

Based on your recommendations, the College academic committee has approved the revision of the curriculum of the Diploma in Business Administration. More specifically, we have reduced the credit requirements for General Education courses from 42 to 36 ECTS credits and we have increased the credit requirements for Business Core courses from 42 to 48 ECTS credits. In addition, the courses ACC113 Management Accounting and FIN101 Financial Management were taken to the list of Major Courses and the following courses were added to the Business Core courses: FIN301 Fintech, MAR206 Digital Marketing, MGT317 Corporate Sustainability. Finally, we have revised the syllabus of CSC101 Introduction to Computing so that it teaches more applied information technology issues for the local and international markets and changed the title of the course to CSC101 Fundamentals of Information Technology so that the title reflects better the revised course syllabus. All the above additions/revisions in the syllabuses were done so that the recent educational and societal trends are reflected in the Diploma in Business Administration. In Appendix 1 you may find the revised curriculum of the Diploma in Business Administration and in Appendices 2 to 5 you may find the syllabuses of the above courses. Inviting instructors of other academic institutions to American College to meet with our faculty members and give lectures to our students is a procedure embraced, some years ago, by both the Administration as well as by the faculty members of American College. The interaction of faculty members of American College with colleagues from other institutions helps in the development of the teaching and research skills of our faculty, thus accelerating their academic development. This interaction enhances the internationalization of the College and opens doors with the visiting instructors and their institutions for academic collaborations in teaching and research. In Appendix 6 you may find a list of visiting instructors' activities (instructor's name and institution, dates and activity details) that took place in American College. Based on your recommendations on inviting more visiting professors, which we communicated to our faculty and administration staff in December 2019, and taking into account the academic benefits our faculty members have from their interaction with professors of foreign academic institutions visits, we have intensified our efforts to organize such activities more regularly. Our efforts included, sending an email to all our Erasmus Partner Institutions inviting their faculty members to give lectures aligned with the curriculum of the program as visiting professors, and other academic collaborations and to have more of their students study for a semester at American College. As a result, apart from the visiting instructor activities that took place in January and February 2020 we have also arranged for the following visiting professor activities in the forthcoming months: Instructor: Prof. Galina Chipriyanova Institution: D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, Bulgaria Date(s): 7/4 – 10/4 Will give lectures to students taking the course ACC101 Financial Accounting. Instructor: Prof. Annamaria Artner Institution: Milton Friedman University, Budapest Date(s): 11/5 – 15/5/2020 Will give lectures to students taking the course ECO101 Principles of Microeconomics. In terms of collaborations and interaction between American College and the Cyprus industries/market, our students benefit from guest speakers that are often invited and give lectures to our students. The guest speakers consist of professionals in various industries who give speeches in their areas of expertise. In addition, we organize for our students, educational visits to organizations where they get the opportunity to have a tour around facilities, meet some of the people working for the organization and have someone talk to them about the organization (how it works, what the departments are, the role of the people

working for the organization etc.). Moreover, every year we organize a job forum at the College where we invite representatives of employing organizations to meet and interview our students and find suitable employees from our student community. This year's forum took place on 28/2/2020. We have officers and faculty members at the College that deal with student career matters. They help students to prepare their curriculum vitae, they take calls from organizations that want to employ our students on a part-time or full-time basis (during or after their studies) and arrange that students who match the organizations' needs are interviewed by the organizations. The same officers and faculty members deal on a similar basis with the placing of students in internship programs with various organizations in order to give students a flavor of industry experience. According to the current legislation, internship (paid or unpaid) for international students is only possible for the placement of Hotel Management and Culinary Arts students in hotels or restaurants. Last year many of our Hotel Management and Culinary Arts students were placed in internship programs in hotels and restaurants. In Appendix 7 you may find a list of organizations collaborating with American College in terms of placing our students for an internship, providing data for our postgraduate student's thesis, hosting educational visits of our students and attending our annual job forum. In order to encourage faculty members to engage more heavily in activities related to intensifying our links with the local industries and market we have increased the budget available for such activities and the academic committee in its 20 February 2020 meeting decided that the organization and participation of a faculty member in such activities will give additional credit points for the faculty member's end of year performance evaluation by his/her Department Head (the end of year performance evaluation is linked to a faculty member's salary raise and promotion).

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The American College has taken all the necessary actions and has implemented revisions/improvements which are appropriate and in line with the recommendations of the EEC.

2. Teaching, learning and student assessment (ESG 1.3)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

The international aspect of the program could be enhanced. The college may capitalise the demand from professionals to receive Diplomas that are needed to their working environment. Moreover, the college can participate in Student exchange programs with other collaborating institutions. The interaction between the college and the local industry/market can be improved. This may provide students the opportunity to find internship and employment during and after graduation, adding that way to the industry/market linkage with the program. Possible internship program for foreign students would add value to the program and would improve the current reputation of the college in the market. For professionals participating to the Diploma program, that would be a good opportunity to interact with other segments in the market. The programme has a low IT courses provided. This can be improved by adding free elective course(s) in the field, but market oriented (means IT that is applied in the local and international markets). The number of students has to be increased if the programme is to grow in the future.

HEI's response

About enhancing the international aspect of the program see our reply in: 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development. We promote our programs of study, among others, to professionals. Professionals can study on a part-time basis, along with their work commitments, by taking afternoon or evening courses. The ways we promote our programs to professionals include offering of scholarships to trade unions (to their members) and organizations (to their employees) and presenting our programs of study through presentations that take place in various organizations. American College was awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission and it participates in the Erasmus+ mobility program. We offer our students a wide spectrum of opportunities to learn, develop, improve their skills and have a good time by participating in exchange programs. A number of our students have studied for one or two semesters in a partner institution. For the above to be possible American College has signed bilateral agreements with the higher education institutions shown in Appendix 8. Based on EEC's recommendation for enhancing the international aspect of the program, we have encouraged more of our students to participate in the Erasmus+ student exchange programs by introducing (via email) these exchange programs to our students and inviting them to participate. We assigned 3 administration officers to deal with student enquiries regarding these exchange programs. About improving the interaction between the college and the local industry/market see our reply in: 1. Study programme and study programme's design and development. Taking into account EEC's recommendation for adding a course in the applied IT field we have introduced the course CSC101 Fundamentals of Information Technology in the Business Core courses of the program. The course teaches applied information technology issues for the local and international markets. In Appendix 1 you may find the revised curriculum of the program and in Appendix 5 you may find the syllabus of the CSC101 Fundamentals of Information Technology. We are aware that the number of students has to increase for the program to grow in the future. We are currently promoting the program and we are aiming at recruiting more students.

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The American College has taken all the necessary actions and has implemented revisions/improvements which are appropriate and in line with the recommendations of the EEC.

3. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

The college should invest more in resources that would help the faculty to conduct quality research. The acquisition of some databases (i.e., Bloomberg, WRDS, etc.) would enhance and intensify the research activities of the faculty. Moreover, the college should pursue to regularly conduct research seminars in which faculty members would present research papers, participate in conferences, and all the practice that is likely to improve the quality of the research. These initiatives should be undertaken not only within the college but also together with other Cypriot Universities and Colleges (sharing of seminar email lists, organization of joint research seminars etc.). Finally, the faculty should be interact together to communicate their research to the local and international job market.

HEI's response

Based on the recommendation of the EEC we searched to find suitable resources that would further help our faculty to conduct quality research. After evaluating the resources found we have finalized a list of such resources (see Appendix 9). To enhance and intensify the research activities of our faculty we have circulated the list of the resources to all our faculty members with the recommendation to get acquainted with the resources and to use them wherever possible for their current and future research. In Appendix 10 we provide a list of Research Paper Presentations which helped our faculty members improving the quality of the research they carry out. Based on the EEC's recommendations provided in December 2019 we intensified our efforts for such activities and since then managed to organize one more Research Papers Presentation in January. In terms of conference participation an internal funding policy of the academic personnel's research activity is in place which financially supports faculty members to participate and present papers at international conferences as well as at conferences held in Cyprus. The College Academic Committee in its 20 February 2020 meeting decided to increase the internal funding of our academic personnel's research activities. The revised policy below applies as from the date of the academic committee's meeting and it aims to enhance the research activities of our faculty members and to help them in networking with other academics in other institutions. Every academic year each tenured full-time faculty member is entitled to the following: Membership subscription in a professional association €100 Local or International conference subscription fee €150 Presentation of a paper at a conference held in Cyprus €350 Presentation of a paper at an international conference held abroad (maximum 2 per year) €1.100. The academic year starts on 1st September and ends on 31st August. With the above policy our academic personnel knows that specific internal funding is available to them every academic year and it now enables them to attend up to 2 conferences per year. In Appendix 11 we provide a list of the Research Activity and Publications of our faculty members including details of their participation in conferences. Other activities that improve the quality of the research conducted by our faculty include the following: For a number of years, faculty members of the College serve as reviewers of papers submitted to the Southern Management Association, for presentation at its annual meeting. Our faculty members have regular contact with and participated in seminars and conferences both in Cyprus and abroad organized by the following academic institutions and research centres: Cyprus Centre for Business Research Cyprus Institute of Management Cyprus Technological University Economics Research Centre of the University of Cyprus EuroMed Academy of Business, University of Nicosia European University Frederick University Klaipeda University, Klaipeda, Lithuania Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) The Makridakis Open Forecasting Center (MOFC), University of Nicosia University of Nicosia. Our faculty members are members of the following professional associations: American Management Association American Marketing Association Association of International Accountants Brand Ambassador of Northcentral Association British Psychological Society (BPS) Cyprus Economic Society Cyprus Hotel Management Association European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP) Maritime Association Society for Human Resource Management Southern Management Association The Chartered Institute of Marketing. American College, publishes a peer-reviewed, academic journal, "The Cyprus Journal of Sciences", which serves academia at local and international level. The Journal has a rich Editorial Board, comprised from professors of Universities in Cyprus as well as from Universities abroad. Periodically, "Calls for Papers" are sent to academics who submit papers to be considered for

publication. The publication of The Cyprus Journal of Sciences, contributes to the internationalization of American College and enhances the contribution of the College to the academic community at an international level. American College administration provides adequate motivation for our faculty members to research since research is one of the main criteria by which faculty members are evaluated, receive salary raises and get promoted. A credit points procedure is in place for evaluating the research activity and the publications of the faculty members, which as it is structured, encourages faculty members to publish papers in high ranked peer reviewed international academic journals. Our faculty members in many occasions collaborated with other academic institutions and academics from other institutions to conduct research. Below we provide examples of such collaborations: On the 5th of December 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between, the American College and the workshop of Sociology of Work and Employment with Emphasis on New forms of Work, of the Department of Sociology of the University of the Aegean. The main objectives of this research collaboration, are to design and execute research activities, to publish papers in peer reviewed academic journals, books, the organization of conferences and research seminars as well as the interaction between the societal environment and our academic institutions. In Appendix 12 you may find the signed MOU. Faculty members of American College have formed collaborations with faculty members of the University of Nicosia, that led to the publication of the following papers in peer-reviewed academic journals: 1. Korres, M. George, Michailidis, M., Louca, Ch. and Papanis, E. (2019). A Review for Regional Growth: European Policies & Perspectives. Journal of Regional & Socio-Economic Issues, 9(2), pp. 44– 54. 2. Louca, Ch., Kokkinou, Aikaterini, Michailidis, M., Korres M. George and Papanis, E. (2018). Enterprise Resource Management and Stochastic Frontier. Journal of Regional & Socio-Economic Issues, 8(3), pp. 5 – 14. Faculty members of our College were invited to participate at the conferences organized by the EuroMed Academy of Business of the University of Nicosia where they published the following in the conference proceedings: 1. Magos N. (2019). To what extent should companies be concerned with ethical issues in advertising, sponsorship and other forms of sales promotion? To what extent should companies be concerned about customers' perceptions of such 'ethical' behavior?' Findings of an Empirical Study. EuroMed Academy of Business, September 2019, Thessaloniki, published in proceedings. 2. Magos N. (2018). The Cyprus Hotel Industry against Porter's 'Five Forces Analysis' in the middle of the financial crisis. EuroMed Academy of Business, September 2018, Valletta, published in proceedings. In Appendix 11 we provide a list of the Research Activity and Publications of our faculty members. Research outcomes of completed research are disseminated, through the publication of books, the publication of papers in local and international peer-reviewed academic journals, by giving presentations at local and international conferences, at research conferences/seminars organized by American College as well as by publishing the outcomes of research in the daily press. For example, many of our research work that concerned Cyprus Tourism and Hotel Industry was provided to the Cyprus Tourism Organization, Hotels and Hotel Unions. Likewise, our research related to Employment in Cyprus was disseminated to the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Trade Unions, Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation and the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The American College has taken all the necessary actions and has implemented revisions/improvements which are appropriate and in line with the recommendations of the EEC.

4. Students (ESG 1.4, 1.6, 1.7)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

During our interview with the students, we asked for the reasons why the American College is an institution where students should apply and study. For the Diploma program, the headline was that the students find it easier to combine their studies at the College with work, and that the program is cheaper than other comparable programs offered by Cypriot Universities and colleges. Although these reasons may be acceptable or welcomed by present students, it might flag up areas of concerns. These factors however could be issues that the college can work on and develop in the future. The American College does not have a high level of selection in Diploma program admission criteria. All students who want to study at the American College and whose qualifications are sufficient (i.e. having a High School degree and some fluency in the English language) may do that. If the program will be expanded in the future, the American College should apply certain criteria with an interviewing process for admissions. This would be beneficial for at least two reasons. First, when including an interview in such process, it would help the College to learn about soft facts that are not apparent in CVs about a certain "fit" between the student body and the "culture" of the College; second, admissions based on interviews (they could be undertaken online via skype for foreign students), could result to a body of students that has a diversity of experience, background and culture.

HEI's response

American College tuition fees are not lower than those of other Colleges in Cyprus. They are though lower than those of Private Universities in Cyprus (as it is the case with all Colleges). We believe that what American College offers to its students it is value for money education. Our fees are very much similar to those of other Colleges in Cyprus, despite the fact that we have bigger and more modern facilities and better qualified faculty members compared to Colleges of similar tuition fees. We believe that this is the reason why students choose to study at American College. The admissions criteria applied for this program of study are in line with the current legislation and have been approved by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. Our admission criteria are the same with those of other Colleges and Private Universities in Cyprus. As long as an institution has the capacity to accept a student and the student fulfils its admission criteria the student is accepted to study for a program. Of course if too many students are accepted in a program of study, then additional groups of courses must be offered to satisfy the increased number of students accepted. In addition, it is worth writing that students from certain countries (currently Pakistan and Bangladesh) undertake an interview with 3 interviewers (1 from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, 1 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 1 from the Ministry of Interior) and their admission is dependent upon their success in the interview. Finally, we agree that interviewing students can be beneficial for the College. If demand for the program rises, we are happy to apply interviews with specific criteria as part of our admission process.

EEC's final recommendations and comments

We find the response of the American College quite satisfactory. Furthermore, we tend to agree that an interviewing process would be more appropriate in the case of increased demand for the programme of studies.

5. Resources (ESG 1.6)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

We believe that premises are in good shape but they could be modernized on a continuous basis. For example, the students complained about the cafeteria which operates with vending machines and offers small variety of food and beverages. Another example is the library that should be upgraded in electronic form and reorganised. Moreover, the students complained about the software which in some of the labs is quite old. During our visit to the computer labs we noticed that while there are some labs which are fully modernized, there are still some labs that have PCs operating the Windows 7 system. When we asked the owner about this, he assured us that the College is in the process of upgrading its software and that in the near future all computer labs will be renovated. The Moodle online platform could be used with more of its functionalities (e.g. uploading of student theses)

HEI's response

In order to better serve our students apart from the 2 cafeterias with vending machines we have available for our students, we have agreed with the coffee shop based on the ground floor of the College buildings to serve our students with discounted prices. The coffee shop serves hot and cold snacks and beverages. For the library see our response in 5. Resources\Findings above. We continuously upgrade our computer facilities in terms of hardware and software. In 2019 we purchased: 2 new latest technology, fast and more reliable computer servers which mirror each other so no data is lost; 1 more reliable uninterruptible power supply (UPS) device; and 1 Network Attached Storage device with very big capacity that allowed us to increase the data web backup and made it easier to retrieve backed up data whenever necessary. All this information technology upgrading ensured we have faster and more reliable IT facilities and reduced the possibility of any down time. Most of our computer facilities are fully modernized but we still have some PCs that have Windows 7 operating system. This is not something urgent but we intend to upgrade the operating system of these PCs to Windows 10 during Summer time. Any upgrading of computer laboratories usually takes place during Summer time (unless it is an upgrading that is needed urgently) when the computer laboratories usage is at its minimum. Based on your suggestion the academic committee decided in its 20 February 2020 meeting from now on to upload all new theses and visiting professors' presentations and supporting educational material in American College Moodle platform and to be accessible by all faculty members and students. Moreover, it was decided to upload in our Moodle platform all the past theses we maintained in electronic form and the visiting professors' presentations and supporting educational material and this was completed by 25 February 2020.

EEC's final recommendations and comments

The American College has taken all the necessary actions and has implemented revisions/improvements which are appropriate and in line with the recommendations of the EEC.

6. Additional for distance learning programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

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HEI's response

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EEC's final recommendations and comments

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7. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

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HEI's response

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EEC's final recommendations and comments

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8. Additional for joint programmes (ALL ESG)

EEC's comments on the external evaluation report

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HEI's response

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EEC's final recommendations and comments

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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 conclusions and final remarks as on the external evaluation report

We find that American College's Diploma program can be improved on the following fronts:1. We encourage the faculty to engage more heavily in applied activities such as participating to the local market, and for the college to put in place stronger incentives for the faculty to do so.2. Internationalization could be improved in a number of ways including more student and hosting visiting faculty from institutions outside Cyprus3. Intensify (existing) links with industry in part by the development of internships.4. Provide more IT courses to the students through the Diploma program.

HEI's conclusions and final remarks

As described in our responses in sections 1 and 2 above:We encouraged our faculty members to engage more heavily in activities linked to the local market and workplace by increasing the budget available for such activities and by taking such activities into account for the faculty member's annual performance evaluation. Moreover, we took measures that have improved the internationalization of this program of study. Specifically, we encouraged more of our students to participate in the student exchange programs we maintain with a number of European partner institutions, we hosted more visiting faculty from institutions outside Cyprus and we invited our European partner institutions to send their faculty members to American College to give lectures to our students and to encourage more of their students to participate in the student exchange programs and study for a semester at American College. In addition, we have intensified the links of this program of study with the local industries/market by placing more emphasis on activities such as guest speeches by industry experts to our students, educational visits of our students to organizations, organization of a job forum at the College and internship placement of our students in various organizations. Finally, we have revised the curriculum of the Diploma in Business Administration and it now includes the course CSC101 Fundamentals of Information Technology with many up to date material on applied information technology issues. As a conclusion we want to state that we took into account all EEC's comments for revisions/improvements and we have implemented all necessary revisions/improvements. Once again we would like to thank the members of the External Evaluation Committee for their very positive report.

EEC's final conclusions and remarks

The American College has taken all the necessary actions and has implemented revisions/improvements which are appropriate and in line with the recommendations of the EEC.

D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>				<i>Signature</i>
Professor	Dimitrios	Kousenidis		
Associate Professor	Dionisis	Philippas		
Associate Professor	Christos	Kolympiris		
Click to enter Name				
Click to enter Name				
Click to enter Name				

Date: 30/3/2020

