Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

External Evaluation Report

(Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Alexander College**

- **Town: Larnaca**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): Business**

- **Department/ Sector: Business**

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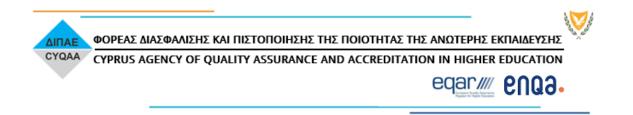
  In Greek:

  Programme Name

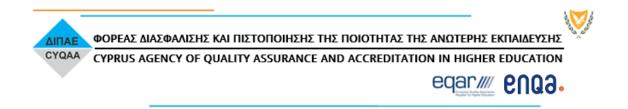 **In English:**

   BSc Business Administration and Finance

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

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

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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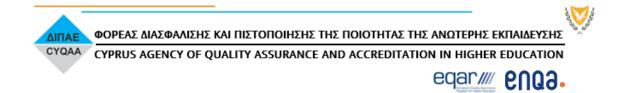
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A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) would like to thank the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for the invitation to evaluate the BSc Business Administration and Finance currently offered by Alexander College (Larnaca).

The evaluation took place online on the 18th of February 2022, following the schedule provided by the CYQAA. The EEC consisted of three academics with relevant disciplinary expertise in the key areas that the BSc covered and a student representative. The agenda included several meetings with the senior management, the program coordinator, teaching faculty, students and administrative personnel.

Given the on-going pandemic restrictions, the evaluation took place online. Consequently, the EEC did not have the opportunity to visit the University and experience in-person the on-offer services and infrastructure. Still, panoramic captures of teaching, administration and social spaces were provided. These were considered sufficient for the purposes of this evaluation.

Beyond the above, the evaluation and the findings and recommendations of this report were based on the meetings conducted, the evidence provided in the form of the self-evaluation report and the additional information requested by the EEC during the visit.

The report discusses in detail areas of strength and areas that further work may be required. The EEC provides a number of constructive suggestions as to how Alexander College could address the points raised. If the College or the CYQAA have any queries with regards to the report, the EEC members will be more than happy to attend to them in due course.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof Savvas Papagiannidis	David Goldman Professor of Innovation of Enterprise	Newcastle University Business School
Dr Christos Kolympiris	Associate Professor	University of Warwick
Dr Dionisis Philippas	Associate Professor	ESSCA School of Management
Antrea Georgiou	Student Representative	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*

- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  (a) *sub-areas*
  (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
  (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*

- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*

- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.
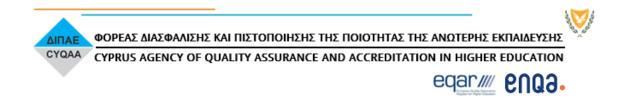
Strengths

A list of strengths, e.g. examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*

- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*

- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

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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)

Findings

The EEC believes that the currently offered BSc Business Administration and Finance provides a good platform on which to further improve the program.

The committee was provided with information regarding the entry criteria, the program's learning outcomes, the delivery of modules, and the assessment procedures.

The EEC found the admission criteria to be adequate and in line with those of other similar programs in the Cypriot market. The program appears to recruit well. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds.

The program spans over 4 years and expects students to undertake and successfully complete 240 ECTS. The proposed structure offers a reasonable balance between the number of modules and associated ECTS between the business administration modules and those related to finance.

The intended learning outcomes are in line with expectations for such a program, aiming to cover both the knowledge and skills that graduates should possess in order to find a relevant to the course job.

The EEC identified that there are policies and procedures in place that aim to ensure the quality of the new and established/revised programs. The overall framework within which quality assurance takes place is along the EEC expectations.
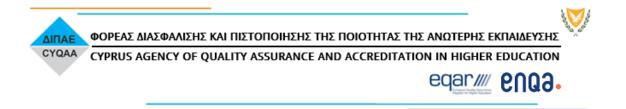
The EEC enquired about the career path of graduates and their potential employability challenges. It was positive to see a high per centage of students securing jobs after graduation that are relevant to their course.

Strengths

The EEC believes that the existing program is in a good state and can be revised in a way that results in an even better learning offering. The existing program offers a wide range of modules that cover the expected areas sufficiently. These provide the necessary background knowledge and skills students will require in order to secure jobs in their respective field.

Assessment is in line with expectations, featuring both exams and coursework for each module. These are operationalised within the framework set by Ministry of Education with regards to assessment.

The faculty members teaching on this program are qualified individuals with relevant expertise and sufficient years of teaching experience. It was positive to see that the majority of those teaching on

the programme were employed on a full-time basis. This can make it possible to ensure continuity and coherence of service.

The EEC positively noted that the College aimed to develop, promote, and reward research activities among its staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC believes that Alexander College management team alongside with the teaching staff should consider ways with which the program's design, structure, and delivery can be improved. The suggestions below can inform this process, resulting in a clearer learning offering and hopefully a more sustainable program when it comes to student recruitment.
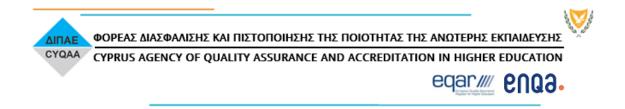
1) Although the program has clear learning outcomes and objectives it would be useful to have these mapped against the modules currently on offer. This will make it possible to explicitly demonstrate that the program meets its objectives. It may also make it possible to identify areas that knowledge development and skills practicing have not been developed sufficiently. In turn, the programme team can address them in future revisions of the program.

2) Similarly, to the programme objectives it would be useful to see that the programme team establishes a programme level assessment strategy. Teaching staff did mention that any changes to assessment are communicated and agreed with the programme coordinator. Although the EEC agrees that this is a good practice, the EEC feels that a more systematic approach would be beneficial to the programme and the student learning experience.

3) The EEC notes that a sufficient number of business administration and finance modules are offered throughout the program. The progression though from one stage/term to the next and the interconnections among the modules is not clear. A clearer mapping as to how students progress through the program (e.g. from the early introductory modules to the later more advanced ones) would be useful. Such a mapping exercise can also make it clear how many modules and what kind of skills students can potentially develop in the sub-themes/disciplines that the programme covers (e.g. in areas like marketing or ICTs).

4) Although the module outline forms sufficiently touched on the areas covered by the modules, these often appeared to be rather specific and eclectic in nature. Examples were mentioned to the programme team during the evaluation meetings. It would be useful to review the module outline forms (and likely the content of the modules) to ensure that they meet the necessary foundational knowledge and skills required in each area and that they do not invest in covering aspects that are not as important. While doing so, it would be useful to review reading lists/textbooks and update them with more recent ones, where possible.

5) The EEC agrees that offering a number of elective modules can help enhance the student experience. In the later stages of the program, students can select modules that are of interest to them and, to some extent, tailor the program to their individual needs/interests.

Still the EEC believes that the electives offering could be better organised and delivered to make this a more sustainable offering. More specifically, given the number of students on the program, there may not be a critical mass of students to make each elective sustainable to run. Grouping electives in 2-3 thematic areas can both help plan better, but also ensure that students develop their expertise in the areas chosen. Such a recommendation can focus the efforts of the College on areas of demand, resulting in a shorter list of elective modules.

6) The EEC notes the College's effort to offer practical skills and experience to students. In relation to points 2 and 5 above, it would be useful to identify all areas of the program that offer such experience and communicate these more clearly to the students. Articulating more clearly how each module and assessment can contribute to employability could alleviate, to some extent, their concerns (especially those of international students) about their future career prospects.

7) Similarly, it would have been welcome to see how research (from the Centre, but also beyond) informs modules in a more explicit manner. To this end, it is important to have a clear plan as to how this can be embedded in the programme and modules so that it can make the expected impact.

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

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

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

Findings

There is a comprehensive teaching methodology and mechanisms. It appears that Alexander College has given appropriate consideration to the overall teaching and learning design and delivery of the proposed program. The program is built with student needs in mind. Overall, the educational process comes across as well-structured, effective and well-implemented.

There are well-documented procedures involving the Head of the programme, the teaching staff and the students. The management of the program of study does not encounter any problems. The College successfully applies the ECTS.
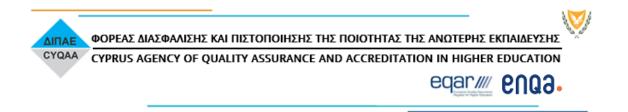
The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated to the students. There is good evidence of structured and well-organized taught material (lecture presentations, good blending of theoretical material and practice, independent study etc). All teaching material are readily available to students.

The EEC met some students. They were particularly satisfied and pleased with their studies. Both students and academic staff noted that the close relationship is built between them, affecting their studies positively. The students have commented that the faculty members are accessible and helpful. A shared positive view was the assistance and good communication students have had with the teaching staff especially during covid restrictions. The students have expressed their gratitude towards the availability of the academic staff as everyone was open to communication. When there was space for improvement the staff were there to assist and provide extra support.

From the evidence gathered by the EEC, the process of teaching and learning (e.g., webinars, face to face meetings, pre-recorded webinars) seems to be quite flexible in respect of students' individual characteristics and needs (e.g., foreign students). There is good evidence that appropriate guidance and support from the teachers are in place.

Strengths

Overall, the program compares positively with relevant programs offered in Cyprus and abroad. The intended learning objectives of the program conform to the aims and objectives of the programme, and they are effectively communicated to the students. Also, the structure of the program, as well as the learning mechanisms, are appropriate for the effective delivery of the learning objectives.

The EEC notes the positive impact of the proper delivery of the programme. The EEC feels that the programme is managed by the staff in charge and there are no inappropriate non-academic interventions. The programme supports a friendly environment between students and teaching/ administrative staff.

The students interviewed by the Committee highlighted they are satisfied with the quality of the program. They have also indicated that communication with faculty members during the studies, and the administrative team is open and part of the culture of the staff.
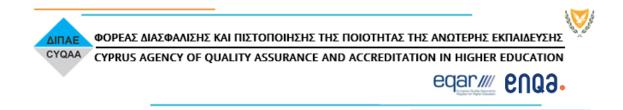
Areas of improvement and recommendations

There are no major drawbacks in this section.

The EEC suggests considering increasing where possible the level of practical training that would with SMEs or relevant stakeholders in Cyprus. Connect to societal issues relevant to such actors, can lead to new sources of funding and internships where students can work or have an internship on higher level with the companies or organisations in the specialties of the students.

The programme is compatible with the professional employment of the students prior to, during and upon completion of their studies. However, the job market is not open especially for foreign students who are the majority of the programme. In this sense, their studies should be integrated more smoothly into their professional careers afterwards, enhancing their career prospects and adding value to all stakeholders and the broader job market. Grouping the elective courses may be a helpful action on this front.

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

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Findings

The EEC noted that the BSc programme is supported by a well-qualified faculty. The EEC also observed that members of staff have several years of experience in their field, as well as teaching experience.

Overall, there is a good fit between the teaching team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver. There is a ratio or 70/30% for full and part time faculty members which is well-balanced for Alexander College.

From the evidence gathered, the faculty appears to be involved with some research activities, albeit in different levels among the faculty members.

During the virtual visit, the teaching staff was praised by students for both the quality of teaching and the level of support received.

Strengths

The faculty members involved in the BSc programme appear to be committed to the programme. The specialization fields of the faculty members are reflected on the content of the programme and in their teaching roles. The faculty's research may also inform their teaching.

Teaching outcomes are monitored and reviewed by the AoQ and College's committees. Any issues arising are dealt with in a timely and professional manner.

The programme makes an effort to draw upon qualified academics from other institutions in teaching, research, assessments and committees.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Overall, there is a good fit between the faculty team's qualifications and expertise with the course units they deliver, there are few points to be considered. The College provides some central procedures to support staff career development. However, there is no compulsory and clear activity menu that leads to promotion, course development, programme development, workload sheet per year, requirements, and criteria, that is compulsory for all staff.

On the positive side, the EEC found that the College is supporting its staff to undertake some research and disseminate their research findings through the appropriate channels. However, there is not a clear path of Research centre's outcomes and expectations, as there are not specific criteria how to join, what the delivery is (or should be).

Staff outcomes are monitored. Still, the substance of these assessments is not entirely clear in terms of the action taken, to further contribute as an overall assessment of the whole programme.

The programme makes an effort to draw upon staff suggestions on course development, which is essential especially for the proposed electives. However, participation does not seem to be clear and sufficient. Neither is it clear how this is reflected on staff workload.
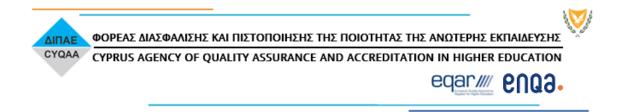
The EEC further suggests some recommendations for the faculty participating in this BSc programme.

1. It is not clear how staff assessment and outcome deliver, are actioned. This is a digression from international standards and so an adjustment can be taken into consideration.

2. It is important that a sufficiently robust teaching and research activity path is embedded into the programme. More centralised and clear rules, in terms of career development, should be given to those who participate to the programme. Any research activity thar might be added to this unit should be specified in advance. There must be a clear support mechanism for staff members so they can innovate and excel pedagogically.

3. It is necessary to establish a clear path for capturing staff contribution to course/programme development in relation to an established workload policy.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Partially compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Not applicable

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

Findings

The evaluation committee had the opportunity to discuss with eight student their experience at the College. The students were at different stages of their studies with some having already graduated. We inquired about why they chose the College, specifics about the BSc program, as well as an overall assessment of their experience with the College.

The students were open in expressing great satisfaction with the College. The main reason to join the College was the affordability of its programs as well as positive assessments they have acquired from their networks. The College appears to be student–oriented with close interactions between students and faculty.

Overall, the students were satisfied with the program and with the services offered by the College such as assistance with necessary paperwork when joining the College from abroad. The students highlighted that the College is accommodating when it needs to be, that they are satisfied with the modules and with the infrastructure of the College.

They noted that state regulations make it difficult for non-European citizens to secure jobs after graduation. Still, they acknowledged that this was not within the College's remit to address.
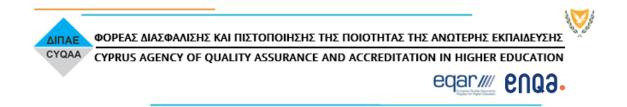
Admission criteria are on par with other Colleges in Cyprus offering similar programs. As discussed with students and faculty, when students are falling behind academically, the College has clear processes and procedures to assist them going back on track.

The College also participates in international exchange programs such as Erasmus and this form of mobility is positively noted as it can enhance the learning experience of those taking part.

The College's research centre offers students the opportunity to be involved with research. This is a noteworthy addition for teaching-oriented institutions, especially when it comes to undergraduate students.

Strengths
1. The College is student oriented.
2. Scholarships awarded on the basis of socioeconomic criteria and academic performance are available. A number of students are successful in securing scholarships.
3. The students are well supported in the context of their academic modules. For example, there is individual feedback by the teaching staff (an advantage of a small program).
4. There is an evaluation by students of the learning experience. Students are represented in committees such as the one on quality assurance. This makes it possible for student voices to be heard and taken into consideration in a structured manner.
5. The College's research centre which offers students research opportunities.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

To the degree possible, the College is encouraged to help international students with improving their job prospects both during their studies and after they graduate. Within state regulations, such help may manifest in short stints in companies, internships and the like.

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

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

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Findings

The panoramic captures of the College's building that the EEC had access to before the evaluation, together with the interviews we conducted lead us to conclude that the College offers adequate resources to both students and faculty including access to library material, IT infrastructure and administrative support.

The building appears to provide the necessary facilities for running a programme like the BSc in Business Administration and Finance.

Along the same lines, the library appears well-equipped. Our overall impression is that all resources are in place and fully functional.

The also appears to be sufficient administrative and pastoral student support.

In terms of human capital support, the College is performing well on that front as faculty appear to be provided with the necessary support in order to fulfil their teaching duties and, in part and when applicable, their research endeavours.
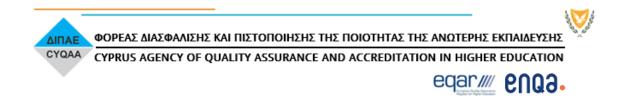
Strengths

Both faculty and students noted they were provided with adequate resources to perform what is expected of them. Indeed, the students appear quite happy with the services they receive in terms of the lounge, the library and the College overall.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The library has access to EBSCO and this appears to work well as it offers sufficient coverage of relevant resources. That said, and in the spirit of further improvement, the College may consider joining the Cyprus-wide network of university libraries to secure access to additional material.

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

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

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Not applicable. This was a UG program evaluated.

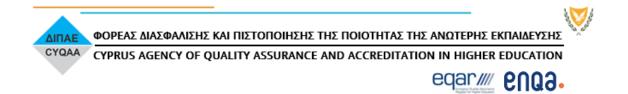**Please select what is appropriate for each of the following sub-areas:**

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/* *Partially Compliant/Compliant*
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Not applicable
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Not applicable
6.3	Supervision and committees	Not applicable

D. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC has provided constructive feedback on the BSc Business Administration and Finance program offered by Alexander College. The report outlines the key findings, highlights areas of strength and proposes actions to improve things further. We hope that the feedback provided in a constructive manner will inform future developments of the program and help underpin a positive teaching and learning experience for all stakeholders.

The EEC would like to take this opportunity and thank the CYQAA coordinator for managing the process both efficiently and effectively. His facilitation has been exemplar and has make it possible for the evaluation to run smoothly.

Finally, once more, should the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education require any clarifications with regards to the points raised in the report, the EEC remains at the Agency's disposal.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof Savvas Papagiannidis	
Dr Christos Kolympiris	
Dr Dionisis Philippas	
Antrea Georgiou	

Date: 24/02/2022