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Date: May 9th 2022

External Evaluation Report (Joint - E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Neapolis University Pafos (NUP)
- **Collaborative Institution(s):**
Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU), School of Management and Economic Sciences (Department of Accounting & Finance), Greece
- **Town:** Pafos
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Economics, Business and Computer Science
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Accounting & Finance
- **Programme of study:** 1.5 academic year, 90 ECTS, Master (MSc)
In English: Data Analytics & FinTech
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):** n/a



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. Introduction

On May 5th 2022, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had virtual meetings with representatives of both institutions, the Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU) and the Neapolis University Pafos (NUP) to evaluate the two new joint programmes “Data Analytics & Fin Tech”, of which one is to be delivered as a “conventional” programme, the other as an e-learning (distance learning) programme. Both are 90 ECTS Master of Science programmes.

The Hellenic Mediterranean University (formerly the Technological Education Institute of Crete) has a history of about 40 years, that of the Technological Educational Institution of Crete, and offers undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Informatics and Engineering Sciences, Health, Agriculture and Food, Economics and Management and Environment. HMU enjoys recognition for its direct contribution to the development of Crete and Greece. HMU’s Academic and Research staff has extensive scientific activities in collaboration with national and international research teams that have led to significant research results, on the one hand, and the development of innovative products with internationally recognition. HMU is among Greece’s highest-ranked universities in research publications and records an impact index that exceeds the global average.

Neapolis University Pafos (NUP) is one of the private Universities of Cyprus established in 2010. Located in Pafos, NUP an academic institution with emphasis in the provision of high-quality higher education and on the creation of applied knowledge and on the provision of academic services to its community and the broader society, with national as well as international aspirations. Aspiring to promote the appreciation of cutting-edge knowledge and research and to create greater potential and opportunities in the new industries, NUP’s aim at offering students relevant knowledge and the appropriate skills and competencies for their smooth and successful integration in cutting-edge jobs of 4th Industrial Revolution and the 21st century.

With respect to the (virtual) visit and relevant to this EEC report, the EEC regrets that the agenda for the assessment of the two new programmes was extremely tight. The EEC is convinced a two-day visit would have enabled the institutions and the EEC to engage in a deeper and more meaningful « peer » evaluation. A significant number of issues would indeed have deserved a lengthier discussion to satisfy all questions related to the evaluation the EEC is asked to address in this report. This remark is a very important contextual element for the CYQAA/DIPAE agency to appreciate in full, as – together with the fact that it concerns two new programmes (there are no students yet) – it leads to sizable number of « not applicable » or partially/non-compliance (as yet) conclusions by the EEC.

The EEC, therefore, stresses that its evaluation, where non applicability and/or non-compliance is concerned, is - to an important extent - to be read as a «pending evaluation» in the light of lack of full information (see details in the report). As a consequence, the EEC is looking forward to a detailed « feedback » report by HMU and NUP.

In addition to some formal (legal, institutional) issues, the report concerning the new «Data Analytics & FinTech» **E-Learning** programme below, will detail the following three main areas of improvement identified by the EEC and to be adequately addressed by NUP/HMU at joint programme level:

1. The (strategic and content) positioning of the programme as a cross-over between data sciences (including big data, digital technologies in finance and accounting, artificial intelligence) rather than either an application of data/business analytics to finance or an application of finance to computer sciences. This includes several issues that need explicit clarification, amongst which (1) the discussion on the most appropriate/suited title of the programme and (2) the added value in terms of cohesive (research, education and delivery) complementarity between the two institution that offer the programme (NUP and HMU);
2. The clear difference between « blended or hybrid learning » and full-fledged e-learning, the latter not so much being an intensification of digital technologies to offer online or distance education of the same content as of the « conventional » programme, but e-learning as a distinctive delivery mode with distinctive matching pedagogies, student assessment methods and even potentially diversified/differentiated content and competences/skills to focus on;
3. Programme leadership is highly recommended to clarify and (strategically) plan the scalability of the programme if it wants to grow to larger numbers of students while keeping the support systems essential to successful delivery of the e-learning programme.

The EEC commends the NUP and HMU for the initiative to launch this new programme (jointly) as it clearly addresses an economic and industry need in both Greece, Cyprus and even internationally. Key to such national and international success, however, will be the clear and crispy « unique selling position » position the institutions will decide on and the complementarity of both institutions that ensures this unique and high-quality distinctiveness.

The EEC further commends the institutions for the best-practice study guides with respect to the programme and for the enthusiasm of both faculty/staff and students (although no students are as yet enrolled into the programme) for this programme.

Notwithstanding these commendations, the EEC feels that the programme has to further mature and be finetuned for full compliance to all CYQAA standards, as will be detailed and contextualized below.

External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Prof.dr. Philip VERGAUWEN	Professor Management Accounting & Control, Pro-dean	Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management (SBS-EM), Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium
Prof.dr. Eleni MANGINA	Professor Computer Science	School of Computer Science, University College Dublin, Ireland
Prof.dr. Santi CABALLE	Professor Learning Engineering	Faculty of Computer Science, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain
Prof. Dr./Dr. habil. Edward SUN	Senior professor Data Science & FinTech	Kedge Business School (Bordeaux), France
Mr. Michael MICHAEL	Student Computer Science	University of Cyprus, Cyprus

B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Sub-areas

- 1.1 Policy for quality assurance**
- 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review**
- 1.3 Public information**
- 1.4 Information management**

Findings

The program under evaluation is a new 1.5 year (90 ECTS) e-Learning MSc in Data Analytics and Fin Tech. It has not yet been accredited and not in operation with a plan to become in operation in September 2022. The program is in

collaboration between two universities (HMU and NUP) with defined roles (1st and 2nd taught module semesters from NUP and a 3rd trimester MSc Thesis project under the supervision of the HMU).

1. The EEC found the established relationship between the two universities confusing as yet and was not provided with the Memorandum of Agreement. Furthermore, the (cohesive) complementarity of the skills/expertise from the two institutions and the need for the 3rd trimester to be delivered from the HMU was relatively unclear (although the EEC had access to the official announcement of the collaboration through the Education Department of the Greek government).
2. The program seems to be subjected to quality assurance procedures by the NUP only. These procedures have a formal status, operationalised by an Internal Quality Assurance Committee. This committee has clearly defined tasks and procedures. However, there is a divergence between the formal procedures and their implementation because there was not mentioned for a student representative to be part of the QA Committee and also there is no external stakeholder involved.
3. The MSc program under evaluation is designed with overall objectives that have explicit learning outcomes. As yet, it is unclear whether students have the opportunity to be involved in the design of the program (i.e. at programme level). Overall, the program is subject to a formal institutional approval process. The courses offered within this program are being offered to other programs within the institution in Cyprus.
4. The EEC finds that the program design does not as yet sufficiently reflect the purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe since it is trying to address needs from two different intake cohorts (ICT and Finance). The expected student workload is defined in ECTS, however the EEC finds that the curriculum material are too thin for the corresponding ECTS at the level of the proposed program. This point is discussed further down in this section. The program MSc research thesis component but it is not clear the process of delivery and supervision and assessment. Successful completion of the program results in a qualification that is not clearly specified and communicated and can create wrong expectations to the students applying for the program.
5. The content and the learning outcomes of the updated curriculum of the MSc in Data Analytics and Fin Tech are not line with the current standards and expectations in the sector, and it should be thoroughly reviewed. During the online visit it was clearly stated that the 90 ECTS were allocated MSc in Data Analytics and Fin Tech, and barely 15/90 are on data analytics related subjects. The program structure and course distribution in semesters are not satisfactory enough identified as yet with the appropriate list of courses, and all course descriptions require a detailed review process.
6. The academic staff teaching the courses have the appropriate academic qualification, consistently with the program but not formal training in eLearning provision. Their teaching load is consistent with the sector. The programme has invested on staff with potential of career development and enthusiasm to teach in the programme, while they are also active in research, although there is no plan for regular training.

Strengths

1. The academic staff teaching the courses have the appropriate qualification, consistently with the program. Their teaching load is consistent with the sector.
2. The programme has invested on staff with potential of career development and enthusiasm to teach in the programme, while they are also active in research. Also training in a for of seminar takes place for the academics, it is recommended for the institution to provide accredited training for eLearning provision to the academic staff involved.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC strongly recommends the institution(s):

1. To revise the title and the content of the program to address the needs of an interdisciplinary student intake: The T&L committee is invited to think outside the box of existing courses in the institution and build up the courses that are needed for this program in order to offer an opportunity to the students to join the financial technology revolution upon graduation. Students in this program need to learn design methodology for financial technology applications and not just passively be presented case studies. They need to learn how to implement, assess and integrate these technologies with current systems. This will only be successful if they develop

computational skills, understand the statistical and machine learning principles in order to later on to work on large scale projects with data analysis that are used in the data driven financial sector. To provide the support to students from both backgrounds (ICT and Finance) a recommendation is for the first trimester to have foundational courses in the two subjects and based on their background to choose the most suitable. Also, it was not clear at the review meeting the process of remediation of a course. The foundation courses are normally mandatory. The 60 ECTS taught courses should provide the students within hands on experience in data analytics (planning, running, documenting and presenting) in finance. Additionally, the eLearning design should be clear and not just involve the provision of material on Moodle platform. Online asynchronous and synchronous sessions should be defined with an exact T&L methodology justified for the need of the program.

- To more clearly and explicitly incorporate the specifics/uniqueness of the “interdisciplinary collaboration” of both HMU and NUP to offer this joint program:

Across Europe, we have observed a number of successful examples of collaboration between different faculties of engineering and management. Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU) has a relatively mature engineering teaching and research experience, while Neapolis University Pafos, and the School of Economics and Management Science at HMU have a relatively complete faculties for finance and management. The collaboration between the two universities is believed to be beneficial and can complement each other's strengths by providing students with relatively comprehensive resources.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	<i>Non-compliant</i>
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	<i>Non-compliant</i>
1.3	Public information	<i>Not applicable</i>
1.4	Information management	<i>Not applicable</i>

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

Sub-areas

- 2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**
- 2.2 Practical training**
- 2.3 Student assessment**
- 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities**

Findings

The EEC stresses the following observations:

- The e-learning programme is an online mode of learning. Therefore, teaching and assessment need to focus on developing the ability of students for an independent learning of Data Analytics & FinTech concepts through online provision. There is no really specific description on the teaching and learning online pedagogy.

2. The EEC had no feedback from current students since it is a new program. The T&L committee should review the curriculum for the implementation of an online guided student-centred approach to achieve the learning outcomes of the program.
3. The organization and the content of the teaching, learning and assessment of online activities (as described in each of the courses) are not in accordance with the expected quality and quantity. When it comes to the scope, there is a need for major adjustments (as described in section 1). The criteria and mode of assessment need to be clearly described and not rely on the Moodle platform delivery of recorded content. From the interviews with the students, the panel noticed some variation with respect to how the students experienced in other courses the MSc thesis process and a rigorous process of project thematic areas, self-proposed projects, supervision, monitoring and assessment panel should be in place for the 3rd trimester on line.
4. The EEC found a lot of uncertainty on the mode of delivery of the MSc thesis supervision from the HMU.

Strengths

The EEC commends the School for the following:

1. Past and current students in the Department have a mutual student – academic respectful relationship although this is feedback based on talking to previous students that had face to face course provision. It will be challenging in an online mode of delivery and the teaching and learning pedagogy should reflect the rules of communications and rules around the participation in discussion forums.
2. The university has a DL unit, which provides technical training and support of instructors to the faculty members of the different University's Faculties. Faculty members can participate in training programs to increase their skills to conduct quality online teaching. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in the form of professional development relevant to distance learning was not shown during the meeting with the teaching staff.
3. With respect to the university's distance learning model, the EEC finds it to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio (1/25) and student feedback is very positive.
4. The EEC commends the programme for the provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-review assessment, that are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project based, and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the very detailed weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their distance learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC identified and discussed the following areas for (further) improvement:

1. The program could be reviewed in terms of T&L eLearning approaches to promote confidence, which is of high importance for the market needs in this new area in Fin Tech. The students need to be exposed to Data Science platforms in different operating systems (i.e. Linux) through the available servers and desktops.
2. Formal external stakeholders' board for the curriculum review should be in place to provide feedback to update the curriculum to the international standards, and inclusion of industry representatives should be mandatory and appropriate minutes to be taken at each meeting. Online Teaching methods are not clearly defined.
3. The teaching and learning effectiveness is highly linked with the level of expertise of the teaching staff and although seminars on improving didactic and pedagogical practices in online teaching are available to staff, they are not compulsory. This is a good initiative in the right direction, but it is not sufficient. A minimum form of basic accredited pedagogical training should be compulsory to all new staff before they begin teaching online.
4. Overall, assessment methodology should be clear for each course online and how plagiarism will be avoided. This should be standard practice for all courses and all forms of homework or examination online.

5. The description and organization of the courses do not reflect an NFQ 9 lever program as the development of students' competencies and general learning experience varies. However, we advise that the college should take the necessary actions to revise the curriculum (and title of the program if it deems necessary and connect the teaching and learning with hands on data science real-life challenges and experiences in Fin Tech sector.
6. With respect to the (technical) specifics of the e-learning delivery, the EEC finds that the nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study.
7. The university's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through Office365/MS Teams) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback in order to assess students' knowledge. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences and skills, such as critical thinking, is also provided though was not shown the specific assessment procedures during the meetings. Each course has a minimum of 6 hours of teleconferences, which is considered an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between teacher and students.
8. Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the subject and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for facing special needs. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by collaborative activities based on project-based learning, though it was not shown the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities.
9. Formative assessment of the courses is based on submitted mid-term assignments and reports with provision of personalised feedback during the course counting to 20% of the final grade while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting to 60% of the final grade. Assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of online quiz-based and other interactive activities counting to 20%. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-assess student knowledge and skills of the course.
10. The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations, such as EDEN, is a good practice. Therefore, the university is urged to keep applying for further external accreditations (EFQUEL, EADTU, etc), to evaluate the quality of its distance learning model.
11. From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if gamification strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. In addition, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are also encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.
12. While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences were perceived as problematic if in the next years the program is expanded internationally and attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.
13. Finally, the EEC wants to point out that onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment through the writing assignments and project-based collaborative learning during the course could be reinforced instead.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	<i>Compliant</i>
2.2	Practical training	<i>Partially compliant</i>
2.3	Student assessment	<i>Partially compliant</i>
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	<i>Compliant</i>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Findings

The EEC finds that :

1. The institution(s) ensure(s) that all teaching staff meet the minimum requirements with respect to their educational level and that they are educated in areas very close to the topics they teach.
2. It is not clear how much, if any at all, of the teaching of this program is done by visiting staff:

According to the information provided to the committee, the number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study, however it is not clear if there is competency to deliver online provision of the content with specific quality and pedagogy of eLearning as well as competency in advanced data analytics in the programme with specialisation in application in Fin Tech.

3. Teaching staff have not been recruited for the specific programme:

Many finance-related lectures (for example, Accounting and Financial Management and Banking Operation and Management) are already taught during university studies, and for students whose first degree is in economics and finance, there is a repetition of relevant content. Similarly, some computer-related courses (for example, Data Analytics and Problem Solving Programming) are duplicative for graduates with a first degree in engineering. The EEC, therefore, finds it inevitable to discuss how to ensure that the content is relatively new, avoiding repetition and reflecting the breadth and depth of content that should be taught at Master's level.

4. Specifically with respect to the specifics for compliant, high quality e-learning, the EEC finds that the university has a Distance Learning unit that provides technical training and support of distance learning to the faculty members of the different University's Schools:

Faculty members can participate in training programs to increase their skills to conduct quality online teaching. However, the effectiveness of these training programs in the form of professional development and certification relevant to distance learning was not shown during the meeting with the teaching staff.

Strengths

The School has followed good practices in terms of recruitment of the existing academics staff members with potential.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC recommends the School:

1. To adopt a transparent workload model process for all staff members with clear admin/teaching/research activities allocation and to be shared at the beginning of each academic year to all academic staff:

The School has not informed the EEC of any professional development activities for teaching staff focused on the online Teaching and Learning skills which could prove impactful in the years to follow on the quality of the teaching and learning in the programme and the reputation of the programme. The panel would advise as well in the future rounds of recruitment to review the curriculum needs of the programme and the research strategy of the School in order to identify candidates with potential to progress within your institution.

2. The college tries to improve the teaching skills of the teaching staff through activities such as optional seminars, for instance:

These efforts are appreciated. As pointed out in the previous section, such efforts should be structured in a more formal way and be made compulsory to teachers, in order to ensure that no staff begins teaching online without a minimum of pedagogical training.

3. Given the interdisciplinarity of the programme it would be beneficial to consider synergies between the academics of ICT and Finance from both institutions. Furthermore, from the information provided so far on scientific publications of faculty members, it is not clear how many are related to big data, data science or financial technology. The connection between teaching and research shall be clarified, for example, the faculty members are expected to list all the related research with respect to the underlying lecture be provided in the curriculum.

4. For some courses, the qualifications of the teachers concerned should be fully reviewed:

For example, in high-frequency finance and trading, if teachers do not have either relevant teaching and research background or industrial working experience, they may not be able to either explain theoretically the microstructure of financial markets or deduce reasonable explanations from the practical trading processes.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

- 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
- 4.2 Student progression**
- 4.3 Student recognition**
- 4.4 Student certification**

Findings

The EEC finds the following :

1. Admission requirements are in place: A prior degree in Finance or ICT 2:2 and proof of English language proficiency, which will be clearly communicated. There are allowances for RPL entry and the students can apply for RPL.
2. There are pre-defined regulations regarding the selection and intake of students:

The number of students is determined, however, the study program's plan for intake is maximum 20 students with a steady increase of 20 year on year. Although this might allow teaching staff to focus on individual needs, this might also hinder students' motivation and social learning activities. The study program is a key element in ensuring the progress of the students, and it clearly defines the number and workload of the various courses, and how they are distributed in the 3 semesters. Special attention in the pedagogy should be paid towards the isolation that an online course can cause and there should be in place external evaluation to ensure the active communication and student-centred approach.
3. With respect to the specifics of the e-learning delivery, the EEC finds that the university's Moodle platform provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information from the student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities. However, it was not clear the extent the instructors use this information to support their students on a daily basis.

Strengths

A strength was noted around the low drop-out rate (even though official numbers were not yet reported). In addition, student feedback is mandatory at course end and is also actively sought on an on-going basis throughout course delivery. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the university was not shown.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC identified the following areas for (further) improvement:

1. According to students' feedback during this evaluation process, the panel could not have a clear picture in terms of the program but only generally on the satisfaction of students from other programs that are face to face:

It was noted that some students had difficulty to communicate in English although the programs are delivered in English and Greek. As a result, the panel recommends for the program review committee to revise the minimum English language requirements.
2. The teaching staff could be supported from the Institution with career development skills in Teaching and Learning.

3. The panel also recommends the development of a 5-10 year plan for the programme and the capacity of intake year on year, in order to plan for recruitment activities in EU and abroad and increase the number of applicants and of enrolled students over the next years (including the recommendation to consider a market research and identify other institutions that provide online programs similar to this MSc online).
4. To attract larger numbers of students, it may be helpful to review the modules taught with content highly relevant with current market needs, and to actively promote and advertise the positive values and high potential of this program to prospective students and relevant stakeholders.
5. The plans of the college are coherent (so students' admission, progression and recognition is (or is going to be) well conducted, the limited number of students and potential difficulties in recruiting new students needs to be tackled. To attract larger numbers of students, it may be helpful to review the courses taught (as advised in Section 1) with content highly relevant with the current Fin Tech industry.
6. With respect to the e-learning delivery of the program, the EEC encourages the institution to explore and use more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning to monitor and predict student performance and dropout in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in case of university's expansion plans through increasing the academic portfolio and/or the number of online students.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	<i>Compliant</i>
4.2	Student progression	<i>Not applicable</i>
4.3	Student recognition	<i>Compliant</i>
4.4	Student certification	<i>Compliant</i>

5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

<u>Sub-areas</u>
<p>5.1 Teaching and Learning resources 5.2 Physical resources 5.3 Human support resources 5.4 Student support</p>

Findings

The EEC finds the following:

1. During the online visit, the availability of computer laboratories, designated areas for group and individual work and library and the teaching and learning resources, which are accessible to students of all the programmes, was clearly described:

The institution periodically assesses the adequacy and suitability of these resources and informs the responsible services of the university for their actions. Students appear satisfied with the programme, the teaching staff, and their interactions with the teaching staff. All regulations supporting student progress and satisfaction monitoring are in place.

2. The university's Distance Learning unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for creating and evaluating online courses:

The DL unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities, and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The DL unit also provides a Faculty Handbook with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of the distance learning courses throughout the University's Schools.

3. The library of NUP subscribes to online learning resources, which are drawn from seventeen world-famous publishing houses and databases, such as Springer, Taylor & Francis, Ebsco, Emerald, Wiley, JSTOR, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Sage, Fame, Orbis, Westlaw, Proquest, TLG, CYS, etc, which include online books, journals, and articles where the students have access twenty-four hours a day via the Internet. Moreover, the NUP's library provides access to the students to ten thousand printed books.
4. The educational platform used for posting teaching materials, making real-time conversations between the participants, creating polls that enable the teacher to evaluate the student's opinions about the course, creating forums, and assigning and delivering assignments, is "Moodle". An educational and learning platform that provides a pleasant experience to the students and is used for a better understanding of the theory is "Kahoot".
5. Accounts are provided to students throughout their studies on the Office 365 platform (including: Microsoft Teams teleconferencing and Office/Outlook software, e-mail accounts with the suffix @nup.ac.cy, 1 TB Personal Online Storage (OneDrive) and the OneNote Class Notebook and Forms educational software).
6. The academic staff, in collaboration with the Counselling Centre for Psychological Support and Evaluation (S.K.E.P.S.I.S.) that exists at NUP, provides ongoing support to students in the academic and personal problems and difficulties they may face.
7. Important to be mentioned is that each student is assigned to an academic advisor, to whom it can refer in case it has any problem. Furthermore, the students confirmed in the meeting with the EEC that they are very satisfied with the academic and administrative staff and with the IT support.

The EEC overall finds that the physical and human resources are adequate to support the current needs of the study program of the college. If the college wants to increase its intake, it is important to assess its resources and conduct the necessary adjustments.

Strengths

The EEC commends the School for the following:

1. Student welfare mechanisms for monitoring the sufficiency of student support are in place. Nevertheless, it is recommended to introduce an Equality Diversion Inclusion (EDI) Committee. Online access to Library services are available but it is recommended to consider the introduction of an online data lab given the subject domain of the program.
2. The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a highly detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time to carry out the proposed activities. In addition, study guides are very well presented in an engaging way, which motivates students in the learning process. This is considered by the EEC as a best practice.
3. The Distance Learning unit is considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the teaching provided while offering a solid base to faculty members seeking to enhance their distance learning expertise.

4. The NUP's IT support is so effective and efficient, and it is accessible both for the academic staff and the students twenty-four hours a day.
5. The EEC was impressed by the library's material because it has access to valuable top-tier subscriptions and academic material relevant to this programme, such as all the textbooks which the students need for their courses and by the Moodle's usage (structure and posted material).
6. All the students argued that there are good and strong bonds between them and the academic staff and an immediate response from the academics when the students need them.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

The panel recommends the School to:

1. To invest in teaching staff professional development, in order to enable growth for progress:
In terms of student support, a potential solution could be a "buddy coder" mentor system in order for students to reach out to students that are doing research in the area or alumni that have secured jobs in the area.
2. Especially with online program delivery, attention is needed as studying in isolation it can impact the students' sense of belonging which could bring high rates of dropout.
3. The panel also recommends the T&L Committee to include student representation of the program and to monitor the T&L processes, curriculum review and resources for each semester needs taking into account the student and staff feedback year on year with inclusion of an official industry advisory Board and External examiner.
4. It is recommended to have in place procedures, appropriate training, guidance and support, for teaching personnel, to enable personnel to efficiently support the online educational process. The EEC did not receive any information on the planning for online moderators and communication pedagogical strategy to have an interactive online program.
5. The students are provided with a departmental email account, and the department need to ensure that communications are enforced through this email, which should be imposed as the official channel of email communication with the students.
6. The School should consider a rigorous process of data collection in terms of reviewing the pipeline and year on year alumni of the students through the administrative office.
7. While the online courses include a good variety of multi-format learning materials (e-books, articles, videos, audio, etc.) which are good for distance learning, the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be usable and accessible for students by making them short, include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility. In addition, the EEC suggest that some considerations should be taken into account to the provision of entire volumes as basic materials in order to adapt them to online part-time students who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.
8. The EEC further recommends the School to deploy external visiting staff and guest speakers to enrich teaching and connect it with the industry.

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

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

6. Eligibility (ALL ESG)

Sub-areas

- 6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement**
- 6.2 The joint programme**
- 6.3 Added value of the joint programme**

Findings

The EEC finds that the joint programme is not offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems. In joint programs it is required a clear Memorandum of Agreement that clarifies the complementarity of the two institutions with clear responsibilities and clear expectations for the prospect applicants. The EEC was not provided with any cooperation agreement. The partner universities have not applied for joint internal quality assurance processes. The joint programme is offered jointly, but the EEC has the impression from the online visit that the cooperating universities are not equally involved in the design, delivery, and further development of the programme. There does not exist a joint syllabus and there was no risk assessment for the collaboration. Study counselling and mobility plans are not in place for the third trimester at the Hellenic University to consider the needs of different kinds of students.

Strengths

Areas of improvement and recommendations

See above






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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
6.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	<i>Non-compliant</i>
6.2	The joint programme	<i>Non-compliant</i>
6.3	Added value of the joint programme	<i>Non-compliant</i>

C. Conclusions and final remarks

As detailed in the report above, the EEC finds that, notwithstanding several commendations and strengths, the programme has to further mature and be finetuned for full compliance to all CYQAA standards.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof.dr. Philip VERGAUWEN, Chair EEC	
Prof.dr. Eleni MANGINA	
Prof.dr. Santi CABALLE	
Dr. habil. Edward SUN	
Mr. Michael MICHAEL	

Date: May 9th 2022