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

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Cyprus
- **Collaborative Institution(s):**  
Cyprus University of Technology
- **Town:** Nicosia / Limassol
  
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):**  
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING (UCY)  
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT (UCY)  
FACULTY OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS (CUT)
  
- **Department/ Sector:**  
Department of Architecture (UCY)  
Department of Business and Public  
Administration (UCY)  
Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts  
(CUT)
  
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**  
  
**In Greek:**  
Μάστερ στο Σχεδιασμό για Κοινωνική Καινοτομία  
  
**In English:**  
Master in Design for Social Innovation
  
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English



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].

- **Programme’s status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Concentrations

## A. Introduction

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) expresses its gratitude to the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for the opportunity to assess the proposed joint Masters programme in Design for Social Innovation, offered collaboratively by the University of Cyprus (UCY) and the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT).

The EEC carried out an on-site evaluation, comprising a panel of four academic experts and a student representative. This assessment provided a chance for the EEC to engage directly with various stakeholders involved in the joint programme, including the senior management from each of the two partner Universities, the Heads of the relevant Departments, the programme coordinators, and members of the quality assurance committees etc. The EEC also had the opportunity to interact with students enrolled in related programmes at both Universities, as well as a wide range of teaching and administrative staff. These interactions were pivotal in offering the EEC a comprehensive view of the proposed curriculum and the overall educational environments of both Universities.

In conjunction with these meetings, the EEC reviewed the self-evaluation report prepared by the joint programme team. This review was augmented by presentations from faculty members and an examination of various documents provided upon request, such as examples of student work, staff and student handbooks, workload policies, and evidence of compliance with QAA standards. The EEC also had access to the online test and a demonstration was undertaken by the programme team during the visit. This thorough and diverse approach make it possible for the EEC to gain an all-encompassing understanding of the programme's strengths and areas where enhancements could be made.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Frido Smulders	Professor	TU Delft
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor	Newcastle University
Martin Knobel	Professor	CODE University of Applied Sciences
Santi Caballe Llobet	Professor	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Alexandros Evgeniou	Student Member	Open 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.**

## 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

### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

#### Standards

- *Policy for quality assurance of the programme of study:*
  - *has a formal status and is publicly available*
  - *supports the organisation of the quality assurance system through appropriate structures, regulations and processes*
  - *supports teaching, administrative staff and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance*
  - *ensures academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud*
  - *guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff*
  - *supports the involvement of external stakeholders*

### 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

#### Standards

- *The programme of study:*
  - *is designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes*
  - *is designed by involving students and other stakeholders*
  - *benefits from external expertise*
  - *reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)*
  - *is designed so that it enables smooth student progression*
  - *is designed so that the exams' and assignments' content corresponds to the level of the programme and the number of ECTS*
  - *defines the expected student workload in ECTS*
  - *includes well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate*
  - *is subject to a formal institutional approval process*

- *results in a qualification that is clearly specified and communicated, and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
- *is periodically reviewed so that it takes into account the changing needs of society, the students' workload, progression and completion, the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme*
- *is reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders*

### **1.3 Public information**

#### Standards

- *Regarding the programme of study, clear, accurate, up-to date and readily accessible information is published about:*
  - *selection criteria*
  - *intended learning outcomes*
  - *qualification awarded*
  - *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  - *pass rates*
  - *learning opportunities available to the students*
  - *graduate employment information*

### **1.4 Information management**

#### Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*
- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

### Findings

The proposed Master of Arts in Design for Social Innovation is an innovative programme that aims to equip students with the necessary knowledge, academic as well as practice-based, to become proficient actors in the domain of social innovation. They therefore receive knowledge and develop skills from a variety of relevant domains, such as entrepreneurship, design, collaborative (design) practices, creativity, ethnographical approaches, inclusion theories and sustainability approaches. All these are aimed at students building a vast and deep understanding of the phenomenon of social innovation and the skills and capacities to become proficient in enacting social innovation by design, i.e. become social innovation practitioners that are capable of leading multi-disciplinary teams.

The Departments involved share an ethos of interdisciplinarity in design and innovation and strive to build links between academia and practice bringing to the forefront impactful and evidence-based theoretical and methodological knowledge.

The programme progresses across three semesters. The first semester features modules that introduce students to contemporary knowledge covering the various threads of design as there are, design inquiry, role of experiments in design and collaborative design. In addition, there is consideration of ethnographic theories and approaches relevant to the domain of social innovation. The second semester widens the knowledge base by covering domains like social entrepreneurship, sustainability and social inclusion. It also introduces research methods, laying the groundwork for the thesis project in the third semester. All modules are taught online.

In the third semester, students have the choice of two paths. One includes a summer school on in Cyprus followed by a practice-based Diploma Project whereas the second path is a theoretical oriented Master's Thesis on a relevant and contemporary subject of research. In order to pass the students must complete a range of deliverables, follow guidelines, and effectively present work that meets requirements, whether theoretical or practice-based.

The curriculum consists of modules such as Research by Design, Experimental Design Practices, Collaborative Design, Ethnography for Design Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Inclusion and Design, and Sustainable Design Futures, each with specified ECTS credits. This approach allows graduates to enhance their work in organisations dealing with social issues by implementing inclusive design processes, making them adaptable to roles like design strategists, social entrepreneurs, design researchers, among others.

The language of instruction for the programme is English.

### Strengths

The programme benefits from a team of highly motivated staff members from the three Departments, as well as from the two Universities. Their dedication contributes to an enriching academic environment for the students that will enrol in this program. The team has experience of running e-learning programmes.

Students that followed e-learning programs in the past were enthusiastic about the set-up, its relevance and its organisation. There was sufficient opportunity to exchange with staff and fellow students which surely fosters a conducive learning atmosphere.

The faculty's knowledge and expertise regarding the subject they teach is noteworthy, as they deeply understand what they educate for. Equally, they seem to have a good sense of student's needs as well as student's capabilities and address mitigating circumstances individually, providing tailored support.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

1. The EEC feels that there is room for improving the balance and especially the relationship between the realm of design science and social innovation. Since the programme must be considered to be cutting-edge integrating a diversity of topics from the domain of design and the domain of social innovation, there is a need to develop a common language and framework that infuses the development of an appropriate discourse among staff as well as participating students. Currently, as things stand, the first term features only design modules. The EEC suggests that modules such as “social inclusion and design” could potentially be moved in term 1 and the “experimental design practices” can be moved to term 2. In addition the EEC recommends adding an “introduction to social innovation” module in the first term.
2. Design modules can be adapted more to the social innovation context. This includes both their titles but also their content. For instance “ethnography for design innovation” can become “ethnography for designing social innovation” and its content and activities aligned more with the programme's overall objectives.
3. It is suggested to start the programme with a face-to-face event to build a community among the students participating in the e-learning program. The event could very well be in the form of a first module in which students and staff jointly explore the field of the programme, as well as getting to know each other. The expected diversity of learners will make such a kick-off module very inspiring to both groups, learners and teachers. Such a gathering could provide an opportunity to create an inspiring event that showcases the work of the previous cohort and offer a warm onboarding event for the fresh cohort.
4. Again, in line with the innovativeness of the programme and the diversity of the teaching staff, it is suggested by the EEC to pay explicit attention to the coherence of the educational modules vis-à-vis the emergence of a theoretical framework representing the trans-disciplinary domain of design for social innovation.
5. Lastly, we suggest considering the role of dissertations (thesis) to align more with the philosophy of the programme as having a strong design for social innovation practice flavour. Such a reconsideration could alleviate the need for a module specifically addressing research methods. In turn this could provide the space in the programme to create an introduction to social innovation module as suggested above.
6. They may be a complicated situation for students that follow the e-learning program in a part-time version. They could follow just two modules from Term 1, followed by two modules from Term 2 and then in second run of Term 1 take the remaining two modules. The learning such a student goes through may be in conflict with the ideal learning path as that is underpinning the design of the program as a fulltime educational commitment. Based on this observation, the EEC recommends developing alternative educational pathways for students that want to study part time.

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	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)

### 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**

### **2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**

#### Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

### **2.2 Practical training**

#### Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

## 2.3 Student assessment

### Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

## 2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

### Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

### Findings

The nature of the joint programme is compatible with distance learning (DL) delivery and the provided methodology is suitable for this specific programme of study.

The supporting learning management system is a Google Classroom installation within the Google academic ecosystem, which effectively facilitates online teaching, learning and administrative tasks. This system offers essential online teaching and learning services, including both synchronous (via Google Meet and Chat) and asynchronous tools, such as Google Docs and Groups. This ensures students can interact with instructors, peers and materials. The system also provides e-assessment tools, such as quizzes with immediate feedback, for self-assessing understanding.

Interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students, occurs mainly synchronously through teleconferences. Each module provides at least three 1-hour teleconference sessions, ensuring an adequate number of hours of live interaction. These sessions are recorded for students who cannot attend in real-time, and the video lectures show the instructor for non-verbal communication with added subtitles for accessibility. In addition, interactive videos are used to enhance engagement among online students during teleconferences, although they were not shown during the meetings. Student collaboration is encouraged through project-based learning activities in small teams, structured and guided by the instructor. Finally, Slack is also available to facilitate daily interaction with teachers and among students.

Formative assessment includes a wide range of self-assessment activities: individual and collaborative projects, case studies, student-created digital material, participation in discussions (synchronous and asynchronous), peer assessment and feedback, reflective journals (short essays), oral presentations, critiques, and quizzes. These activities cater to different learning styles and contribute in different proportions to the final grade. The joint programme does not include written final exams or other forms of summative assessment. Optional non-grade formative self-assessment tasks with indicative answers are provided weekly to assist students in self-assessing their understanding and competencies, though they were not shown during the meetings. Complex e-assessment forms for evaluating key competencies, such as critical thinking, exist, but it was not demonstrated during the meetings how they are designed and evaluated.

### Strengths

The EEC considers the Universities' DL model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional and family 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 (1/30) and student feedback is very positive.

The provision of rubrics-based and personalised feedback in the interactive activities and during the teleconference sessions are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities, project-based, peer assessment, and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the detailed study guides,

which make it possible for the students to determine the work to be done every two weeks, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the Universities to keep up these strong elements of their DL model while reinforcing them when possible.

The faculty's distinctive personalised approach stands out, characterised by their thorough understanding of each student's abilities and their proactive handling of individual circumstances, offering customised assistance and support.

The incorporation of peer-to-peer feedback not only enables students to develop their critique abilities but also cultivates their reflective skills. This approach supports students in honing their capacity for thoughtful analysis and introspection, fostering a well-rounded learning experience.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC recommends exploring more advanced feedback methods, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents enriched with learning analytics and gamifications strategies for immediate and automatic student feedback. The feasibility of online collaboration, especially for international programs with students in remote time zones, remains a concern from a coordination standpoint while recommending the constant adaptation of their DL model to support the evolution of the joint program.

The EEC recommends the Universities to be evaluated by external, voluntary accreditations from organisations, such as EDEN, EADTU, EFQUEL and QS Stars for e-learning quality assurance and active participation in the e-learning community.

**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	Compliant
2.2	Practical training	Compliant
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant
2.4	Study guides structure, content and interactive activities	Compliant

### 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**

### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### Standards

- *Institutions ensure the competence of their teaching staff.*
- *Fair, transparent and clear processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff are set up.*
- *Teaching staff qualifications are adequate to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.*
- *The teaching staff is regularly engaged in professional and teaching-skills training and development.*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the teaching staff focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *Promotion of the teaching staff takes into account the quality of their teaching, their research activity, the development of their teaching skills and their mobility.*
- *Innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies is encouraged.*
- *Conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching are followed.*
- *Recognised visiting teaching staff participates in teaching the study programme.*

### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### Standards

- *The number of the teaching staff is adequate to support the programme of study.*
- *The teaching staff status (rank, full/part time) is appropriate to offer a quality programme of study.*
- *Visiting staff number does not exceed the number of the permanent staff.*

### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*

- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

### Findings

In the joint e-learning programme between two institutions, a high standard for teaching staff recruitment and development is maintained. This is underpinned by both Institutions ensuring the competence of teaching staff, setting up fair and transparent recruitment processes, and ensuring that staff qualifications meet the expectations of postgraduate teaching.

The policies also emphasises the importance of ongoing training, guidance, and support for the staff, with promotions taking into account the quality of teaching, research activities, development of teaching skills, etc.

Regarding the number and status of teaching staff, the partner Institutions have made the necessary resources available to support the study programme by allocating staff relevant to the modules. In turn, this also means that the proposed programme will be supported by full time members of staff.

The Universities have a joint DL governance structure, including a DL Unit and related bodies, offering training and support to instructors and students in DL. This includes seminars, mentoring, and technical assistance across University faculties. Faculty members are encouraged to join training programs to improve their online teaching skills. Following EEC recommendations, the University is considering making these programs mandatory to ensure faculty are updated and well-prepared for conducting quality online teaching.

### Strengths

Teaching staff involvement in research activities is not only commendable, but also beneficial for the programme they teach. The staff's participation in international conferences and their contributions to academic journals enrich the curriculum, ensuring that it is current and informed by the latest developments in their field. Additionally, when it comes to design, engagement in a wider range of national and international exhibitions and public engagement activities enhances staff profile's and could potentially have a positive spill-over effect to the proposed programme. This active involvement in both the academic and public spheres ensures that the programme remains dynamic and relevant, equipping students with knowledge and experiences that are reflective of real-world applications and contemporary thought.

The EEC noted a strength with the collaboration of one of the Universities with the Open University of Cyprus and Tallinn University about DL know-how and good practices. This can reinforce the DL competences and skills of the faculty staff involved in the joint programme.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

Considering that three Departments in two Universities, the EEC does not expect the workload to be a significant issue as the load will be spread sufficiently. Still on the individual level it is good practice to consider how this affects individuals. The EEC notes that both institutions have a workload policy in place that mostly considers teaching duties, but not the wider context of one's academic and service contributions (which in this case may also include coordination overheads).

In accordance with established norms, students will expect to fill out evaluations or surveys regarding their instructors' effectiveness in teaching. Additionally, the introduction of a peer observation scheme that extends beyond Departmental and Institutional limits could serve as an additional feedback mechanism. Such an arrangement would make it possible for academic staff to participate in valuable and constructive dialogues about online teaching methods and approaches, thus contributing to an emerging e-learning ecosystem linked with the proposed master's programme. This cooperative structure would not only enable the exchange of best practices and novel instructional techniques, but also offer a supportive foundation for professional growth and ongoing betterment.

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

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

#### 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

##### 4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

##### 4.2 Student progression

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

##### 4.3 Student recognition

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

##### 4.4 Student certification

###### Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

### Findings

The joint programme has established clear and well-documented regulations for student admission that operate within the policies of the two Institutions. These regulations, which are readily accessible and publicly available, ensure transparency and fairness in the admissions process. The criteria for evaluating student applications are clearly defined, allowing for a consistent and transparent implementation of admission policies and processes.

Similarly, programme regulations will provide clear guidelines on academic advancement, detailing expectations, requirements, and milestones for students so that they are aware of how to progress through the e-learning programme. Additionally, the Universities employ effective processes and tools to monitor student progression. This system includes regular evaluations, feedback mechanisms, and academic advising sessions, enabling the university to identify and address areas where students may need additional support.

Upon completion of their studies, students will receive a certificate from each University. Each certificate will be valid only with the existence of the other Certificate. This approach ensures that certification reflects the joint nature of the degree and remains within the expectations of each Institutions awarding policies.

The Google Classroom platform offers an array of learning analytics tools to monitor student progression and performance. These tools focus on data from inactive students with limited participation or incomplete activities. Although the universities have mechanisms to identify and address students at risk, it remains unclear how instructors utilise this information to help their students and the daily benefits derived from it.

### Strengths

A strength was noted in the high participation rate for collecting student feedback at university level (approximately 90%), though its mandatory nature at the end of the course raises questions about the objectivity and usefulness of this feedback. In addition, it was not well-defined how this feedback specifically informs improvements at the university level and contributes to a continuous improvement cycle.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Organising an initial physical event, possibly through the summer school module serving as the first touchpoint, presents an opportunity to establish and nurture a sense of community among students. This gathering could catalyse building connections, fostering collaboration, and laying the foundation for a supportive learning environment.

When it comes to the admission, it may be beneficial to encourage applicants with past work experience related to themes pertinent to the programme to apply. Having such track record can

be useful for the programme as they can share experiences and help put their learning and that of other students into perspective. This does not have to be a part of the formal admissions criteria. Similarly, it may be useful to ask applicants to consider having a social innovation project in mind that could act as an ongoing platform on which to apply their new knowledge and skills throughout the programme.

**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	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)

### Sub-areas

**5.1 Teaching and Learning resources**

**5.2 Physical resources**

**5.3 Human support resources**

**5.4 Student support**

### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

### **5.3 Human support resources**

#### Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

### **5.4 Student support**

#### Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

#### Findings

The EEC has conducted a comprehensive review of the programme's physical and human resources, as well as its student support systems. Both Institutions have the necessarily resources to successfully deliver the proposed joint programme. The EEC notes that the cohort size is expected to be up to 30 students. With three Departments contributing to the programme, the resource implications on each Department are expected to be manageable. Academic (typically holding PhDs and conducting research in their areas) and professional support staff are sufficiently qualified and experienced, but also deeply committed to the success of the students and the joint programme.

In terms of physical resources, such as premises, libraries, and IT infrastructure, the programme is well-equipped to support the study needs of students and the e-learning provision.

Student support services are tailored to a diverse student population, including mature, part-time, employed, international students, and those with special needs.

The universities' DL unit provides pedagogical support for creating and evaluating online courses. This unit ensures that study materials, interactive activities and assessments adhere to international standards. Specifically, the unit focuses on requirements for study materials, interactive activities and teaching innovation, offering a variety of learning resources (e-books, gamification tools, interactive videos, etc.), which are beneficial for DL, even though these were not detailed during the meetings. The EEC recognises the unit's ongoing efforts to enhance the online teaching and learning experience.

The proposed courses feature a complete syllabus and highly detailed, biweekly student-centred study guides that include relevant information, such as learning objectives and outcomes, content, methodology, evaluation methods, bibliography, self-evaluation activities (both graded and ungraded), along with complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time. However, the presentation of these study guides lacks homogeneity, which might demotivate students in their learning process. The EEC acknowledges this as a best practice, while recommending ongoing improvements to the study guides.

### Strengths

The DL unit outlines a comprehensive handbook, supported by the universities' procedures and policies, which includes guidelines for developing and delivering DL, thus defining the key characteristics of a DL course. This unit is considered a best practice due to its structured approach, resources and services dedicated to improving DL. The EEC believes that it can be a significant support in ensuring and maintaining the quality of teaching while providing a solid foundation for faculty members seeking to enhance their DL expertise. Such a faculty handbook can serve as a valuable tool to ensure quality and consistency across all DL programs.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC notes that some required readings consist of entire volumes, which may not be suitable for part-time students who need to study efficiently. It is recommended to provide clear indications of the relevant sections of these volumes in the study guides to make them more manageable. In addition, self-evaluated activities are not clearly detailed in the study guides, often directing students to a separate assessment guide, which can cause confusion. The EEC believes that there is potential for improvement in this area.

For an e-learning programme, student mobility is not important as it would have been otherwise. Still, it may be useful if this manifests as an opportunity for students to meet in Cyprus before starting their studies in order to help create a sense of belonging. It can help elevate their learning experience and result in a much more engaging and integrated learning experience.

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

Sub-area	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></p>
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<b>5.1</b>	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
<b>5.2</b>	Physical resources	Compliant
<b>5.3</b>	Human support resources	Compliant
<b>5.4</b>	Student support	Compliant

## 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

### 6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

#### Standards

- *The joint programme is offered in accordance with legal frameworks of the relevant national higher education systems.*
- *The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement in particular covers the following issues:*
  - *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
  - *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation, including funding, sharing of costs and income, resources for mobility of staff and students*
  - *Admission and selection procedures for students*
  - *Mobility of students and teaching staff*
  - *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures*
  - *Handling of different semester periods, if existent*

### 6.2 The joint programme

#### Standards

- *The partner universities apply joint internal quality assurance processes.*
- *The joint programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating universities in the design, delivery and further development of the programme.*
- *Aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated, including a joint syllabus, language policy, as well as an account of the intended added value of the programme.*
- *Study counselling and mobility plans are efficient and take into account the needs of different kinds of students.*

### 6.3 Added value of the joint programme

#### Standards

*The joint programme leads to the following added values:*

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*

- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*
- *Increases highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market.*
- *Increases European and non-European students' interest in the educational programme.*
- *Increases competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system.*
- *Increases the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs.*
- *Contributes to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional.*

### Findings

In the development of the joint e-learning programme between UCY and CUT, it was observed that CUT is taking a leading role in the DL component of the collaboration. This decision was grounded in the fact that CUT has a more mature infrastructure and a broader array of resources dedicated to DL compared to UCY. The EEC believes this arrangement is a good approach that optimises DL resource utilisation while avoiding potential administrative and technical issues that can arise from students accessing resources across two different systems.

### Strengths

The partner Institutions have agreed on the terms of a collaboration as discussed in detail in the document entitled «Σύμφωνο Συνεργασίας». The agreements cover all the important aspects of the joint venture covering the collaboration framework, coordination, administration, graduation etc. The EEC believes that such an agreement brings sufficient clarity to the way that the proposed programme will run.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

The EEC suggests thinking beyond the formalities and contract agreements to make sure the staff enacts the collaboration in terms of building a community of professors related to the programme as well as to the e-learning ecosystem. Such is especially relevant because of the fact that the DSI-programme aims to venture partly into unknown academic territories as a trans-disciplinary educational programme. Building a joint knowledge base and a shared frame of reference will support the development of a proper discourse for the emerging field of Design for Social Innovation.

**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	Compliant
6.2	The joint programme	Compliant
6.3	Added value of the joint programme	Compliant

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

As members of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC), we have conducted a thorough evaluation of the proposed joint master's programme offered by the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology. Our assessment has enabled us to identify key components that can potentially contribute to the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the programme. Our evaluation also brings to light specific areas requiring improvements and refinements. It is our belief that by addressing these areas, the programme teams at both institutions can substantially enhance the quality and coherence of their offerings. Such improvements will not only bolster the programmes' overall standards but also establish a unique selling point that distinguishes them in the market. The EEC's recommendations are grounded in established best practices, aimed at enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of the proposed joint programme. We hope that these suggestions will serve as a valuable resource for both the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology, assisting the programme team in achieving the ambitious goals set.

If there are any queries with regards to the points raised in this report the EEC remains at the disposal of the Agency and will be more than happy to provide further information.

## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Frido Smulders	
Savvas Papagiannidis	
Martin Knobel	
Santi Caballe Llobet	
Alexandros Evgeniou	

**Date:** 13/12/2023