

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 3 February 2023

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Open University of Cyprus
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Faculty of Economics
and Management
- **Department/ Sector:** N/A
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό πρόγραμμα σπουδών στην ΠΟΙΝΙΚΗ
ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ

In English:

Master Degree Programme in Criminal Justice

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**
In Greek: 1. Σύγχρονο Έγκλημα και Διαφθορά, 2. Αστυνομική
Διοίκηση και Ηγεσία
In English: 1. Contemporary Crime and Corruption;
2. Police Administration and Leadership



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

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Prof. Pashiardis (Rector), Erato Ionna Sarri and Prof. Tsadiras (Programme's Academic Coordinator, Associate Professor of Law at the OUC) gave a brief overview of the OUC. Mr. Pashiardis stressed that the OUC is not only a teaching university, but also a research university. The teaching staff contains a very small number of permanent professors (around 30; 1-2 in each specialization), who have a rather low teaching load, but a high administrative-coordinating load. The teaching is done mostly by around 250 adjunct tutors, most holding a Ph.D. The teaching is almost fully online; there is an expectation to move to online exams. Around 50% students are from Greece; the Greek language is legally required for undergraduate studies. The OUC is predominantly oriented toward post-graduate studies.

Prof. Tsadiras named as the #1 of the four "Mission Statements" of the OUC to "Increase employability". The people who enrol for the programmes offered by the OUC seem in the most part in search of improving their chances of rising in their respective careers rather than their knowledge per se or finding a first job. This seems to be the case specially with the programme we are supposed to evaluate.

The onsite visit included most of those who have been engaged in tutoring allied courses, administrative/library staff, and a student representative. All were very thoughtful and gave insightful commentary and realistic analysis of the problems facing the institution and the courses. They had ample opportunity to develop their arguments and were not cut off from expressing them. These are set out in the programme (07.14.299.020), with the exception of the live class (which could not take place because this is a prospective programme of study).



B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Michael Levi	Professor of Criminology	Cardiff University
Luis Greco	Professor of Criminal Law	Humboldt University Berlin
Wouter Vandenhole	Professor of Human Rights Law	University of Antwerp
Santiago Caballe	Professor of Learning Engineering	Open University of Catalonia
Panayiotis Antoniadis	Student Representative	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *What is the procedure for quality assurance of the programme and who is involved?*
- *Who is involved in the study programme's design and development (launching, changing, internal evaluation) and what is taken into account (strategies, the needs of society, etc.)?*
- *How/to what extent are students themselves involved in the development of the content of their studies?*
- *Please evaluate a) whether the study programme remains current and consistent with developments in society (labour market, digital technologies, etc.), and b) whether the content and objectives of the study programme are in accordance with each other?*
- *Do the content and the delivery of the programme correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How is coherence of the study programme ensured, i.e., logical sequence and coherence of courses? How are substantial overlaps between courses avoided? How is it ensured that the teaching staff is aware of the content and outputs of their colleagues' work within the same study programme?*
- *How does the study programme support development of the learners' general competencies (including digital literacy, foreign language skills, entrepreneurship, communication and teamwork skills)?*
- *What are the scope and objectives of the foundation courses in the study programme (where appropriate)? What are the pass rates?*
- *How long does it take a student on average to graduate? Is the graduation rate for the study programme analogous to other European programmes with similar content? What is the pass rate per course/semester?*
- ***How is it ensured that the actual student workload is in accordance with the workload expressed by ECTS?***
- *What are the opportunities for international students to participate in the study programme (courses/modules taught in a foreign language)?*
- *Is information related to the programme of study publicly available?*
- *How is the HEI evaluating the success of its graduates in the labor market? What is the feedback from graduates of the study programme on their employment and/or continuation of studies?*
- *Have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*
- *What are the reasons for dropping out (voluntary withdrawal)? What has been done to reduce the number of such students?*

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.

The programme, which was designed mainly by Prof. Constantinou (Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Cyprus), an Adjunct Professor of the OUC, has what are described as two concentrations (or pathways): Contemporary Crime and Corruption / Police Administration and Leadership. It is designed for at least 18 months (maximum: 6 years) and consists of 90 ECTS. There are seven compulsory modules (10 ECTS each), three of which are supposed to be taken in the first six months, common to both concentrations; and a master's thesis (20 ECTS), which is only optional, since a student may instead take two (out of three possible) elective courses. There is a tuition fee of 5400 Euros.

The programme has a strong criminological orientation; it is only secondarily legal in orientation.

Strengths

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

The course aims to provide for two areas of study not currently available in Cyprus at master's level, tailored to the needs and expressed demands of the police, prosecutors and other criminal justice personnel. Given the history of Cyprus evaluations by international bodies – GRECO, MoneyVal, and UNCAC – there plainly is a need for better locally available education on contemporary forms of crime and responses to them. The envisioned core *teaching* member of staff – Dr. Angelos Constantinou - was enthusiastic and cogent in his explanation for what was planned. There are no particular observable good practices etc., because the programme has not yet commenced.

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 degree title is Criminal Justice, but a specialist consideration of one concentration – contemporary crime and corruption - is only in the second section when the pathways diverge. Cybercrime and economic crimes in fact may not require corruption, and this should be emphasised more in the teaching. Furthermore, only some components of them relate to organised crime in the conventional sense. At several points, money laundering is mentioned, but there does not appear to be any sustained consideration of this: an area where reasonably or not, Cyprus and other advanced economies have been criticised in international evaluations. The EEC recommends that either the text or the course content be changed to be consistent. Also absent are discussions of problems in the trial process, sentencing and asset recovery/forfeiture. This would help to give a more developed understanding of criminal justice as a loose-

coupled system or structure. This might happen earlier on in the course, as police leaders also need a better contextual understanding of how their work interacts with other components.

There were significant deficiencies in the bibliographies for many proposed courses, which need to be updated and also refined to a realistic level. In the comparative components, for both concentrations, greater consideration should be given to European countries other than the UK and France, to see what relevant lessons can be learned, both positive and negative. (There are now handbooks of comparative criminal justice and other literature available which are less exclusively UK/US oriented.) More critical literature now available on international evaluations, on corruption and on policing would aid in accomplishing the stated course objectives of giving a comprehensive and reflective understanding of criminal justice.

The EEC draws attention to a further issue: the possibility of obtaining a master's degree without writing a thesis. As explained above, the programme gives the student the option of visiting two optional courses (10 ECTS each) instead of delivering a thesis. The EEC sees this is a problem, for at least three reasons of principle. First, the act of writing a thesis develops skills of structured, disciplined, independent working and thinking, which will simply not be activated if one does not take up the task; these skills are not only important for those who wish to move on to a Ph.D., but are expected to exist in those who sport higher academic titles. Second, writing a thesis, even one with 20 ECTS = 15.000 to 20.000 words, is much more difficult than the given alternative, attending to two courses (even if one has to deliver an assignment of 3.000 words); students have an easy pass around the thesis, so this is a disincentive to try it. Third, the EEC fears a devaluation of the master's title, if it is granted in the same way for students who do and for those who do not deliver a thesis. The EEC has an understanding that master's degrees should, in principle, be granted dependent on a thesis, while degrees that do not depend on one should be called something else, a postgraduate diploma, a specialization, a certificate.

At the same time, the EEC recognizes the pragmatic reasons for the programme's designers for their decision. In their view, they have to adjust to the needs and to the realistic possibilities of their main "clientele", which is made up of part-time students and practically oriented police officers. A compulsory thesis might make the whole programme far too demanding and therefore unattractive. The EEC is aware that even outside Cyprus, there exist master's degrees without a thesis requirement.

For the EEC, the situation calls for a trade-off, envisaging solutions that could have at least strived to accommodate the aforementioned principled reasons. One could concede that the first one is somewhat (though by no means fully) compensated by the fact that students have to write a 3.000 word assignment for each of the nine courses; the compensation remains though incomplete, since writing a large essay is something qualitatively different than writing a batch of small ones. The second and the third one, on the other hand, could have been better addressed in the structure of the programme. One could have tried to create some balance, instead of giving an easy and a difficult path, which lead both to the exact same place. This balance could have been, even though not fully attained, at least ameliorated if, for instance, the programme granted 30 ECTS for a thesis (allowing a student in this way to “skip” not only two, but three courses; the flipside would be the obligation to write an even larger thesis), or if the different paths lead to different academic titles.

The EEC does not rule out that its assessment might weigh too much on the principled side. It stresses that it has no intention to bar the programme. However, these remain issues to be kept in mind, especially for the future re-evaluations. These should specially take into account what percentage of students actually write the thesis. If this percentage is very small, this means that the possibility of a thesis is in reality playing the role of an alibi, functioning to legitimize a title which is earned almost exclusively with no thesis at all.

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	Not applicable
1.4	Information management	Not applicable

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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

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.

The nature of the programme is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular programme of study. The university's quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as EDEN and EADTU. Following these accreditations, OUC guarantees quality assurance of technology-enhanced learning while fostering innovation and continuous improvement in line with the principles, recommendations and best practices of the European community of e-learning.

The University's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation (eClass) with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through Blackboard Collaborate) as well as asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and the teaching 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 competencies and skills, such as leadership and critical thinking, was explained but not evidenced in the specific assessment procedures during the meetings.

Each course has an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between instructors and students through live teleconferences, which are recorded for further reuse.

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 those facing special needs. In addition, in-class collaborative activities among students are promoted during the teleconferences, even though the design and procedure of these activities were not detailed during the visit.

Formative assessment of the courses is based on two submitted mid-term assignments with the provision of personalised feedback weighing 30% of the final grade, while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting to 60% of the final grade. The assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of interactive activities weighing 10% of the final grade. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-assess student knowledge and skills of the course.

Strengths

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

The EEC believes that continuously evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations, such EDEN and EADTU, is a good practice.

The EEC considers the OUC's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional/familial responsibilities and commitments and who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

The EEC would like to note that students will benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio. In line with the existing programmes, the provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions are considered best practices.

In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by in-class collaborative activities and discussions as well as the provision of assessment based on rubrics.

Finally, the provision of weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered the best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of its distance learning model, while reinforcing them when possible.

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.

While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and real-time collaboration among students might be hard to scale upwards if, in future years, the programme is expanded internationally and/or 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.

Finally, the university indicated that current final onsite exams will be moved online, though without informing when this critical and strategic change will happen and what will be the procedures and technology to support online exams at scale. In the meantime, the EEC wants to point out that current onsite exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, while online exams supported by proctoring methods cannot scale. Instead, the EEC recommends reinforcing the collaborative learning activities and formative continuous assessment through written assignments during the course, if allowed by the governing and/or legal framework.

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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the teaching staff qualified to teach in the e-learning programme of study?*
- *How are the members of the teaching staff supported with regard to the development of their teaching skills? How is feedback given to members of the teaching staff regarding their teaching results and teaching skills?*
- *How is the teaching performance assessed? How does their teaching performance affect their remuneration, evaluation and/or selection?*
- *Is teaching connected with research?*
- *Does the HEI involve visiting teaching staff from other HEIs in Cyprus and abroad?*
- *What is the number, workload, qualifications and status of the teaching staff (rank, full/part timers)?*
- *Is student evaluation conducted on the teaching staff? If yes, have the results of student feedback been analysed and taken into account, and how (e.g., when planning in-service training for the teaching staff)?*

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.

Teaching staff is composed of two categories: those who actually teach, and the programme coordinator, who is a member of the permanent staff. Those who will actually teach will be temporary adjunct faculty (tutors) (AFT); the programme coordinator is a member of the permanent staff at the Faculty of Economics and Management. The programme coordinator is an expert in European Union (administrative) law. The

core expertise on criminal justice and police administration is to be found in the Academic Council, which consists of four members: in addition to the programme coordinator, the academic coordinator of the bachelor in police studies at the OUC, an assistant visiting professor of criminology at the University of Cyprus, and a senior member of Cyprus Police Headquarters.

AFT will be hired in accordance with applicable regulations. They are encouraged – *ceteris paribus* – to hold a PhD and should have relevant research (including publications) and teaching (including in distance learning) experience.

No adjunct staff members have been hired yet, since the programme has not yet started, but a number of people have already been approached to prepare a detailed study guide for each of the Thematic Units (TU) envisaged.

The university has a distance learning unit called LEMM that provides technical training and support of distance learning to the faculty members, who can participate in training programs to increase their skills to conduct quality online teaching. From documentation and the meeting it was not clear if these training programs are certified in terms of professional development relevant to distance learning.

A maximum of 30 students per AFT is the university norm.

Teaching staff are assessed by the students. Student assessments are shared with the tutors in order to allow them to improve when needed.

Strengths

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

There are a number of strengths:

1. The Academic Council is composed of academics and practitioners who are broadly familiar with the subject
2. In principle, teaching staff must hold a PhD
3. The tutor-student ratio is fair
4. Tutors will be assigned a teaching unit based on their particular area of expertise
5. Tutors will receive appropriate training in online teaching

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.

There are also three challenges that require further consideration:

1. The only member of permanent staff in the programme is the academic coordinator. All other staff will be on short-term (3 year) contracts, and part time (in principle only for one thematic unit). That holds considerable risks for programme coherence, familiarity of staff with procedures and regulations, and ability for following up on students' overall progression closely enough. It may also impact negatively on staff availability for master thesis supervision.
2. The academic coordinator is not an expert in the field of criminal justice and police management studies. Whereas the composition of the Academic Council ensures the presence of relevant expertise, it does not fully compensate for the inherent weakness of not having an expert in the field as academic coordinator.
3. A relevant research track record is required for being hired, but it is not clear whether and how much time is allocated to research (if any) in the tutors' job description. A comparison between teaching hours and time allocated to research is therefore difficult to make, nor is it clear to what extent teaching will be based on their own and up-to-date research.

The EEC therefore strongly recommends reconsideration of the staffing policy. In its view, the academic coordinator should be a permanent member of staff, and should be involved in part of the teaching themselves. It may improve the quality of the programme and student satisfaction to have a core group of staff teaching perhaps more than one course rather than having a larger group of different tutors for each teaching unit. The EEC encourages the OUC (but does not require it) to provide for research time for staff members, so that the programme can be truly research-based, in line with the view that teaching should be research-based. Timely recruitment would assist staff (and students) in the timely preparation of course material and bibliography.

The EEC recommends that contingency plans be made and implemented for continuity in assistance to students in the event that Adjunct Tutors leave/has health or maternity absences and are not replaced.

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	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Partially compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Partially 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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

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.

The University's eClass platform based on Moodle provides a wide range of learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information from the student (lower grades, poor participation, undelivered activities, etc.). However, it was not clear the extent to which the Faculty staff currently use this information to support their students on a daily basis.

The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio and student feedback is very positive.

The EEC does not comment on other components, since this is standard practice in the OUC.

Strengths

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

To facilitate access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the OUC provides opportunities for fee reductions, including for students with special needs.

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 notes that at the university level, the dropout rate from registration and graduation is around 20%, partly because people initially do multiple courses while they decide which ones to continue with. The level of dropout is broadly in line with other distance learning institutions. However, there is scope for improvement, and thus the OUC should have a rigorous process for data collection on the dropout rate year on year while providing measures to mitigate it.

In line with other programmes, student feedback is recommended to be collected by questionnaires at module end and measures for improvement to be considered as well as the effectiveness of these measures to be assessed.

Should it be feasible and within budgetary reach, more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI and specifically Machine Learning are encouraged to be used to monitor and predict student performance and dropout, in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures.

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	Not applicable

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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*

- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

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.

The University's DL unit (LEMM) 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 assessments in accordance with international standards.

The DL unit also is stated to provide guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establish the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. They should be a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of the distance learning courses throughout the University's Faculties.

The OUC has Internal Regulations for Persons with Disabilities that sets out the rights of people with disabilities, covering those with visual, hearing, motor, mental and intellectual disabilities as well as speech impairment, and the level of support that the university offers to ensure that these rights can be fulfilled. As noted earlier, there are also further provisions for students from certain backgrounds with tuition fee reductions.

The OUC has an agreement with many academic libraries in Greece, in addition to a number in Cyprus, to provide its students with access to digital resources and continues to expand on its inter-library loan services. The EEC was impressed by the e-library provision.

Strengths

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

Based on the projected relatively small cohort, the level of support offered to students will be very good and can be provided on almost an individual level. There are also specific provisions in place to ensure a high level of support, including contracts for Adjunct staff that specify the timeframe within

which students can expect to receive a reply to their inquiries/emails (within 48h), which in many ways is above the common standard across Europe.

The University provides very detailed weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week. The level of detail in the Study Guides offered is above the standard across HEIs in Cyprus.

The DL 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.

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 notes that there are specific regulations in relation to students misbehaving, including in relation to plagiarism or academic misconduct. To further facilitate the development of supportive communities of students, the EEC encourages further development of rules, and communicating them clearly to students, to prevent online (as well as offline) bullying and harassment as well as to educate students about privacy rights in the online environment.

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	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Not applicable
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

This is an evaluation of the master's programme in the Greek language for a Greek-speaking audience. The programme strives to meet the needs of local and regional personnel. The EEC broadly approves that this programme should go ahead and foresees strong benefits from modifications mentioned in relation to clearer and more contemporary bibliographies, a broader range of national references, and improvements to the recruitment and retention practices for teaching staff. The EEC commends the online provisions, but notes that care must be taken in the event that online examinations are provided. It suggests that further thought be given to the provision of a master's title without a thesis requirement.

The EEC hopes that this feedback may guide future growth and help to secure the success of the programme. If the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education requires any clarification on the report, the EEC is available to assist. Finally, the EEC would like to express its gratitude to the CYQAA coordinator for her management of the evaluation process.



D. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Michael Levi	
Luis Greco	
Wouter Vandenhole	
Santiago Caballe	
Panayiotis Antoniadis	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 3 February 2023