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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
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External Evaluation Report

(Joint - E-learning program of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Open University of Cyprus
- **Collaborative Institution(s):** Hellenic Open University
- **Town:** Nicosia / Patras
- **School/Faculty:** Faculty of Economics and Management & Faculty of Social Sciences
- **Program of study:**

  Joint Postgraduate Programme in

  "Enterprise Risk Management" in English

  (2 years, 120 ECTS)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **program's status:** New Program of Study

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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

In preparation of the virtual onsite visit, the EEC received the Application for Evaluation - Accreditation (document 200.1) as compiled by the program. In addition, EEC members were given access to a large number of additional documents. These include full CVs of all faculty members involved, course manuals of all courses in the program, samples of exams, assignments and master theses, internal regulations, and documents related to the cooperation between the Open University of Cyprus and the Hellenic Open University. Most relevant documentation was delivered timely before the evaluation. In addition, EEC members were also able to watch recordings of some teaching activities.

Members of the committee individually read through the main documents that were sent to them. One week before the onsite visit, the full committee met with a representative of CYQAA to discuss the objectives of the external evaluation, the main criteria, the schedule of the site visit and some practical matters. The committee members also met briefly before the site visit to discuss its first impressions and some key points of attention. A full day virtual/distance site visit was conducted via Zoom on 22 February 2022. The OUC staff and students came prepared and the atmosphere was positive, open, and constructive. The committee wishes to express its gratitude to all people involved for making the documentation available, as well as for their willingness and flexibility to be available during the site visit.

In addition to the more global material provided in advance, the on-site presentations and discussions offered the EEC some deeper and more concrete insights into the faculty and the program to be evaluated. The program under evaluation is the Master in Enterprise Risk Management, which is a new program, although it has been running under a different status and in a different format (with annual modules) since 2016. Some of the documentation and information provided to the EEC related to the old program. This, obviously, includes the feedback received from student representatives that are currently enrolled, and the samples of the master theses. With this in mind, the EEC was under the impression that the new program will not be fundamentally different from the existing one, in terms of content, learning goals, and academic staff involved.

Overall, the EEC did not identify any fundamental problems with the application, but there are definitely some challenges and points of improvement.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Charalampos Glymakopoulos	Student member	University of Cyprus
Axel Dreher	Member, Professor	Heidelberg University
Hans Hummel	Member and DL expert, Professor	Open university Netherlands
Peter Norman Sørensen	Member, Professor	University of Copenhagen
Marno Verbeek	Chair, Professor	Erasmus University Rotterdam

1. Study program and study program's design and development

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

Sub-areas

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

Findings

The Enterprise Risk Management program is a two-year program that can be followed by full-time or part-time students (distance learning). It consists of eight semester-long courses and a master thesis (worth 40 ECTS). The focus of the program is more diverse than its name suggests. There is attention for both financial and entrepreneurial risks in a large variety of contexts (from banking to tourism), and it covers both risk management and crisis management, which seem to be the two pillars from the second year onwards. Whereas much of the provided documentation suggests the program is academic and research-oriented, the site visit clarified that it had a strong professional focus. Nevertheless, the number of industry-focused components and the involvement of industry partners in the program is limited.

The University Quality Assurance System seems to follow the external regulations. There is a University Internal Quality Assurance Committee in which the Vice Rector, some faculty members, and some students participate. With this, the system is in place to internally monitor the quality on a regular basis, on aspects such as program standards, performance of teaching staff, and student learning experiences. Students have the opportunity to give feedback on both the program, courses and tutors. This feedback is taken into account, e.g. in program development and staff recruitment. There is no evidence that external stakeholders, such as potential employers, are involved in the design of the program or its components. Surveys among former students are planned but do not appear to have been implemented yet.

The program of study is designed with some overall program objectives. Besides 'deepening of knowledge of risk management' (as central learning objective according to the program presentation provided), the application claims ample room for 'application' (build predictive models, apply risk assessment techniques) and 'evaluation' (implementation of decision making *in society*, identifying learning needs *of organizations*) as learning objectives. However, these types of objectives do not fully become reflected in the set-up and materialized in the learning outcomes of the program (see also criterium 2).

The program has a clear structure, with eight compulsory courses of 10 ECTS each and a concluding thesis of 40 ECTS. It is clearly described which courses need to be completed before a next one can be started, or the thesis. There are no electives, tracks or optional components in the program. That is, all students follow

exactly the same program, albeit - to some extent - at their own pace. The current expectation is that four staff members will share responsibility for teaching the eight courses as well as most of the thesis supervision. Most of these staff members are hired as Adjunct Faculty. The hiring process for Adjunct Faculty has well-defined minimum criteria, but it is not clear how widely (and internationally) recruiting takes place. It is difficult to judge to what extent the Adjunct Faculty contracts, in combination with other duties, allow sufficient time to fulfill all expectations related to the program, including the desire to engage in research projects.

The EEC noticed some lack of self-reflection in the application; they internally had scored the program on most aspects as good to excellent (4-5 scores). According to these internal scores, there is most room for improvement on the areas of: a. quantity and quality of staff; and b. involvement of staff and students in research (networks). The committee agrees that these are important points of improvement.

There seems no mechanism in place that allows monitoring whether the actual workload of the courses and thesis matches those expressed by ECTS. From the outset, the allocated workloads in ECTS seem to be somewhat high. For example, not many MSc programs in Europe feature a written thesis worth 40 ECTS. Nevertheless, students experience their workloads as heavy, and find it hard to keep up with the optimal study tempo (with weekly activities, assignments and meetings). Conditionally on there being no other entry requirement than a bachelor's degree from any field, the course program is ambitious. It can and should not be expected though, that students are able to complete the program in two years in combination with a full-time job. Effectively, most students appear to study part-time and take between three to six years to graduate.

The OUC collects information about the profiles of the students in the program, their progress, drop out rates, etcetera, but not all information was readily available to the EEC, and it also appeared that this information was not systematically shared with the teachers in the program. After the start of the program (2015/2016) about 50 students have graduated (so with a yearly average of about 10 students). The dropout rate (between 50-60% at first sight) could - as appeared during the Q&A sessions - largely be explained by a large group of non-starters (those registering but not starting or dropping out in the first month). Respondents did not have ideas on what could be reasons for students to drop out.

The application file (pages 98-99) suggests that the new program will eventually enroll approximately 100 *new* students per year. This expectation may be too optimistic. At the same time, having such a large number of students would create serious challenges for the current organization of the program with only four dedicated teachers. In the discussion, it became clear that the program coordinator and tutors also did not consider this number as realistic, and rather interpreted it as 100 students in total.

Although the program is fully taught in English and attracts some foreign students (6%), the vast majority (94%) still are Greek speaking students from Cyprus or Greece. To further enhance the international inflow of students, the program will need to communicate better how it stands out from the competition, and what its competitive advantages are. Apart from the exams, all course activities are online or virtual, so

geographical restrictions are less binding. This creates an opportunity to attract more international students that are interested in the holistic view and alternative perspectives on risk management and crisis management that the program provides.

Strengths

- During the site visit we noticed an open, constructive and friendly climate where every staff member felt free to speak out.
- The topic of the program appears to be rather unique, and has a clear appeal to students. Current students stated they could not encounter many similar programs in distance learning.
- The ambition for more research-informed teaching was evident, but still 'under construction'.
- The faculty members we talked to showed a strong commitment and dedication to the program, and were very willing to dedicate parts of their weekends and evenings to serve the students. Each of the key faculty members comes across as highly motivated to present demanding academic methods and ideas for the enrolled students. Some of them even provided their private phone numbers to the students, so that students could contact them directly in case of questions.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The EEC would strongly recommend considering ways to increase the involvement of tenured teaching-research staff. The EEC acknowledges there are serious risks involved, but the future is built with people. If the University and Faculty are serious about improving the University's visibility and reputation, and making the University more attractive in the future recruitment of staff and students, the Faculty should have the resources and room to maneuver, coherent with its role and responsibilities.
- In order to optimize the content of the teaching, it would seem useful to obtain systematic feedback from employers of the candidates. One idea is to set up a panel of likely employers who can advise on these matters. Likewise, input from alumni could be valuable to improve the program and this could also lead to more involvement from the industry in specific components of the programme (e.g. data-driven research projects, real-life cases, guest lectures, etcetera).
- The EEC sees this program as primarily oriented towards professionals, who work full time while studying. Accordingly, the program may benefit from a better positioning as a (post-experience) professional master, and communicate this more explicitly, also to potential students. A more transparent description of the program might also reduce dropout rates, particularly "non-starters" that leave the program after a few weeks.
- Textbooks about existing theories are still the main sources of teaching content. Courses could benefit (more) from the use of research data and case studies, and from immersing students in the process of knowledge and theory construction, e.g. through projects staff are involved in (also beyond the UOC in international collaborations). This is a concern raised by the EEC members since the program claims to be of academic nature and to be research-based. In addition, more effort could be made to cooperate with industry partners, attract guest lecturers from practice, work with

real-life cases, etcetera. This could better prepare the students for the demands of future work environments. The case studies presented (on request of the EEC) did not always reflect the full complexity of the professional context the graduates are getting (better) prepared for. Here the digital learning environments present some challenges, but may also confer advantages when used more creatively.

- We recommend to consider if the relevant amount of work required and ECTS given for each course unit should be the same ('one size fits all'), independent of content. From an administrative perspective we understand the practicality, but from the academic perspective we feel there could be more variety in needs, and more mutual alignment between courses. This might also introduce more options for the students with the same amount of work for the teachers.
- All students have to take a predefined set of courses. For a university-based master program, this seems highly unusual. After a set of basic courses, students would benefit from being allowed to participate in elective courses. Supply of courses could be increased by partnering with other online teaching institutions.
- There is a big discrepancy between intended research time (33%) and funding received for research (5%) within UOC, and we recommend bridging the gap by finding ways of encouraging the staff to do more research together within UOC. Currently, it is insufficiently clear that there are enough opportunities and time to have substantive research in the areas of the program. We also encourage creating more opportunities for students to be involved in their supervisor's research.
- In this 2-year masters program open to any kind of bachelor degree, it is very important to focus every bit of teaching towards the overall desired learning outcomes. We understand that it is a deliberate strategy to differentiate this program from many programs that emphasize risk in financial settings, and hence, this material has very little space in the program. Yet, it would seem natural to equip students with a little more knowledge about the main insights from this domain. A concrete suggestion is to attempt a modification of course "ERM511 Principles of Economics Risk Management." It is well acknowledged that students benefit from this introduction to decision making under constraints, and to the actions of participants in competitive and strategic market settings. But it should be noted that the many keywords in the study guide for this course never mention the word "risk." It might be useful to confer some general insights on the relevance and irrelevance of trading risk through markets. This could be a relatively small modification, perhaps merely replacing one of the currently provided lectures with new material.

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant

1.3	Public information	Partially compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

Findings

The teaching methodology in the program is rather conventional and leans on (virtual) class lectures with additional (all provided online) textbooks, teaching materials and assignments. According to the application received, the pedagogical model provides a generic setup of 8 courses of 10 ECTS (semesters 1-2), and a semester with a thesis of 40 ECTS (semester 3), so total study load of 120 ECTS with all materials and teaching delivered in English. This is the intended setup for the new program; during our Q&A on the day of the site visit it became evident that the program had ran from its launch in 2015 with just 4 one-year courses of 20 ECTS (ERM501, 502, 503, 504) that are now each being split up in two (e.g. ERM511 and ERM 521). All courses more or less have the same structure. This allows for easy organization and administrative support.

Learning in courses appears not that student-centered or activating as could or should be. Students follow a rather pre-set setup of learning units with limited interaction (both with learning material and with their peers or tutors). Where the application mentions (p. 125) 'through interactive learning methods', the EEC found much room for adding more real interactivity in real life contexts. There are no practical training components in the program. There was some proof of more interactivity during the Q&A with the teachers, for instance a case study provided in ERM611: Crisis Management. Students confirmed that this (isolated) experience had indeed been extra motivating and activating for them.

Where teaching staff clearly defines textbooks and other materials to be studied, they are reluctant to 'pre-script' more interactive learning because this would impose on the autonomy of future teachers. This stands the risk effective delivery becomes dependent on the (qualities and knowledge) of the individual teacher and may not be reproduced by other/new teachers; a real risk since the current group of four developers/teachers might withdraw from teaching when new staff arrives.

According to the program presentation, the emphasis is on development of (deeper) knowledge of risk management. Skills development and practical training with regard to the development of skills (in authentic contexts) play a relatively minor role. The claims in the program application for application and evaluation in real life contexts were not fully reflected in the setup and learning outcomes of the program. For instance, the Dublin descriptor for Application skills at the Master level (European Quality Framework for learning outcomes) states that students should demonstrate to be "able to apply knowledge, insight and problem-solving skills in *new* or *unknown circumstances* within a *broader (multi-disciplinary) context* related to the field of expertise" (i.e., ERM), and be "able to integrate knowledge and deal with *complex* matter." The italic parts distinguish the Master level from the Bachelor level, and the committee did not find sufficient evidence-based practice, apart from some good master theses that obtained data from real life contexts.

Students have to do written assignments and hand in results. Assessment is based on these assignments, on active participation, and on a final exam. Procedures are clear. There is sufficient interaction between the student and the teacher in a course. Feedback given to students seems adequate, although there is some criticism on the availability of and timely feedback from teachers, and some students complained about the standardized nature of the feedback. Students do not seem to be involved in research, which might in part be explained by the comparably weak research of the teaching staff.

The lack of focus on students with specific backgrounds makes it very difficult to involve students at the frontier of research. Still, this seems to be what is expected from students in their MSc theses. It is not entirely clear how the course material would bring students to such a level. This suspicion finds support in the substantially varying quality of the theses submitted with the program evaluation material - most likely, students' previous education is the main driver of thesis quality. Teachers' expectations about the MSc. theses are not laid out in an entirely transparent way. No other information about the methodology of supervision and evaluation criteria is available than a short Thesis guide. The rubrics for 'scientific assignments' in courses and dissertation research are procedural and do not contain research quality criteria (research design, operational research questions, hypotheses, APA criteria for writing and layout, etcetera).

We received a more elaborate presentation of ERM513 (Risk management) as a representative course. Although very neatly structured in eClass, there is a rather linear order to be followed by students (look at various texts, links and videos; write assignments; a.o.). In other courses, interaction seems more limited, or was not made clear from the study guides or teachers. Questions that come up are, for example: how

are techniques applied on problems (ERM511)? How are predictive analytics applied in real life contexts (ERM522)?

The eClass platform appears to do well for offering content online, monitoring student progress and having virtual group meetings or lectures. For more collaborative activity it is less often used. Some students mentioned this does not work well, and they felt 'more comfortable' using other platforms (Skype, Whatsapp). The risk here is that some communication and progress cannot be traced in the eClass platform.

Strengths

- The EEC appreciated meeting an enthusiastic Academic Director and teaching staff.
- The program offered in English in the unique field of enterprise risk management, including crisis management, attracts students, some even from abroad.
- At least an ambition for more research-informed teaching was evident.
- Flexibility and organization of the distance learning program attracts (working) students, and makes them get back for other programs.
- The EEC found good coverage of some important and timely topics in risk management.
- Good teacher-student relationships were reported by both teachers and students that were present. It was also mentioned by students that this was teacher-dependent, so not all teachers may not always timely address concerns or provide concrete feedback for instance.
- Exams can be taken at the campuses of the two involved universities, but also elsewhere, such as in embassies. This facilitates participating in the program without the need to travel long distances.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The courses and master thesis are rather 'stand alone' elements. It is not clear how they build upon each other nor how all required competence areas of the European Quality Framework (Dublin descriptors) are distributed over the courses. However, during the site visit the committee heard intentions and ideas to align courses and include missing competences and introduce more innovative instruction formats.
- The study guides reflect some evidence of educational activities that encourage students' active participation in (modeled) professional practice (e.g. discussion of case studies from the past). There is a need for more analysis of applications in the ERM context, and for actual implementation of the various components of the complex realities of risk and crisis management.
- We recommend considering more diversity in final course assessments. Each course is now completed with a final exam that the students have to take (physically under non-Covid circumstances) at approved examination centers. Alternatives could be the design of interventions, games, lesson plans, etcetera, and asking for additional proof in the form of, for example, videos, portfolios, results of questionnaires.
- Incorporate current research in course material on an intensified level.

- Include more opportunities for students to take an active role in knowledge construction.
- Include hands-on experience where applicable.
- Strengthen teaching and practice interconnections at least in some suitable courses.
- Strengthen relationships with the educational professions and use students' access to educational settings for mutual data collection and professional development.
- Further opportunities for international experiences for the distance learners should be explored.
- There is a need to signal more clearly to students and tutor-supervisors how the thesis work is organized, and what the ultimate goals are. The submitted sample of theses exhibits heterogeneity in form and content. The program should strive for a good balance among students' needs to address problems that are familiar from their own professional background with the more academic objective of a university education to involve research. The course-responsible faculty should further help students to identify some interesting research areas that connect to the problems they have in mind.
- The course outlines all mention understanding and awareness of concepts (knowledge) as main learning objectives. There is some mention of evaluation and discussion activities, but not operationalized how these could contribute to problem-solving or decision-making skills and attitudes. The staff has confirmed this indeed is what they intend to achieve.

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

Findings

The teaching staff seemed to be quite proper for the particular program. After the conversation that the EEC had with them, it is clear that all of them are qualified enough for their teaching tasks. Candidates for adjunct roles are assessed "on their distance teaching expertise and ability to use state-of-the-art technology", and (mandatory) workshops are offered on e-didactics to keep them up-to-speed. Effectively, adjunct faculty is mainly hired for teaching, and continuous contracts require positive evaluations in previous courses. As such, teachers seem incentivized to aim at student satisfaction. Whereas research is appreciated by the institution, there are little opportunities and incentives for this within the structure of the adjunct contract.

What has not been entirely clear to us is how they search for new academics to fill empty positions, what is the typical type of interview they apply for or how they evaluate them in order to decide whether they are qualified to get hired. Most teaching staff do not publish on the scientific frontier and seem to be from the geographic areas of the involved institutions. Given the online nature of the program a more international adjunct staff seems desirable, in particular given the articulated desire to internationalize the universities and the program. This might also allow the inclusion of teachers with a stronger scholarly background. The involvement of at least some permanent staff from both universities would strengthen the collaborative character and reduce potential fluctuations in how modules are taught.

There are central units that staff do not seem to sufficiently benefit from. For the content there is the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Unit at HOU (web page provided 'under construction' or in Greek). For educational innovation there is the LEMM (Laboratory for Educational MultiMedia) at OUC of which we received a presentation.

Strengths

- The subject areas are sufficiently covered by contracting part-time tutors (adjunct staff) with a workload of about half a day a week. All teaching staff are PhD holders, a degree mostly obtained abroad.
- Some new faculty positions for the next period will probably be approved, especially at the assistant professor level. This is warmly encouraged by the EEC. The synergy and stability (in case of unforeseen situations) of the Faculty is improved by having enough permanent expertise.

- The establishment of the Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology which aims to improve distance learning experience in OUC.
- The supporting staff enables mandatory professional development for teachers, especially in the area of distance education technologies. In case tutors fail this course, temporary contracts are not renewed. Incentives for adjunct faculty to perform well in teaching are clear and explicit.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Some, but not all, teachers contribute to the knowledge base in their domain of expertise and use cases from their own professional or academic experience in their teaching. Some courses offer opportunities for students to contribute to the research of the teacher. Hence, the alignment of teaching and learning with research could be strengthened. Changing this means that the structure of the academic staff needs to be reconsidered.
- The research output for about half of the academic staff that teach in the program is not published in international peer-reviewed journals. The OUC does not appear to have a clear focus, or explicit incentives, to publish in journals with better impact factors or higher ratings (such as, for example, the Academic Journal Guide of the Chartered Association of Business Schools).
- The nucleus of fixed staff needs to be extended for generating research output with UOC members as principal investigators. Ideally, the number of permanent academic staff should be bigger than the number of the visiting/temporary academic staff, and come from both of the universities involved. Internal research nuclei are absent but considered necessary in the future.
- It seems most adjunct faculty are employed full time elsewhere. Teaching in the program takes time that would otherwise have been most likely devoted to research. One could explore the possibility of joint hiring faculty, where faculty reduce their time elsewhere in accordance with being employed in the program, so that more time can be devoted to research. That way, synergies between teaching and research could be strengthened.
- Professional development opportunities with respect to teaching methods, such as case studies, simulation, data-driven assignment, active learning, etc., should be provided to the teaching staff on a more regular basis, in order to make the program more practice-oriented. Now staff only receive a four month online course 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Distance Learning' at the start of their contract, and that appears to be the only mandatory collaboration and support from LEMM.
- As per innovation, there is much area for improvement, such as the participation of the University in competitions or challenges among other Universities promoting this way their own students in thinking innovatively, critically and meeting new people with new ideas helping them in their own education path and to their future career of course. Students need the opportunities to show their skills and what they can do, they need to stand out sometimes to boost their confidence.
- The teaching staff should be involved in development programs from time to time because this is something that adds more value to the whole program. One recommendation would be to stimulate teaching faculty to participate in some development programs abroad where they have

the opportunity to meet new people with different ideas and prospects. Involvement of visiting researchers who bring in expertise from their own institutions might also be useful in this regard.

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	partially 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

Findings

The program is open to students with any bachelor degree, and there do not appear to be any further selection criteria in place. Over the past years, the program has been attracting students with a BSc degree, MSc or MBA degree, and also students with practical work experience (obviously so for the part-time students). The heterogeneity of the students and lack of well-defined entry standards (apart from the BSc requirement), limits the opportunities to offer a challenging MSc program at the frontiers of enterprise risk management. For example, students with particular backgrounds (e.g. in economics) will find the material much easier to digest than others. The regulations do allow for some course exemptions in case previous courses have been successfully completed with the same content and study load. So far, according to the teaching staff, this has not occurred.

Students expressed that they could have benefitted from more help in understanding the learning platform (eClass), would have welcomed having a mentor / study advisor throughout the program, and sometimes needed a more 'human touch' (also in the application phase). Administrative and learning processes are generally well implemented and standardized, allowing learning at a distance. However, students sometimes feel these processes to be too automated and rather impersonal. Another critique heard is that live group works and teaching sessions are planned on weekends (even Sunday mornings), and interfere with private life compromises.

Strengths

- Students have full access to the online library and online learning platform e-Class, where lectures, video conferences, assignments, self-evaluations and forum (chatbot) are available, for effective communication among other students and teaching staff. Direct links to research projects appear (largely) missing.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The positioning of the program could be enhanced, and the entry requirements could be made more specific. This will enable a better learning experience and allow the program to reach a higher level. For example, the program could specify recommended (or compulsory) BSc degrees as a

prerequisite, for example, in the areas of business administration, management, economics and statistics, possibly complemented by some relevant industry experience.

- Students should have prior mentoring before entering the program most probably with an academic counselor of the University. This way some students may learn that this program is not suitable for them after all, thus reducing the (early) drop-out rates.
- The relationship between teaching staff and students is productive but could be more challenging in character.
- Students should be stimulated to become self-guided and independent innovators and/or researchers. This involves recruitment of more permanent staff with active research projects, to which students could contribute. A tenure track system would mean that there are researchers at different stages of their academic career, which is also inspiring for students in the MA and PhD programs. Such a staff is also more robust in the long run (see also criterium 3).
- A set of basic pre-courses could be taught to bring students to the same level of methodological knowledge. For example, a course in statistics could be offered to those with a bachelor degree from more unrelated fields. Otherwise, the level of teaching will be too low for some and too high for other students.

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Partially 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

Findings

The learning resources are adequate for this program, especially the use of case studies and role playing which enhance some vital abilities of the students including critical thinking, team work, thinking outside the box and applying their theories and knowledge in real scenarios like if they would have been in their real life. As per students' feedback, the access to the institution library material and online databases is unlimited, contributing this way to their overall studying experience and even more to their MSc thesis where the collection of reliable material and data is one of the first important tasks. A good range of textbooks and journal articles are readily accessible to students and staff.

Laboratory facilities, library and learning materials are all provided at a satisfactory level, and are at times used in relation with the courses for this Master of ERM. The EEC feels that the potential of learning (innovation) labs is not fully exploited in this master's program, esp. regarding the LEMM and Unit for Innovation and Entrepreneurship for this program. The same applies to the use of available software at UOC, as for instance video imaging and authoring in education (Paropto, Camtasia, Vyoud, Articulate), and interactive learning experiences (Unity, Vuforia).

The e-Class platform is functionally in good condition and a backup server is available. There is sufficient support for exchange, group work and student monitoring. The e-Class environment is potentially a Learning Management System enabled to support socio-constructivist learning, but mainly used here as an electronic blackboard to provide digitized content (syllabi, articles/books) with virtual classes with the teacher explaining content and students asking questions. Students confirm they communicate with each other about their studies, and occasionally real collaboration takes place through e-Class. There are existing examples where courses contain case-based material and/or explanatory animations/video on which students need to apply their knowledge. We did not encounter any examples of real project-based, collaborative or research-driven activities through e-Class, besides some small examples from practice. Here again, our discussions and the ideas and presentations provided by staff during the site visit have made the committee more positive in this regard.

Especially for digital learning programs, controls for fraud should be in place. This is an ongoing development of which the program is aware and takes adequate measures (they use Proctoring exams and Ephorus software for plagiarism detection in written assignments).

The pedagogical model provides a general and rather traditional setup of 8 courses (semesters 1-2), with thesis research (semester 3), but does not provide a clear description of how these components build up in order and complexity, nor how they contribute to all required competence areas of the European Quality Framework (Dublin descriptors) and levels for the program. The objectives and learning objectives presented were rather knowledge-oriented. However, during the site visit the committee became more convinced of the program's intentions and ideas to make this include other missing competences and more innovative instruction. The pro-active and receptive attitude of the Rector and some enthusiastic and more innovative approaches presented by staff made us more confident that the actual program is better than what the application presents.

Strengths

- Using the Learning Management System to provide students free library access to the most important databases is a strong point (although we did not have information on satisfaction results and usage of the library resources).
- We had the pleasure to encounter a thoughtful and accessible Rector, and some enthusiastic staff members who presented more innovative ideas (and actual examples) of how the program should address competences like critical thinking, problem solving and carrying out research, that were not contained in the application we had to review before the site visit.
- The committee feels the responsive attitude we encountered with most respondents will work well for continuous learning and improvement. To have a larger fully employed staff will help generate a collaborative workforce for enabling more effective and innovative distance learning programs in the future, especially when supported by a dedicated distance learning and research unit.
- Support to the students seems to be very good as per students' feedback. Academics are more than willing to help students when they are facing some issues in the online platform, some of their assignments or anything else.
- The overall support to the students from both academic and administrative staff seems to be very good. The students are receiving the mentoring they need regarding their assignments, their projects and anything else they need about the program. Students are looking happy with the support they get. Administrative staff also offers what is needed for making the students' experience as good as they can.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The design of the e-Learning platform is not very helpful for students that have the need to interact immediately with their professors. Students are probably feeling that they are dealing with just a computer and they receive a grade and some comments at the end of the program. The platform

may be further enhanced so that students can interact more among themselves and with their academic tutors.

- In the application we did not encounter any e-learning in the sense of dedicated interactive media designed by the faculty, that for instance supports students to apply their knowledge in a simulated professional environment. The interaction which is stated as important is therefore focusing on consuming PowerPoint slides and textual information, listening to teachers, and some occasional application tasks. During the site visit we could hear about plans to include real interactive e-learning programs where students experience content, apply knowledge in more authentic contexts.
- In respect to controlling for fraud we recommend looking for distance learning improvements, taking in account recent technologies (pattern/handwriting/iris recognition) and proctoring during exams.
- What are the competence areas (related to the QF-EHEA, Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area on the second, master level cycle of qualification, using Dublin descriptors), especially regarding communicative, critical thinking and research skills? This was not explicitly mentioned and should be clearer in the design of the program (see also the more elaborate comment about learning outcomes expected, under findings criterium 2).
- To address the concern we have for the distance learning to support the desired competencies, a real DLU should contain *more substantial and more dedicated* expertise for instructional methods and interactive e-learning, in order to design and develop a more active and experiential program, needed to achieve some of the higher order competences in higher education. Currently there are only three staff members working for LEMM, and this is not enough for a distance learning university. It appears recently new staff with more ICT and innovation affinity was contracted, but this is an ongoing process.

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

6. Eligibility *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement
6.2 The joint program
6.3 Added value of the joint program

Findings

As presented to us, the main value added of the collaboration with the Hellenic Open University (HOU) is to be able to reach a wider set of potential students. Considering that the program is offered in English, it appears to be a surprisingly effective strategy to target Greek students. As for internationalization of the program, we understand that the OUC is more active than the HOU in marketing its English-language programs in third countries. The only benefit of involving HOU seems to be in marketing a joint degree, giving access to Greek students.

Historically, the HOU was very helpful in sharing resources with the OUC when it was first founded, and this has paved the way for strong, lasting ties. But for the specific program, there does not appear to be much value added from shared resources.

The legal framework document is written in Greek, and could not be evaluated by us. From our conversation with the program representatives, we had the impression that the agreement provided sufficient guarantees for the program for the coming years (provided the program attracts a sufficient number of students).

Strengths

- Students are enrolled in both universities and receive a joint degree. That certainly adds value from the students' perspective.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The involvement of permanent faculty from both universities would strengthen the ties between the two and make the program more collaborative.

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
6.1	Legal framework and cooperation agreement	Compliant

6.2	The joint program	Compliant
6.3	Added value of the joint program	Partially compliant

C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC is thankful for the trust placed in us. The opportunities to observe and talk with the students, faculty, management and staff of the OUC have been frank and eye-opening. We have learned a lot.
The present situation is quite good, but not unproblematic. For instance, finding a way to attract good students to the program, as well as a way to keep them till graduation is essential. Likewise, finding high quality (fixed) staff that stays for longer times is essential, as well as providing them with more opportunities and conditions to grow in both research and in (more innovative and experiential) e-learning development.
The EEC encourages the program to follow up on the recommendations made in the other sections. Our most important recommendations relate to

- the positioning of the program as being a professional master,
- a stronger focus on how the program's learning goals contribute to required competence areas of the European Quality Framework (Dublin descriptors),
- an increased integration of real-life cases in courses,
- a better use of the opportunities provided by a digital learning environment, so as to enhance problem-solving skills of the students,
- allocating more permanent staff to the program so that it becomes better grounded in the participating universities,
- providing more explicit opportunities and incentives to generate research and to enrich the synergies between research and teaching,
- and, if relevant, setting more explicit entry requirements, so students can reach the same level much quicker.

We fully acknowledge we cannot imagine all the practical concerns and limitations in the local context of the university under study. Regarding future instruction (digital didactics) we should take lessons from the Corona pandemic, to find new and efficient methods and technology for distance learning and instruction.
We wish the Rector and his faculty staff much success in finding the optimal balance between increasing the potential of 'Edupreneurship' while at the same time minimizing the limitations of various 'Administrativia'.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Axel Dreher	
Hans Hummel	
Peter Norman Sørensen	
Marno Verbeek	
Charalampos Glymakopoulos	

Date: 25 February 2022