Doc. 300.1.3

Date: 7.3.2025

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- **Higher Education Institution: Open University of Cyprus**

- **Town: Latsia, Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  Αλληλεπίδραση Ανθρώπου - Υπολογιστή (3 ακαδημαϊκά εξάμηνα, 90 ECTS, Μεταπτυχιακό, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

  In English:

  MSc Human-Computer Interaction (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master of Science, E - Learning)

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

- **Programme's status:** New

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: N/A
  In English: N/a

A. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Mauro Cherubini	Full Professor of Information Systems	University of Lausanne (UNIL), Switzerland
Maurizio Caon	Full Professor and Leader of Digital Business Center at School of Management of Fribourg	University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO)
Marije Kanis	Associate professor, Digital Media & Creative Industry department & research centre	Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands
Josep Maria Duart Montoliu	Professor in the Psychology and Education Sciences Department	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), Spain
Marilena Lemonari	PhD student, Computer Graphics / Machine Learning	University of Cyprus (UCY)

B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
Given the critical importance of equipping students with skills relevant not only to R&D but also to the broader industry, the EEC strongly recommends that the HEI actively engage with key stakeholders in Cyprus's industrial landscape, including representatives from SMEs, large companies, governmental organizations, entrepreneurial associations, and chambers of commerce. By fostering direct dialogue with these stakeholders, the HEI can ensure that the program is designed to meet the needs of the industrial ecosystem as well, providing students with a comprehensive education that prepares them for diverse career opportunities. Moreover, it is important that also students will be involved in the design of this program in order to include their perspective and ensure meeting their expectations.	To date, the OUC has approached stakeholder engagement in an informal manner, consulting with project advisors and partners outside the university environment, as well as former students, as in the case of the proposed HCI program. Currently, the OUC is in the process of creating official advisory boards for each of its three faculties. The Faculty of Economics and Management has already established its own. Thus, the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences is putting together a set of advisors, from both the private and government sectors, to advise on new initiatives in our two pillar areas, ICT and Environmental Sciences. Based on the recommendation, student members will also be included; each program in the school will be asked to nominate one student. The Advisory Board of our school is expected to be in place by June 2025 with an initial online meeting by September.	Partially Compliance It is a good start, but still needs to come to full realization. It takes time to form such relationships. Also consider engaging the field/broader stakeholders in the formulation of student assignments and master theses.
To ensure the prevention of intolerance or discrimination against students and staff, the contact information for the ombudsperson must be publicly and easily accessible to all students and staff. The EEC strongly recommends that the HEI establish clear and transparent procedures for managing Student and Staff Complaints and Appeals. These procedures, along with the relevant contact information, should be publicly published on the institution's website to ensure accessibility and to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of the academic community	Procedures for the reporting of incidents of discrimination and harassment are covered in the Code of Ethics of the Open University of Cyprus. These are available on the OUC website: in Greek https://shorturl.at/xQLco The English version has been approved by the Senate, and once it is approved by the Council as well by the end of February, it will be available here: https://tinyurl.com/yf4y2eah	Partially Compliance Please ensure that there are different parties democratically involved for further safeguarding, and prevent too much dependency on single person only. The English version of the material is still not website.

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA

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

eqar/// enqa.

	There is an official procedure for student complaints, which is available on the OUC website, here: https://shorturl.at/o2CI1	
The EEC requires the HEI to translate the code of ethics in English before the opening of the program. Furthermore, the EEC recommends the HEI to develop a directive to conduct research involving human subjects	The OUC code of ethics has been translated to English as per the information provided in the previous section. The OUC Research Committee is always available for consultation on matters of research ethics (participation of human participants, protection of personal data, use of AI in research). OUC directs its faculty and students to the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee for reviews of research protocols. This is the official body in Cyprus for research ethics screening.	Non Compliance Please keep in mind the specifics for HCI subjects matter. For students' work it might be an overkill to involve the CNBC. It will be easier if the Faculty develops an internal directive to conduct research with human subjects. You can see many examples online. The code of ethics was not provided during the visit and it was not part of the attachments provided with this rebuttal. This code of ethics should be available also on the website.
The EEC recommends reevaluating the allocation of ECTS to ensure a more balanced workload. One approach could be to reduce the ECTS for specialized courses while increasing the ECTS for "User Research and Evaluation." Alternatively, the content of the specialized courses could be expanded to justify their 10 ECTS, and "User Research and Evaluation" could be unpacked into two distinct courses to distribute its content more effectively.	To address this concern, we have modified the program structure, although not the content, which is reflected in the updated application, as well as the respective study guides [Annexes 1, 2]. User Research and Evaluation (HCI512) has been split into two 10 ECTS modules: User Research and Evaluation I (HCI512) and II (HCI513), which focus on qualitative and quantitative approaches, respectively. They shall both be compulsory courses, while IT Project Management (formerly HCI513) will be offered as an elective course (HCI 613).	Compliance This is an improvement.
Another potential improvement to the current course design concerns the number of elective courses. Expanding the selection of elective courses would offer students greater flexibility in tailoring their learning experience. Additionally, it could facilitate the integration of courses from other Master's programs, allowing students to select electives that align with their	We have increased the number of electives to five, by allowing students to choose from appropriate courses offered in other OUC English-language MSc programs, in addition to the three HCI electives: -Social Data and Analysis (HCI 611)	Compliance This is an improvement. The final thesis project also provides a way for the student to tailoring their learning experience. This needs further iteration in educational practice.

interests and are relevant to HCI (e.g., a course on cybersecurity or usable security). This approach would not only enrich the curriculum but also promote interdisciplinary learning opportunities.	-Human Computation and Crowdsourcing (HCI 612) -IT Project Management (HCI 613) -Information Security Management (SEC 112) -Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (COS 512) This solution gives students the chance to expand their horizons in new application areas and/or methods, but at the same time minimizes the risk of having too few students enrolled in each module, which is the case when there are too many electives. (A minimum of five students must in enrolled for us to operative a module.)	
From the EEC's perspective, the HEI has two viable options to address the discrepancy between the title of the program and the content actually covered: 1) Rebrand the program to reflect its focus on digital media; 2) expand the curriculum to include courses on tangible interaction and digital fabrication. The latter would involve providing the necessary equipment and infrastructure, potentially through partnerships with fab labs and makerspaces, as well as developing methods for online feedback and assessment tailored to such courses. These adjustments would ensure that the program aligns more closely with its domain and possibly better meets the expectations of students and stakeholders.	We appreciate the EEC's effort to ensure that students' expectations are aligned with the program's title and description. However, the first recommendation (change of title) would jeopardize the viability of the program, while the second (include tangible interaction) is infeasible for the OUC, and would not appeal to our prospective students, who seek a fully digital educational experience, for which the OUC has an established reputation. Rather, the required action is to clearly describe in all marketing materials to prospective students that our HCI program focuses exclusively on digital technologies. We respectfully disagree that the title of HCI presents a discrepancy with the content of the program. Many, if not most, high-quality HCI programs – with the title of HCI – focus *exclusively* on digital devices and technologies (e.g., Uppsala University, Utrecht University, University of Nottingham, University College Dublin, to name but a few European programs). Thus, our title	Non Compliance You could still do a study to evaluate the undesired assumption of change of title and to which extent the program is aligned with prospective students' expectations and needs. Please keep in mind that it is still important to fully educate the students of all relevant HCI matters, and provide/point them to educational resources, e.g. thus including human societal and tangible approaches. Naturally, the extent to which is up to you, but should not be limited or motivated by just pure pragmatic limitations; students should still have basic knowledge of all professional important approaches to make just decisions. You could work on partnerships (e.g. MIT fab academy) to further expand horizons. All of the programs you linked teach tangible interfaces and fabrication as part of the curriculum. The EEC appreciate the complexity of providing students with prototyping support but at the bare minimum, tangible interfaces, multimodal interfaces, embodied

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

	is far from controversial, in relation to its content.	interactions, IoT, should be covered as part of the program.
	As discussed with the EEC during the visit, in the Cypriot higher education market, it is extremely important to have a clear program title aligned with a known scientific area that the public understands. Changing the title to something more specific and niche would compromise its viability. Furthermore, students who come to OUC do so because they are specifically interested in a distance-learning experience, and they are very aware of its benefits and limitations.	
	As discussed with the EEC, while it would be possible to accommodate students who need physical infrastructure for their research projects via our partnership with CYENS CoE, we prefer to guide students towards interaction and digital technologies, which will allow them to take advantage of our digital expertise. Requests from students for physical infrastructure are expected to be extremely rare.	
	Moreover, the program addresses a global audience, and it would not be responsible for us to expand into the physical, as this would create significant inequalities between our students, given that many of them live outside of Cyprus. They would need to travel to Cyprus at their own expense to access physical infrastructures. Our prospective students know the reputation of the OUC and are expecting a fully digital experience. In addition, because all marketing material and the description of the program will emphasize the digital technologies focus, students will not have any expectations that are not covered by the program.	

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
- Encouraging and strengthening collaboration with external stakeholders on a local and international level would help students, also in taking professional initiatives and developing professional attitudes needed to become successful in the field. - Inviting and detailing guest speakers and specifying when and what they contribute is a welcoming step into this direction.	As mentioned, the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences is discussing setting up an Advisory Board that can help us to better link to the industry at the local level. At the international level, the OUC faculty is the key resource for strengthening collaborations. New initiatives such as the OpenEU European University Alliance, as well as the HCI faculty's own projects, are used as a catalyst for student opportunities (e.g., online seminars with leaders in the HCI field, student mobility exchanges). As discussed with the EEC, we shall continue to offer our hybrid seminar series and we will contextualize the talks in relation to what the students are currently learning and doing in the program modules, as recommended. Finally, all OUC programs, including the new HCI, are hosting guest lectures, and have an optional Industry Placement module.	Compliance Engaging with the wider field and strengthening such relation-and partnerships is (still) important and these are important steps. Continuous engagement is needed for keeping up with relevant professional developments in the field. Please keep needed professional attitudes in mind.
Taking advantage of what is already there, but strengthening it, such as links with UK universities, Design academies (the one mentioned in Linz, Austria) and local organizations may help widen students' horizon and offload pressure on the staff. In this way, students will have wider access to more resources and perspectives that are needed to become successful in the field.	This is a good recommendation and one that is in the works, as mentioned above. Other means by which we plan to strengthen international ties is to include external members in student thesis supervision and assessment, and by allotting slots in the seminar series to advanced students who will have the chance to present their work to an international audience (as well as to inspire other students).	Compliance Engaging external members and stakeholders in student thesis is important indeed.

- Further detailing of a specific plan for encouraging social interactions, student feedback and developing an active community among students (and alumni) will be helpful for safeguarding student wellbeing and support, which is particularly important when overcoming on-line barriers. This could include setting particular physical events, conferences and online means of communication, providing feedback and presenting student work.	This is a good suggestion. The team plans to prepare a plan to encourage – and guide – both digital and physical interaction. During the orientation session for the new students, this will be presented. Regarding digital communication, we shall emphasize that, while our teaching platforms have a place for discussions between instructors and students, the students are highly encouraged to set up a digital meeting space (asynchronous and synchronous) of their own. Regarding physical socializing, we will recruit four students, one each from four geographical areas (Nicosia, Athens, Thessaloniki, Europe), and encourage them (although we cannot require them) to organize physical meet-ups. Regarding workshops and conferences, instructors shall announce well in advance the events that they will attend as well as share funding opportunities for students to apply to, to support participation. The University will request increase of its funding in order to expand the Alumni activities.	Compliance Good following up. Additionally, you can also pick one relevant hybrid/ physical conference (E.g. CHI, Ars Electronica) for one time communal and alumni meet up.
It is particularly important for HCI students to be able to motivate their research and (interactive) design decisions. Further clarification and detailing on how this is assessed is needed. This will provide much needed clarity to students, as well help (future) staff in reaching common agreement on assessing students' work such as interactive prototypes and master thesis. - Educating students on the various methodologies and suitable deployment is crucial in this process.	As discussed with the EEC, rubrics are used in evaluating student work, including exercises, assignments and theses. These rubrics are shared with students before they submit their work, so that they have the chance to ask questions concerning how they will be evaluated. Examples of such rubrics (e.g., for the evaluation of theses) were shared with the EEC during the visit. Regarding the development of students' knowledge of methodologies for suitable	Compliance Although the rubrics could be further improved based on desired student final outcomes, from the methodological side this is a great improvement in implementation. As mentioned before tangible interfaces, multimodal interfaces, embodied interactions, IoT, should be covered as part of the program. These could also be covered in an elective course.

Online/ physical *Design* method toolkits might be useful to consider, such as these: https://www.creativeresearch.nl | https://toolkits.dss.cloud/design	deployment, the key course to develop these abilities is the User-Centered Design Studio (HCI 521), into which we have already incorporated tools such as Figma. The Design Method Toolkit recommended will be an excellent addition as well. As mentioned above, physical design is not a priority in this MSc. The online design method toolkits will be introduced in the Interaction Science module and further taught and used hands-on through HCI 521. We have incorporated relevant Tasks from https://toolkits.dss.cloud/design in the weekly interactive exercises of HCI 521. Specifically, the exercises in 3.4, 3.6, and 3.9 have been updated to include Tasks from the suggested toolkit. The suggested link: https://www.creativeresearch.nl provides a lot of resources but in Dutch, so unfortunately, we cannot use this. Taking the committee's suggestion into account we have also incorporated from the Interaction Design Foundation toolkit - https://www.interaction-design.org/toolkits , resources in the Exercise in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.	
The EEC further recommends a better assessment of what is desired and needed within the professional field, society and region (employment and career potential), and developing matching professional attitudes (such as supporting critical thinking, reflection and interactive solution-oriented design thinking), and developing specific skills (such as for	The suggestion to have the students define their personalized learning goals will be adopted. During the student orientation day, we plan to introduce a session that will guide them in this process. To this end, we have found several online toolkits that will help us craft such a session, and that can be used as a reference for students (e.g., Reflection Toolkit for Goal Setting). Students will be	Compliance That is an excellent improvement, in terms of setting goals. Regarding the part what is needed in the professional field (e.g. for becoming a digital media designer) -this still needs work. Further engagement with the professional field (as you planned) will help towards this goal.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

eqar/// enqa.

becoming a web designer or UX researcher). -In addition, it would be helpful if students are encouraged to also define their own individual learning goals from the beginning, so to better support these during, and assess these at a later stage.	encouraged to develop their goals and plan at the beginning of the program and refer to them / update them periodically in consultation with their Faculty Academic Advisor.	
Even in the case of on-line education, students and staff should not become hesitant or afraid to deal with the non-online world. More focus on motivating, developing and deploying appropriate and innovative strategies for student engaging with the real non-online world should be taught and encouraged. - Further building and learning from other HCI and related on-line learning worldwide, as well as approaches by the HCI community during Covid-19 are recommendable. - The way practical training is organised in terms of crucial HCI matter, namely developing and evaluating interactive systems (developing digital and physical prototypes, conducting user studies) in line with achieving the objectives of the study programme should be further detailed. An example of successful hybrid worldwide education on digital fabrication from MIT: https://fabacademy.org	Our position is that, while our program focuses on interaction with digital technologies, students will be taught to design and evaluate interactive experiences with digital technologies to address real world problems; some of these will certainly address the non-online world, through the support of digital technology. As explained above, our position is that we do not feel it appropriate, due to the nature of our university, to teach physical interaction. Practical training will be supported throughout our modules, online, through invited speakers and use of toolkits used in the industry. Furthermore, practical application of designing, developing and evaluating interactive digital technologies can be done through online communication tools. We thank the EEC for the additional resources on hybrid learning. It is our university policy, however, to teach in a fully digital format; thus, we have to tread very carefully when it comes to hybrid activities. Fully digital is what our students come to OUC for and what they expect, and introducing hybrid activities runs the risk of placing students who do not live near our premises in Nicosia, at a disadvantage.	Partially Compliance Address real world problems sounds fruitful. The committee still observes hesitance. Please consider a more open approach, tools (e.g. hybrid kits) and attitudes towards this, as this is extremely relevant for fully developing as a professional in the HCI field. The EEC iterates that even though you might not focus on tangible, multimodal interfaces, this content must be taught in order to deliver an MSc qualification in HCI.

| - The EEC did not see real examples of desired student output. Even though this is a new course, this is important for assessing the level of quality that is expected and desired, but also for inspiring the students.

The recommendations are to develop a stronger & unique perspective and level of quality that is needed to become more attractive and sustainable from a student perspective. | Study Guides submitted for the evaluation of the program include interactive educational activities. As this is a new program, we were not able to provide real examples of student work, nor is that expected by CYQAA for the evaluation of a newly designed program.

Our position is that this is something that will evolve organically. Initially, to motivate and inspire students, we can use examples of student projects and outcomes from other HCI programs, requesting help and input from our colleagues abroad for pointers to examples that are not readily available online.

Another initiative will be to establish a number of awards given annually to students in the program, who have produced outstanding work. This is something that the OUC usually does for its MSc programs, and students are recognized at the annual graduation ceremony. | Compliance
The EEC welcomes these initiatives. An example of award is available here: https://cmd-amsterdam.nl/gda-2021/ |

3. Teaching staff
(ESG 1.5)

<u>*EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response*</u>

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
Criteria for promotions at all levels must be measurable, transparent and available to AP and AFT. The criteria of the University of Cyprus were considered by the EEC as too generic, unclear and difficult to access. The commission recommends that a set of criteria should be developed specifically for the OUC, with clear quantifiable standards, and placed on the main Internet website of the university for anybody to access. An example to get inspiration from could be the criteria for promotion of the Technical University of Cyprus[1]. These criteria must also include teaching evaluation standards.	The three public Universities have the same criteria for academic promotions. These are approved by the State (House of Parliament). Thus, as in the case of the CUT, the OUC's criteria for promotions come directly from the relevant legal regulations. The criteria and procedures are provided to faculty members when they join the university and questions and clarifications are discussed during orientation. By law, the criteria do not specifically include teaching evaluation standards, but refer to the evaluation of the number of years of independent teaching. The adjunct faculty do not undergo reviews for promotion at OUC.	Partially Compliance The EEC appreciates that the three public universities share the same criteria. At the very least, the OUC should publish these criteria on their own website or intranet.
Development of teaching personnel is of paramount importance. Going forward the HEI must ensure more training courses will be available to the AP and AFT of the institution to upskill teaching methodologies and deal with societal changes in higher education (e.g., ChatGPT). Also, mobility budget must be made available also to AFT in order to allow for professional development and networking.	Given the nature of our university, the OUC places great emphasis on providing training for both permanent and adjunct faculty in terms of teaching methodology and the development of distance learning content and tools. There are two training programs offered by the eLearning Unit and the Lab of Educational Material and Methodology. Beyond that, educational offerings on various topics are offered online (e.g,. via LinkedIn Learning) as well as onsite; two recent onsite trainings included: Generative AI in the Classroom, Cybersecurity Awareness and Resilience.	Partially Compliance The EEC recommends that an internal budget should be made available to allow for professional development and networking.

---

[1] See https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2003_1_198/full.html, last retrieved 20th of December 2024.

	Both our AP and AFT are eligible to apply for mobility actions (teaching and/or training) via the Erasmus+ program.	
The EEC recommends encouraging staff **mobility** at all levels. Mobility is a fundamental activity for staff to create opportunities for scientific collaboration, to further the professional network and for professional development. Specifically, the HEI should clearly indicate that mobility is a favourable point for promotion and should encourage staff members to take leave (short-term and through the academic sabbatical) to spend time in other institutions and to collaborate with other colleagues.	The OUC promotion criteria, which, again, are established by law, include the following criteria for evaluation, at all levels: "Networking and Collaboration i) International Profile (joint publications with international co-authors, joint research projects with international partners, Work experience in international environments, research stays abroad." At the time of hire and orientation, faculty members are given these promotion materials in writing and they are presented and discussed during their orientation. Furthermore, the policy regarding sabbaticals is presented, by which each faculty member is eligible for a one-semester sabbatical every three years. Upon application for sabbatical, the faculty member must present a work plan that includes international travel / research stays. Both our AP and AFT are eligible to apply for mobility actions (teaching and/or training) via the Erasmus+ program.	Compliance The EEC recommends that an internal budged should be made available to support sabbaticals.
The **core courses** of this new program must be taught by the AP, not by AFT. This will ensure continuity of the program over time. The EEC considered as core courses: "Interaction Science", "User Research and Evaluation", in addition to "User-Centered Design Studio".	Given that the OUC is a public university, all academic positions must be approved by the State. All online universities work with adjunct faculty. With the addition of a new AP in January 2025 (Dr. C. Vasiliou), changes are made as follows: --Interaction Science (Dr. S. Kleanthous) --User Research and Evaluation I (Dr. C. Vasiliou) -User-Centered Design Studio (Dr. S. Kleanthous)	Compliance No comment.

Going forward the HEI should identify and recruit teaching personnel through **public calls** and announcements done in standard communication channels, social networks, and specialised websites. This will ensure equal opportunities and higher chances of recruiting high-profile instructors.	AFT are always recruited through public calls using an open and transparent process. The AFT who are collaborating with the AP in the design of the HCI program (Matsagidou, Christoforou, Orphanou) went through an application process and were selected for their positions. In full transparency, E. Christoforou is also a post-doctoral researcher on the team of the Coordinator, and is paid from the Coordinator's projects. M. Matsangidou is a colleague from CYENS CoE who has no financial relation to the Coordinator or team. K. Orphanou is employed full-time at another research organization and has no financial relation to the Coordinator or team.	Compliance No comment.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
It was revealed during the site visit that approximately 40% of students complete the evaluation questionnaires. Perhaps, employing a strategy further encouraging the students to complete the evaluation, would mitigate this. For example, a strategy followed by some other institutions is to allow students to see their final marks earlier, provided they had completed the questionnaire for the relevant course.	The student survey is anonymous, and it is conducted before the examinations period. The purpose of this survey is to gather useful feedback concerning the performance of the teaching staff, content/structure of the program and its modules, and the OUC eLearning platform. It is a useful recommendation to try to increase completion rates without making it mandatory for students.	Compliance No comments.
Certification recognition in foreign countries, e.g., Greece, can be quite challenging and time-consuming which may negatively affect both student satisfaction and employability, but also prospective students' interest in the program. A marketing strategy targeted to these international students, highlighting the program's long-term benefits, could mitigate this issue.	The OUC is a public university; hence its degree titles are recognized in Europe. It can be time-consuming to seek degree recognition in Greece for instance, but the relevant process is now expedited.	Compliance No comments.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
To have better and more strategic uses of IT to support teachers and students in their teaching and learning process, the EEC recommend the following improvements: a) Establishing a strategic educational model or reinforcing what already exists. The IT and support teams should expand their support by offering a more comprehensive proposal that integrates advanced tools and, in particular, interactive resources. By doing that, the OUC will enhance a better and more innovative teaching and learning experience.	The Laboratory of Educational Material and Methodology (LEMM) is the unit at OUC that is responsible for supporting the development of educational programs based on our strategic educational model. As presented during the EEC's visit, the Lab offers a number of services including: research and development (e.g., needs detection for a given program, development of AR/VR/Games tools to support learning), design and development of materials and supporting technologies, guidance and support of instructors, and quality assurance (e.g., monitoring the assessment of educational material developed within the OUC).	Partially Compliance The EEC recommends that the LEMM provides more courses to the teachers. E.g., using social media to animate students' work, latest trends in online teaching, etc.
b) Developing Institutional Strategy and Position on emerging technologies, namely for Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): The irruption of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is an important challenge for Higher Education Institutions nowadays, especially for Open Universities because their interactions and assessments largely depend on text generation. To address these challenges, the OUC should create guidelines and resources that promote the ethical and constructive use of GenAI in academic environments. Additionally, the OUC should implement training programs designed to enhance GenAI literacy among faculty, students, and administrative staff. These initiatives will encourage the integration of GenAI tools to complement traditional learning methods, ensuring a balance between innovation and academic integrity.	Our institution has been very proactive on this matter, beginning in 2023. We have established a Committee on Artificial Intelligence, which has developed an internal policy on Generative AI, as well as guidelines for the use of Generative AI for four target groups – students, faculty, researchers and administrative staff. These are available in both Greek and English on the OUC website. Additionally, the committee has already sponsored one mandatory training session for all staff and faculty, concerning the ethical use of Generative AI to enhance productivity. More targeted sessions will be offered soon.	Compliance No comments.

Having a diversity of Evaluation and Assessment Methods: Currently, the evaluation system is primarily based on final examinations, supported by robust IT tools for student identity verification. The EEC recommends introducing alternative assessment formats, such as oral examinations that support the demonstration of students' interactive work, collaborative group assessments, and project-based evaluations. Additionally, assessments should be designed to enable students to apply their course knowledge by developing prototypes or practical solutions, which will foster critical thinking and real-world application skills. Also, we recommend analyzing the possibility of enforcing the continuous assessment system as formative evaluation to avoid the final exam. The EEC is aware that external restrictions exist to implement that proposal, but we invite the OUC to think about it and implement a feasible future proposal based on educational principles and its experience.	We thank the EEC for the invitation to consider alternative methods for assessment. The OUC has adopted CYQAA's recommendations to include interactive educational activities. Hence, there are three assessment methods: a) interactive educational activities, b) written assignments – mostly project based, c) final exam. Oral examinations would not be feasible given that the program will attract students from around the world, and it would be extremely time-consuming to manage oral exams and ensure their integrity.	Partially Compliance The EEC disagrees that oral exams are unfeasible. A Ms does not have thousands of students and identity and integrity might be managed through specific protocols.

6. Additional for doctoral programmes
(ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

7. Eligibility (Joint programmes)
(ALL ESG)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

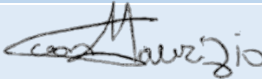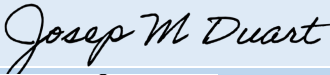*EEC's final conclusions and remarks*

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
Alignment with Industry Needs: While the program successfully engages research-oriented stakeholders, it lacks sufficient alignment with the broader industrial ecosystem of Cyprus, including SMEs and larger enterprises. This gap limits the program's appeal and applicability for diverse professional pathways. Recommendation: Establish stronger collaboration with industrial stakeholders, including those in digital solutions, to ensure curriculum relevance. Regular consultation with industry representatives can guide course content and better prepare students for employment in varied professional settings.	The MSc in HCI is a hands-on program that will provide graduates not only with theoretical knowledge, but with applied skills as well. There are many courses of a practical nature, and the program aims to attract audiences from all over the world. We believe that the link with the industry is evident. As mentioned above in #1, our immediate action is the formation of Advisory Boards at the school level. This will provide a set of go-to stakeholders who can be consulted on a regular basis, and at the same time, facilitate better communication and networking between the OUC and the broader society.	Partially Compliance The importance of liaising with industry is evident but solid link with industry has not been demonstrated yet. This specific point should be assessed again in the future.
Workload and Course Structure: The current ECTS allocation is uneven, with foundational courses overly dense and specialized courses lighter in content. Recommendation: Balance the ECTS distribution by either dividing comprehensive courses like "User Research and Evaluation" into smaller modules or expanding the content of specialized courses. Increasing elective	As detailed in #1, we have moved forward with the recommendation to split *User Research and Evaluation* into two distinct modules, to allow ample time for students to engage with the content of the course. We have also adopted the suggestion to include additional electives, as reflected in the revised application.	Compliance No comments.

ΔΙΠΑΕ
CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

course options will also enhance curriculum flexibility and student satisfaction		
Program Title and Scope: The title "Human-Computer Interaction" does not fully align with the program's content, which lacks tangible interaction design and digital fabrication elements. Recommendation: Rebrand the program to reflect its focus on digital media and interaction design or expand the curriculum to include hands-on courses in tangible interfaces and prototyping, supported by appropriate resources and equipment.	We have documented our position on the two alternative recommendations above in #1. Following the many high-quality examples abroad, we have designed our MSc in Human-Computer Interaction to focus exclusively on digital technologies. It is not realistic or desirable to add tangible interfaces and digital fabrication to the scope of our program, as our faculty's expertise is on digital technologies. The program content, while being firmly rooted in HCI principles and methodologies, takes advantage of our faculty's strengths so as to maximize the benefits for students.	Partially Compliance The EEC still feels that tangible, multimodal interfaces should be covered as part of the program content.
Policy for Quality Assurance: The quality assurance framework, while robust, does not sufficiently address issues like intolerance and discrimination or provide accessible complaint mechanisms. Recommendation: Establish clear, transparent procedures for handling complaints, including publicly accessible contact points for student and staff concerns. These should be integrated into the institutional quality assurance policy.	As mentioned above, the OUC Code of Ethics includes processes for handling complaints (e.g., harassment), and there is a formal procedure for students' complaints. The University's Ombudsman is also handing such cases. There is also an EDI plan available on our website.	Partially Compliance The EEC recommends that this material should be made more accessible to the students and personnel by simplifying and moving most procedures online: e.g., add a flowchart, a whistleblower report form, listing contact information of the relevant people, etc.
Teaching Staff Development: Although adequate support is provided to permanent staff, adjunct faculty face limitations in accessing development opportunities. Recommendation: Extend professional development resources	The OUC is always looking for ways to support its adjunct staff, integrating them into the OUC community. As mentioned, Erasmus mobility programs are open to our adjuncts, for teaching and/or training mobilities. In a similar vein, all of our trainings (e.g., LinkedIn Learning, seminar on the use of Generative AI) are open to our	Partially Compliance The EEC recommends that the OUC makes available an internal budget for professional travels and sabbaticals.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA
ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar/// enqa.

to adjunct faculty, including mobility budgets and access to training. Transparent criteria for promotions and advancement should also be developed and communicated to all teaching staff.	adjuncts, along with the online trainings on distance education, which are compulsory. We also have recently instituted policies such as our Excellent Teaching Award (one award per School, per semester is given), which also includes a financial reward to be put towards research-related expenses (e.g., open access fees, attending a conference). Adjuncts do not undergo a promotion process at the OUC.	
Student-Centered Learning and Support: The current teaching methodology is not fully adapted to the hands-on nature of HCI, and the student representative system is absent. Recommendation: Introduce innovative teaching approaches that incorporate practical, tangible interaction exercises and field-based studies. Establish a student representative system to ensure their voice in program development.	As mentioned in #1, we will include student advisors in the Advisory Board that is under development. At the program level, practical exercises (including those that ask students to go into the field and collect data) are used. We shall continue to integrate such practical tangible interaction exercises using some of the tools that the EEC has directed us to.	Compliance No comments.
Integration of merging interactive technologies, namely Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): The emerging importance of GenAI and physical forms of interaction in education have not been fully addressed. Recommendation: Develop suitable strategies to guide the ethical and constructive use in teaching and assessment of such interactive technologies, complemented by training programs for students and faculty.	Please see our response above in #5, which documents the OUC's efforts to date in this area.	Compliance No comments.

ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA

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

eqar// enqa.

Assessment Diversity: The reliance on final exams as a primary assessment method could be complemented by alternative formats. Recommendation: Implement project-based evaluations, oral assessments, and continuous formative evaluations to encourage critical thinking and practical application of skills.	As mentioned in #4, there are three assessment methods: a) interactive activities, b) assignments, c) final written exam. Hence, students link theory and practice. The final exam is not essay-based, there are options to incorporate multi-choice exercises, case studies, visual diagrams of results based on the analysis of data, etc. Oral examinations are not appropriate for our context, as explained above.	Partially Compliance The EEC disagrees oral exams are unfeasible.
Innovative Use of IT Resources: While the IT infrastructure is functional, it could be enhanced to support more interactive and pedagogically rich learning experiences. Recommendation: Expand IT capabilities to include simulations, and advanced interactive tools that align with the program's objectives and foster student engagement.	At OUC, as noted in #5, in collaboration with the LEMM, we continue to strive to develop more interactive and engaging learning experiences, while at the same time remaining faithful to our mission of open education and providing opportunities to a large and diverse population of students.	Partially Compliance The EEC recommends that the LEMM should develop more course content.

D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Mauro Cherubini	
Maurizio Caon	
Marije Kanis	
Josep Maria Duart Montoliu	
Marilena Lemonari	

Date: 7.3.2025