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External Evaluation Report

(Joint - E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** Cyprus University of Technology
- **Collaborative Institution(s):** University of Tallinn
- **Town:** Limassol
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Σχεδιασμός Διάδρασης (2 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 120 ECTS, Μάστερ (MSc))

In English:

Interaction Design (2 academic years, 120 ECTS, Master(MSc))

- **Language(s) of instruction: English**
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**
  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws" of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

Following an invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had the opportunity to evaluate the Joint Master in Interaction Design programme offered by a partnership between the Cyprus University of Technology and the University of Tallinn.

The EEC consisted of: Professor Fabio Crestani, Professor Tom Crick, Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos, Professor Nicola Ferro and Valentino Pariza.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the evaluation for the programme took place online in February 2022.

The programme's aim is to develop interaction design expertise and provide learners with specific competences on user experience and human-computer interaction, preparing them for the labour market. It has been specifically designed for distance learning and with an emphasis on practice-based learning.

The Master is offered in English to better accommodate the international students it currently attracts, in addition the two main cohorts of students coming from Cyprus and Estonia. It can be completed in either a full-time or part-time mode of study, thus requiring between 2 and 4 years of study (120 ECTS). It aims to train graduates to effectively lead multi-disciplinary teams and collaborate in the design and development of interactive software and technical systems. The large use of practice-based classes should enable these students to be ready for immediate employment.

The programme was established in 2014 following a global feasibility study and a market analysis, and started attracting students from 2016. It has been already accredited in Estonia as a joint programme between the two universities.

The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and willingness to interact and engage with the members of the committee during the online evaluation. The committee would also like to express their gratitude to Mrs Natasa Kazakaiou, the CYQAA coordinator, for managing the process effectively and her support.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Stylianos Hatzipanagos (chair)	Fellow and Executive Co-lead for Research and Dissemination	University of London Centre for Distance Education, UK
Fabio Crestani	Professor and Head of the Information retrieval Group, Faculty of Informatics	Università dell Svizzera Italiana (USI), Lugano, Switzerland
Tom Crick	Professor and Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor Department of Education & Childhood Studies (Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences) and the Computational Foundry (Faculty of Science & Engineering)	Swansea University, UK
Nicola Ferro	Head of the Intelligent Interactive Information Access (IIIA) hub and of the Information Management Systems (IMS) research group, Department of Information Engineering	University of Padua, Italy
Valentinos Pariza	Undergraduate Student in Computer Science, Specialty: Artificial Intelligence,	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas.*
- *At the beginning of each assessment area there is a box presenting:*
  (a) *sub-areas*
  (b) *standards which are relevant to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)*
  (c) *some questions that EEC may find useful.*
- *The questions aim at facilitating the understanding of each assessment area and at illustrating the range of topics covered by the standards.*
- *Under each assessment area, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements of each sub-area. In particular, the following must be included:*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- *The EEC should state the compliance for each sub-area (Non-compliant, Partially compliant, Compliant), which must be in agreement with everything stated in the report. It is pointed out that, in the case of standards that cannot be applied due to the status of the HEI and/or of the programme of study, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted.*
- *The EEC should state the conclusions and final remarks regarding the programme of study as a whole.*
- ***The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.***

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

- *Information for the effective management of the programme of study is collected, monitored and analysed:*
  - *key performance indicators*
  - *profile of the student population*
  - *student progression, success and drop-out rates*
  - *students' satisfaction with their programmes*
  - *learning resources and student support available*
  - *career paths of graduates*

- *Students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Taking specifically into consideration the policies for quality assurance, the EEC finds that the agreement between the two universities prescribes the creation of a joint council that makes recommendations and takes actions to ensure the development and the quality of the programme. Teaching staff, students, alumni, and industry representatives are members of this council, which reviews anonymous student evaluation questionnaires that contain qualitative and quantitative indications on how the programme is perceived by ongoing students and is progressing. In recent years, based on student reviews and on consequent council meeting discussions with the student representatives, several improvements to the programme have been made and actions have been taken to increase the quality and impact of the learning. In addition, all teaching staff participates in a joint coordination meeting at the beginning of each term where each course is presented and opportunities for discussion are opened to build synergies between courses and avoid overlaps in content. The coordinators of such (joint council and coordination) meetings submit an annual report to the senate of each institution to report on students requests and actions taken. In addition, teaching staff and coordinators also take feedback on board during term-time. Such feedback is gained through formal communications with student representatives and through feedback forms prepared by students at the end of term.

The view of the EEC is that the policies designed for quality assurance are also valid for the design, approval, and on-going monitoring of the programme. In fact, the Joint Council periodically reviews (every three years) the programme. External expertise is provided to the council through the participation of two industry representatives, one alumnus and one student representative. The curriculum has been recently revamped introducing new and improving the sequence of courses to follow a more natural schedule. The student workload appeared to be in accordance with the European Qualification Framework. The workload of courses, given in ECTS, also appears to be reasonable with the notable exception of the Master Thesis Seminar that has a high number of ECTS (16 ECTS) and it is not made clear how it relates to the Master Thesis. The course description says it is meant to help each student in choosing and refining her/his master thesis interests and topics. In practice, to outline an initial master thesis project. A workload of 16 ECTS seems excessive for the purpose of outlining an initial Master thesis project. The master's Thesis Seminar is a prerequisite for undertaking the Master Thesis.

Finally, in relation to the accessibility of information with regards to student selection criteria, qualifications, pass rates, learning opportunities, etc, the view of the EEC is that the information is easily accessible. On the other hand, student progression, satisfaction, and dropout rates are kept more confidential. This is not unusual and understandable, as they are more valuable for the effective management of the programme, than to the students.

Strengths

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

- The EEC concluded that the policy for quality assurance has an appropriately formal status and is publicly available.
- The establishment of a specific Office for Quality Assurance that periodically reviews the changing needs of the Master to ensure they are in line with the needs of the society provides a substantial benefit to the programme.
- Information related to student admission criteria, courses learning outcomes, teaching, and learning processes, and marking procedures, are publicly and readily accessible.
- The view of the EEC is that information regarding student acceptance into the programme, student progression, and student satisfaction is regularly collected and is effectively managed.
- The programme provides good library and computing (software) facilities for the students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- Considering the large number of part time students and the large drop-out rate, the EEC believes it could be useful to improve the current mitigating policies in case of delays in courses obligations, to possibly reduce the high dropout rate. The currently implemented process of enabling students to apply for “academic leave” and allow them to complete the master in four years might not be sufficient. Perhaps more flexibility with regards to the completion deadline is needed.
- The use of learning analytics tools could help to identify the possible causes of the high dropout rate. Currently learning analytics technologies are not being used in the Programme. Yet, given the large use of online tools, their use should not be too difficult to implement.
- The EEC suggests replacing the Master Thesis Seminar with some other project-based course, perhaps a “minor master thesis project”, as opposed to the Master thesis, in which the student could practice what he/she learned in some other large (but smaller than the Master thesis) project.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

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

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

Standards

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

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

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

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The very nature of this MSc in Interaction Design programme requires the development of a broad, interdisciplinary mindset, reflecting the core underpinning knowledge and skills of the discipline, as well as fostering its application to a diverse set of real-world problem domains.

Both a strength and a potential challenge of the programme is its interdisciplinarity: in that it requires solid technical/digital/computing foundations (e.g. developing important technical/ programming/ software skills), as well as encouraging and embedding human factors, user-centred design, creativity and innovation across the entire programme. To ensure that it meets its student-centred learning, teaching and assessment aspirations, it is critical to meaningfully interconnect theory and practice, weaving this into a consistent thread throughout the programme (for example, as a clear

strategy for pedagogical approaches), and especially in authentic and appropriate assessment practices. A range of assessments are used across the programme, both individual and group-based, acknowledging the important balance between theory and practice and how this is best assessed, as well as directly linking to substantive real-world problems and domains/sectors/industries. There is a real opportunity to use authentic assessment as a way of fostering and facilitating high-quality student engagement, developing current competencies and work practices, as well as supporting transition into (post)graduate employment.

Related to the previous point, given the anticipated diverse background of the incoming international student cohort (also a potential strength of this programme, to further foster the interdisciplinarity and wider student experience), they will need varying academic support in the first term to ensure they are able to be brought up to speed as quickly as possible with some of the core theoretical/technical and practical topics. However, it was clear from the EEC discussions that the programme team are aware of this, and how this potentially impacts on learning, teaching and assessment (especially in the first teaching period), as well as wider academic and pastoral support. This will need to be appropriately differentiated/targeted for different groups of students, as well as ensuring tracking during the early teaching phases to ensure engagement and early interventions.

Looking at the structure and scheduling of the programme: according to the team, activities are organised in bi-weekly modules, each focusing on specific topics, and students are expected to engage in both preparatory readings and follow up activities. This approach is appropriate and can be seen as intensive “sprints”, but need to consider wider student workload and time for immersion into the content to adequately prepare them for assessments. Furthermore, if students are unfortunate and have an illness or any related issue that impacts upon their study, this can have a significant impact on their ability to engage with learning, teaching and assessment during these intensive blocks; so appropriate mitigations and measures need to be in place for students with such extenuating circumstances, so they are able to progress through the programme.

The arrangements for e-learning are appropriate, allowing both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, with clear designed approaches for formative and summative assessment. However, as noted above, it is important to ensure that given the interdisciplinary nature of this programme, with its solid theoretical and technical foundations, as well as clear applied and empirical application, this will have an important influence on pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies.

Linked to this, in response to the EEC’s query about scalability of the programme, the team highlighted the partnership’s commitment to delivering all the necessary courses for any enrolled students and indicated that the partnership provides mechanisms to ensure financial viability in order to accommodate a bigger number of students per cohort. The programme also ensures a maximum number of students per course to ensure smooth delivery.

Finally, it was clear from the sessions and resulting EEC discussions that there is a clear focus on student needs for this programme (both academic and pastoral), recognising the potentially diverse student demands from the distributed international cohort. There was also a clear message of “lessons learned” from the impact of COVID-19 on programme delivery and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and how this can improve and enhance provision going forward.

Strengths

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

- Very clear student-centred approach to the design and development of this interdisciplinary programme, with clear rationale and relevance/interest to a large international student market.
- There is significant potential for fostering deep and authentic student experiences with an international cohort from a wide range of academic background and professional practice.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- All modules seem to have the same generic short description under the "Teaching Methodology" heading. We recommend enhancing this description by providing some additional content on the specific methods that teachers employ in each module.
- Ensure that students are exposed to and are able to fully engage with a broad range of real-world scenarios and authentic assessment approaches during their study.
- Consider the provision for targeted support and early intervention for international student cohort with diverse academic and industrial background, especially in the early stages of the programme.

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

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

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The programme relies on an appropriate number of permanent staff members, complemented by adjunct teaching staff, from both the institutions jointly participating in the programme. The team is composed of a fixed number of seven permanent staff from both universities that teach in the course. This is complemented by a number of adjunct staff that varies according to needs for every cohort (the current term involves six adjunct lecturers bringing in expertise and experiences from industry that complements the expertise of the permanent staff). The number of permanent staff is always equal or more to the number of adjuncts in compliance with CEQA regulations. The faculty staff members involved in the programme are well qualified and their CVs are of a high standard. The research background of the faculties informed both the design of the programme and the content of the lectures. The teaching staff appear to be very experienced in teaching, also in the specific context of a fully remote programme.

A minimum of three hours per week contact hour between instructor and students (either in groups or individually) applies to all modules. The teaching staff receives support from the university for developing and improving their teaching skills. Moreover, all the technical tools and instruments needed for successfully carrying out remote teaching are made available to teaching staff. However, staff pointed out that preparing audio-visual content is an additional skill that all courses require. In this respect more support could be provided by the university to let teaching staff focus less on these technicalities and more on their teaching duties to further improve the quality of the material.

Student evaluation is regularly conducted on teaching staff and on the courses, both during courses themselves and at their end. Results of the evaluation are appropriately analysed and taken in account. The teaching staff very clearly explained how students' feedback and evaluation have supported the progression and improvement of the programme over the years.

For the recruitment of new staff, a joint committee between the two institutions takes care of the planning and the strategic decisions. Once it has been decided which candidates to recruit and from which institution, precise procedures determined by the national regulations of one of the two institutions are followed. This procedure can also take into account students' evaluation.

Overall, the teaching staff appeared to be very motivated towards the strategic objectives of the programme and very committed to deliver a high quality learning experience to students, working together as a close-knit team. In particular, special care is taken in engaging students in course activities as well as stimulating and moderating discussion among them.

Strengths

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

- Permanent and adjunct faculty are appropriately and well qualified for both research and teaching in the area
- Motivation and cohesion of the teaching staff towards the objectives of the programme and delivering a high quality learning experience

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Consider offering more continuous technical support and assistance to teaching staff for the production of audio-visual teaching materials.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*
- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) felt that the student selection and admission process are transparent and applied consistently throughout the years. Tallinn University is responsible for evaluating and admitting students to the programme by conducting firstly an Eligibility Check, secondly a Document Evaluation and lastly inviting students to attend an Interview. The student admission procedure contains robust and promising plans for the recruitment of students of diverse backgrounds. The EEC was informed that admitted students' backgrounds come from Arts and Design (38%), Computer Science (19%), Humanities (13%), Social Sciences (13%), Engineering(10%), and Finance, Economics and Management (10%). Admission requirements include Bachelor's Degree Certificate or certificate of a corresponding qualification, CV, Motivation Letter, proof of sufficient knowledge of English language and an interview. These entry requirements are similar to corresponding accredited programmes from other Universities that operate internationally. Additionally, entry requirements in the programme' public information on the web are appropriately flexible to accommodate the different educational backgrounds and access qualifications for home, EU and international applicants. There is a comprehensive website with information regarding admission requirements and processes as well as country-specific requirements for different educational qualifications.

The programme uses the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS) for measuring the workload of each course which allows recognition and transfer of Programme courses undertaken. There is an induction seminar one week before the beginning of each course, as well as other induction activities at the first week of each course allowing students to connect with each other and teaching staff as well as getting help in navigating through the course. The students receive information related to their studies towards the completion of the programme as well as regarding help and support related to education-related issues, forms and processes. Academic advisors/counsellors and tutors are available to support and monitor student progression and achievement. The grading and degree classification systems being used are comparable to other national and international institutions. Information regarding the programme and the courses, their learning outcomes, as well as any regulations are shared with the admitted students. However, the programme has a relatively high dropout rate (29%) for a postgraduate degree. There are clear policies supporting student progression and achievement of student outcomes. Some strategies and ideas to mitigate this aspect were offered by the Programme team.

Last, the programme of study is recognized at national and international levels and has helped students completing this programme to change careers and progress professionally. The EEC received some positive feedback in relation to this in the discussion with current students and graduates.

Strengths

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

- The student admission process is transparent and implemented in a consistent manner.
- Information regarding student admission, progression in the programme and graduation is available to the applicants and admitted students.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Even though the programme has a process in place for measuring the performance of students on a per course basis, adopting a more structured and detailed annual monitoring student progression approach (from the moment of admitting students to their exit or graduation) would help identify more factual insights and lead to improvement regarding student drop-out rates in the programme.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
5.2 Physical resources
5.3 Human support resources
5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

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

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

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

5.4 Student support

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

Resources

Overall, the programme offers satisfactory resources, including learning materials, IT infrastructure, and administrative support to support student learning. Both partner university libraries offer resources through access to the prospective library records.

Student Induction

Online induction to distance and online learning is offered to students in the beginning of their studies. This is not a mandatory activity that students need to engage with, but the team indicated that satisfactory support is provided ad hoc whenever the students need it and the Estonian partner is the first port of call for such support requests.

Pedagogical approach

Pedagogical considerations seem to be taken into account in the design and delivery of the programme. The institutional infrastructure that supports course development and delivery comprises a team (Council) that also deals with the specifics of the coordination of the programme from a pedagogical and quality assurance point of view. The EEC was given the opportunity to inspect online learning materials, inc. synchronous sessions with student presentations and contributions (e.g project presentations), videos from both partners of a great variety from narrated PPTs, step by step induction videos and other online videos of instructors presenting topics of the programme curriculum.

Learning technologies

The programme employs an adequate infrastructure (using Google Classroom as the main teaching platform) that supports students learning and videoconferencing technology. The programme team has also developed activities to support interaction .

Assessment

Assessment approaches employ a model where there is a diversity of assessment formats both formative and summative. This is a strength of the programme. The use of fora, self and peer assessment is commendable in the distance learning delivery. It was not evident whether there were any student-facing pedagogical justifications for the value of peer learning. In our discussions with students they seemed to prefer receiving feedback from lecturers rather than their peers.

Employability

Career guidance in both institutions is offered to students in the programme to support employment opportunities. A number of students in the programme are professionals, completing the programme for career advancement purposes. The committee's discussions with graduates and current students from different parts of the world offered some good examples of positive student experience and positive evaluations and feedback re: the programme.

Strengths

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

- The staff support functions led by academics and administrators seem to work well and there are professional and academic development support activities in place for staff with appropriate breadth (a significant number of CPD seminars on pedagogical and learning technology aspects are offered yearly to staff of the university).
- The use of a variety of formative and summative assessment formats as a dominant model rather than end of term exams is commendable in the distance learning delivery.
- Online learning design conforms to accessibility requirements (designed taking students with special needs into account).

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

- We recommend that the induction in the online environment becomes compulsory for all students as this will help to address learning support needs during the student journey. In addition it may have a positive impact on progression and retention.
- We recommend that the experience of the students as far as student access to library materials from both partners becomes seamless by the provision of an appropriate uniform interface (dashboard) that does not make a distinction in relation to the provenance of resources from each partner (a search aggregator might be a solution).
- We recommend that staff professional development around distance and online learning (including webinars) is offered as a structured professional accreditation programme (basically a licence to teach in an online/distance environment which can also be used for ca purposes). This can further increase motivation in attending and participating in such events. A microcredentials approach to motivate and encourage staff to participate in professional development could be helpful there. In addition, it would be useful to offer these sessions to teaching staff from both institutions, overcoming any language barriers (if any) via subtitles etc).

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Partially 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 programme
6.3 Added value of the joint programme

6.1 Legal framework and cooperation agreement

Standards

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

6.2 The joint programme

Standards

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

6.3 Added value of the joint programme

Standards

The joint programme leads to the following added values:

- *Increases internationalisation at the institutions.*
- *Stimulates multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and makes cooperation binding.*
- *Increases transparency between educational systems.*
- *Develops study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs.*
- *Improves educational and research collaboration.*
- *Offers students an expanded and innovative arena for learning.*

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

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Does the joint study programme conform to the requirements of a study programme offered at the specific level?*
- *Is there a system that assures the quality of joint provision and guarantees that the aims of the programme are met?*
- *Do the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the joint study programme take into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)? Are they adopted by all the universities involved?*
- *Is the division of responsibilities in ensuring quality clearly defined among the partner universities?*
- *Is relevant information about the programme, e.g. admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures, well documented and published by taking into account the specific needs of students?*
- *What is the added value of the programme of study?*
- *Is there a sustainable funding strategy among the partner universities? Explain.*

Findings

A short description of the situation in the Higher Education Institution (HEI), based on elements from the application for external evaluation and on findings from the onsite visit.

The study programme has been approved by the Tallinn University Senate and the Cyprus University of Technology, following a partnership agreement between the two universities. The joint programme conforms to the requirements of a study programme offered at postgraduate level.

There are clauses in the partnership agreement that support the management of the programme by the partnership. For instance, both universities have the obligation to appoint a study programme coordinator and study programme assistant.

The programme is supported by the joint study programme council and the quality assurance follows the principles specified in the Tallinn University Statute of Study Programme. This arrangement appears to be addressing issues of registration, progression and awards for the programme students in a satisfactory manner.

The quality assurance procedure of the joint degree conforms to the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. The Council provides an overview of quality assurance and enhancement issues.

Strengths

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

- This is a strong partnership between two established HE institutions that has a positive impact on the internationalisation of both partners.
- Both universities and collaborating departments have an active research culture from which students of the programme can benefit. There are agreements in place that support this approach, e.g. publications resulting from the programme such as Master's theses, manuscripts of conference papers and journal articles, etc. which are stored in the partners' institutional repositories with open access.
- The partnership has also addressed the issue of sharing data of students and employees by processing these data in accordance with the requirements for data protection published at their websites. This is important in an international agreement of this type.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

The programme could benefit further from the collaboration and synergies as far as student support is concerned. This could be achieved by:

(a) enhancing further consistency between all the components of the programme, including administrative and e-learning support in order to offer a uniform learning experience for all students of the programme;

(b) offering additional support, infrastructure and flexibility to make sure that students benefit further from the partnership. For instance: benefitting from joint research culture and activities of the partner institutions; making sure that international mobility for placements or internships does not disadvantage some students because of their professional constraints.

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

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

D. Conclusions and final remarks

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

Concluding remarks

The EEC has concluded that the Interaction Design Programme is worthy of support and recommends that it be approved. The programme draws on the expertise of two dynamic higher education institutions and their partnership is in the spirit of internationalisation agenda/initiatives in both institutions. The programme covers a coherent and cohesive range of core subject matter, providing a valuable mix of theoretical foundations as well as applied and empirical studies.

The evidence presented to the EEC indicates that the Cyprus University of Technology is committed to student support and that this Programme is well designed and provides prospective students with a high level postgraduate experience.

We offer a number of recommendations that we believe will further strengthen the Programme:

Progression and retention

- Considering the large number of part time students and the high dropout rate, we believe it could be useful to improve the current mitigating policies in case of delays in course obligations, to help reduce the high dropout rate (see Section 1).
- We recommend adopting a more structured and detailed annual monitoring student progression approach (from the moment of admitting students to their exit or graduation), especially during the early stages of the programme (see Section 2), to lead to improvement regarding student drop-out rates (see Section 4).
- We recommend the use of learning analytics tools in the online learning environment which could help identify the possible causes of the high dropout rate and address them (see Section 1).

Curriculum and assessment

- We recommend replacing the Master Thesis Seminar with another project-based course, studying which the students could practice what they learned in some other large (but smaller in scope than the Master thesis) project (see Section 1).
- We recommend that students are exposed to and are able to fully engage with a broad range of real-world scenarios and authentic assessment approaches during their study (see Section 2).

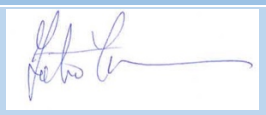
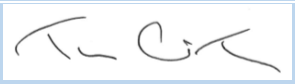
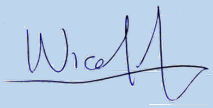
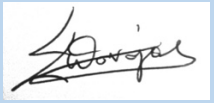
Student and staff support and resources

- We recommend that further continuous technical support and assistance is offered to teaching staff for the production of audio-visual teaching materials (see Section 3).
- We recommend that staff professional development around distance and online learning (including webinars) is offered as a structured professional accreditation programme (see Section 5).
- The partnership should consider the provision for targeted support and early intervention for international student cohort with diverse academic and industrial background, especially in the early stages of the programme (see Section 2).

Added value

- We recommend (see Section 6):
  - (a) enhancing further consistency between all components of the programme, including administrative and e-learning support in order to offer a uniform learning experience for all students of the programme;
  - (b) offering additional support, infrastructure and flexibility to make sure that students benefit further from the partnership.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Fabio Crestani	
Tom Crick	
Nicola Ferro	
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	
Valentinos Pariza	

Date: 18-02-2022