

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 19/1/2023

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**
FREDERICK UNIVERSITY
- **Town:** NICOSIA
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Business Law
- **Department/ Sector:** Department of Business and Law
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων

In English:

Business Administration E-Learning

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **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 the invitation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) has evaluated the “Business Administration” Bachelor (BA) e-learning program provided by the Frederick University in Cyprus, which is an existing Distance Learning (DL) program in Nicosia (Cyprus). The EEC reviewed and examined the accreditation report and materials for the BA e-learning program provided by Frederick University. The EEC evaluated the program that had been previously evaluated and accredited.

The EEC consisted of four academics: Chair of the Committee Professor Dimitrios Gounopoulos (University of Bath), the members Professor Dionisis Philippas (ESSCA School of Management), Professor Charilaos Mertzanis (Abu Dhabi University), the member and DL expert Professor Olaf Zawacki-Richter (University of Oldenburg) and the student member Ms Ioanna Onisiforou (Open University of Cyprus).

The evaluation for the program took place at the EUC premises on the 17th of January 2023. Prior to the site visit, but also after the visit, the EEC was supplied with a comprehensive internal evaluation report and other relevant documentation, as well as all the presentations that were presented during the day of the site visit. The EEC utilized digital tools in facilitating the preparation of the site visit and the evaluation.

The EEC met with the senior management team and academic faculty responsible for delivering the DL BA program, the administrative and other support staff from Frederick University, and a number of students (current and a graduate) who joined the program. In particular, during the site visit, the EEC met: the Rector George Demosthenous, the Vice President of the Council Dr Christoforos Charalambous, the Vice Rector of Quality Assurance and Academic Excellence Prof. Costas Kyriakou, the Vice Rector of Research, Development and International Relations Prof. Michael Komodromos, the program coordinator Dr Petroula Mavrikiou, the Dean of School of Business and Law Professor Eleni Hadjiconstantinou, the Chair of DL Unit Dr Nikleia Eteokleous, the Head of the Department of Business and Law Dr Nikos Koussis, a member of DL Unit Dr Alexandros Argyriades. Moreover, the EEC met the members responsible for the distance learning unit (Q&A session), a number of permanent and adjunct faculty (professors), 5 current and graduate students and the administrative personnel: the Director of Studies and Student Welfare Service Ms Andrea Athanasiou, the Director of Administration Mr George Kazantzis, the Director of Research and Interconnection Mr Alexis Onoufriou, and the Head of Library Mr Dafnos Economou.

In the morning session, the senior management team of Frederick University presented the institution and the DL BA program under review. Later, the EEC met the members of the DL Educational unit, the faculty members, the students and, finally, the administrative personnel. The discussion covered the program under review, its structure, academic issues related to the program, staff workload and organization, assessments, and resources. During the session with students, the EEC met with students who shared their experiences in Frederick University, and specifically for this program. In addition, the EEC has watched recordings in the distance learning platform and took a tour to the University's premises. The last session was the meeting with members of the senior management team for final questions and clarifications.

After the presentations in each session, the EEC had the opportunity to ask questions and collect further information. More specifically, the EEC asked questions related to the program (e.g., learning objectives, program's structure, delivery methods, assessments approaches, quality of learning (QoL), infrastructure and IT support, etc.), faculty, and the institution more broadly. Additional evidence was also provided with regards to information on placements and how it works with distance learners, example/s of assessments, information about open access material, platforms and other learning technologies, the learning management system and the infrastructure for supporting e-learning.

The site visit concluded with a meeting and general discussion with the senior management team (the Vice President and Vice Rector) for clarification questions from earlier sessions during the site visit. The EEC members found the discussions to be fruitful and informative. The EEC would like to thank all parties involved for their cooperation and support during the online evaluation.

The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Mr. Lefkios Neophytou, the CYQAA coordinator, for his efficient way of managing the process.

As we detail below, we find that the existing DL BA program under review is compliant in overall with the stated criteria and standards. However, the EEC identifies some specific areas of partial compliance that we recommend improving upon prior to launching the program.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Dimitrios Gounopoulos	Professor and Chairman	University of Bath
Olaf Zawacki-Richter	Professor	University of Oldenburg
Charilaos Mertzanis	Professor	Abu Dhabi University
Dionisis Philippas	Professor	ESSCA School of Management
Ioanna Onisiforou	Student	Open University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The EEC was provided with information regarding the entry criteria, the program's learning outcomes, the delivery of modules, and the assessment procedures, as demonstrated by the members of the Frederick University. The EEC found the admission criteria to be adequate and in line with those required from the Cyprus authority.

The program appears to recruit reasonably well. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, where all the program is open for Greek and Cypriot students.

The program spans 4 years and expects students to undertake and successfully complete 240 ECTS, containing a number of 18 core and 11 elective courses. The proposed structure initially offers a reasonable balance between the number of modules and associated ECTS between the accounting, marketing, management, finance and law modules and those that fulfil the BA. In particular, the core and elective modules give 10 ECTS each one, and the structure is as follows. The first two years contain 3 courses per semester while the last two years deliver only electives.

The language is Greek. The sessions per semester are 14 weeks where 9-10 hours are synchronous sessions. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear and adequate and clearly communicated to the students. The assessment of each course contains a 60% written final exam and 40% of other assessments that include mid-term exam, continuous assessment, coursework and other assignments.

The program's learning outcomes align with the expectations for the field and aim to provide graduates with both the knowledge and skills necessary for relevant employment. The EEC inquired about the career paths of graduates and potential barriers to employability.

Evidence of extensive quality assurance procedures, as part of an ongoing review and development, were provided by the Frederick University and the program coordinator under review. The EEC identified that there are internal policies and procedures in place to assure the quality of the program under review. Evidence of quality assurance procedures, as part of an ongoing review and development, were provided by the University. The Quality Assurance mechanisms are present, and they are well-aligned with international standards.

In 2019, the university received the E-xcellence Associates in Quality label from the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU). Thus, Frederick University demonstrates its active engagement in a European quality network in the field of online distance learning and teaching.

The EEC believes that the proposed BA distance learning program provides a platform on which to further improve.

Finally, the Frederick University showed evidence about its close links with local society and local educational school system.

Strengths

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

We find that the strong points of the BA program are, as follows:

1. A well-structured and organized program.
2. The program of study is well-designed and delivered in line with University's objectives and strategy.
3. Management, teaching and administrative staff are committed to the delivery of the program.
4. The process of teaching and learning supports student needs and development.
5. All present faculty have proper educational qualifications (Ph.D.) and professional experience.
6. Extensive quality assurance (internally and externally) in place. Many stakeholders are involved.

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 has some suggestions that may improve the program.

The EEC suggests grouping elective courses into specializations to make the program more compact and avoid courses that cannot be taught due to low enrolment. This would ensure the program's goals and create a clearer learning experience. This will also help to improve the program in a sustainable way.

The EEC believes that the program has too many learning objectives which are not clearly mapped to the modules offered in the program. Improving that, would make the program structure clearer and improve its continuity and progression.

Currently, the syllabi for the core and elective courses often lack continuity and connection to other modules in the program, particularly when students choose electives. A clearer mapping of how students progress through the program, from early introductory modules to later advanced ones, would be useful. The EEC suggests that a more compact structure and changes in syllabi over the semesters would help to demonstrate that the program meets its objectives, and identify areas where knowledge development and skills practice have not been sufficiently developed. This will allow the program team to address them in future revisions of the program.

The EEC suggests that the program should enhance its computer skills training in relation to business administration topics such as accounting, finance, etc., by incorporating a simple series of tools, e.g., Excel and/or STATA.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

2.2 Practical training

2.3 Student assessment

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

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

2.2 Practical training

Standards

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

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

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

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

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

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.

Frederick University, founded in 2007, is a private institution that offers a Bachelor of Business Administration program through distance learning. The program was first introduced in 2013 and the methodologies and framework for distance learning are outlined in study guides. Although a specific document outlining the distance learning methodology was not included in the evaluation application, the approach to online instruction was discussed by the Distance Learning Unit Director with faculty members during a site visit.

According to the study guides, DL courses run over 13 weeks during the semester with a maximum of 30 students that are taught by one faculty member. The Learning Management System (LMS) is the open-source system Moodle. Zoom is used for synchronous interaction.

In the distance learning pedagogical framework, interaction between students and faculty members and among students is emphasized as a crucial aspect of the approach to online education. Both asynchronous and synchronous communication are utilized throughout the courses. The pedagogical framework is based on three key pillars: directed learning, dynamic online interaction and assessment.

Interaction is crucial in fostering and maintaining a learning community in distance learning. Each course includes a minimum of 9-10 hours of synchronous teleconferencing, which includes at least 4 webinars throughout the semester, facilitated by Zoom. Additionally, weekly asynchronous activities are provided for interaction between students and instructors as well as among students.

Regular feedback is given to students throughout the course through communication tools on Moodle, self-study questions, and quizzes which are automatically graded for immediate results. Faculty members are expected to respond to student inquiries and posts within 48 hours. The study guide, available on Moodle, includes clear information on expected learning outcomes, course goals and objectives, assignments, assessment details, bibliography, weekly schedule, introduction to course content, supplementary resources, self-assessment and self-evaluation exercises.

Each course is completed with a final exam that the students can take online (e-assessment). The result counts 60 % towards the final grade, another 40 % is awarded on learning activities (mid-term exams, assignments, online participation, study groups) during the online courses.

Strengths

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

Learning activities, exercises and projects are designed to promote collaboration among students in which they apply their knowledge to solve complex problems. A variety of digital tools are used to support collaborative online learning. Using weekly topics and assignments in the courses is a good practice in the context of distance learning.

The size of the classes limited to 30 students per section allows the instructors to work in close contact with the students providing the guidance and the encouragement needed especially in distance learning settings.

Students who were interviewed reported that they appreciated the friendly and proactive support provided by faculty members. Instructors typically respond more quickly than the expected 48 hours, often on weekends.

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.

In addition to participating in online classes together, ways to enhance international experiences for distance learners could be explored such as inviting international experts and guest lecturers for virtual interactions (virtual internationalization).

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

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

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The EEC met with the majority of the teaching staff involved in the program.

Consistent with the University's goals, all faculty members possess Doctoral degrees (PhD or DBA), many of which were granted by leading institutions in the UK and EU.

The EEC found the faculty to be professional, engaged, and dedicated to the program.

The University has been successful in securing substantial external research funding and has established international collaborations. However, the distribution of research output among faculty members is uneven, with some faculty members not having a sufficient amount of recent publications to demonstrate active research efforts.

The department follows the University's promotion criteria and guidelines, but they could be further quantified within the department to increase transparency and provide more clarity to faculty members on expectations.

One way to achieve this could be to use commonly used journal lists, such as the ABS list in the UK.

Strengths

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

The EEC highlights the following strengths in this session:

1. The faculty members appear to be committed and dedicated to the program.
2. The specialization fields of the faculty members are reflected in the content of the program.

3. The faculty's research informs their teaching.
4. The experienced faculty have been with the University for several years, which suggests the presence of a good working environment that is beneficial to the program. Moreover, there is a good relationship between senior and junior staff.
5. Teaching outcomes are monitored and are carefully reviewed by the program coordinator and the Assurance of Learning committees, within timely and professional manner.

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.

Some specific areas of improvement, suggested by the EEC are after below:

1. While research is appreciated and encouraged, there is space for improvement in terms of how research is evaluated. In broad terms, quantity receives equal credit as quality. Although this approach has virtues as quantity has a quality of its own, focusing on higher quality publications informed by international metrics (i.e., ABS UK list of journals' evaluation) could further enhance the reputation of Frederick University in the long term.
2. The University should enhance the quantifiable criteria about promotion, research output, etc.
3. The link between research, education and business sector can be stronger.
4. Promotion policies criteria are not always very clear to all faculty members.

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

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

4.2 Student progression

Standards

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

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

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

4.4 Student certification

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The EEC met four students (three current students and one graduate), equally divided between Cypriots and Greeks.

The EEC surveyed students about their experiences, what motivated them to choose Frederick University and their specific program, their likes and dislikes, as well as their thoughts on the delivery of the program and related courses.

The student admission requirements were found to be clear and aligned with the higher education framework.

When asked about the main factors that influenced their decision to enroll in the program, students cited the cost (affordability and cost savings), the distance learning format, and the reputation of the university.

Students noted that the program and the university have a student-centered approach that promotes close interactions between students and faculty.

Overall, students were pleased with the program and the services provided by the University.

Strengths

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

Some of the main strengths identified by students include:

1. Frederick University is professionally oriented and has a good reputation, with a focus on the student experience.
2. The university has an efficient and effective admissions and administrative team.
3. Students receive adequate support for the modules they are enrolled in.
4. There is an evaluation process in place for students to provide feedback on the learning experience, and students are represented in the quality assurance process, allowing them to voice concerns and contribute to ongoing program and course development.
5. The university's infrastructure accommodates students with special needs and disabilities.

6. The students highlighted the flexibility of the distance learning programs as an advantage of the program being reviewed.

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 has some minor comments in this area:

Some of the students mentioned that there was a lack of accessibility to the online platform and/or with the email communication with instructors. A better technical assistance should be ensured in this case, since the program is delivered solely online.

Some of the students mentioned that a main motivation to join the other DL programmes was the reduced cost (a discount to fees). This should be carefully reviewed by the senior management because it concerns the sustainability of the new program.

Some students mentioned that the online assessment that replaced the physical exams is better. However, the University must ensure that the exams will be delivered on time, transparent and achieve the learning outcomes of the program.

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Partially 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.

The EEC visited the Frederick University's facilities and met with administrative staff. Based on the tour and interviews, the EEC determined that the University provides adequate resources for both students and faculty, including access to library materials, IT infrastructure, and administrative support. The University's facilities are modern, functional, and well-located, with a well-equipped library. The faculty members appear to have the necessary resources to fulfil their teaching and research responsibilities.

The design of online courses and production of study materials is supported by the Open and Distance Learning Center (ODLC, a central service unit). The Distance Learning Unit is responsible for supporting faculty members in distance learning course design, learning material and multimedia production, as well as professional development and faculty training in online teaching methodologies. The center also supports the quality control process for distance learning programs. The ODLC closely works together with the Learning Support Unit (LSU), which is responsible for the maintenance and administration of the learning management system Moodle. In 2019, the University received the Excellence Associates in Quality label from the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU).

Around 90% of all students on the postgraduate level are enrolled in distance learning programs. The ODLC caters for about 2.250 distance learning students and 100 distance learning faculty members / instructors.

All faculty members involved in teaching distance learning courses have to take a mandatory training programme facilitated by the ODLC.

Admissions criteria for distance learning programmes include that the prospective students have a good level of digital literacy. New students can take a non-graded Distance Learning Introduction Course (DLISC100) that introduces them to the distance learning mode of delivery. In addition, each module starts with a pre-week (Week 0) to make students familiar with the goals and objectives of the course, the online learning environment and their fellow students.

Furthermore, student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and individuals with special needs. Students are informed about the services available to them. In addition to the more generic services (like IT-support, library services, etc.), include a Counselling Service (supportive services for students with emotional issues), a Disabilities Support Program (learning disabilities or physical), career services, and various online services.

Strengths

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

1. The leadership team are committed to support faculty and students with resources when required.
2. The administrative staff are satisfied with the working conditions in the University.
3. The administrative staff is dedicated, actively participates in student life and supports academic experience. Administrative systems appear to be sound, with clear structures and roles.
4. The students are happy with the services provided.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

There are no serious issues related to the overall DL course development and student support systems. Here are just a few general and minor recommendations:

1. Given the rapid growth of distance learning and the high workload in this area to provide professional student and faculty support services, the university should consider investing more resources into the ODLC. Having one full-time instructional designer for each of the four Schools would be adequate.
2. The opportunities that learning analytics afford to implement an early warning system for students at risk could be exploited more systematically. Student data should be fed back to the Learning Support Unit and used to provide proactive student support, guidance and counselling.
3. Although Frederick University qualified for the E-xcellence Quality label for distance learning programs, the University is not a member of EADTU. Membership and participation in EADTU annual conferences (next one 2023 in Istanbul) would give Frederick University more international visibility in terms of good practice and also (practitioner) research into open and distance learning.
4. Access to more databases would be a welcome addition. This could be on subscription fee basis or through bilateral agreements with other Universities in Cyprus. Especially in doctoral programs (say in Finance) such access can be a game changer.
5. The University should provide more administrative training and more specialized administrative support (e.g., education psychology).

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

Sub-area		<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Partially compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Partially compliant
5.4	Student support	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.

The e-learning program in Business Administration is a currently running Bachelor degree with a 4-year content design and structure, provided by the Frederick University.

The EEC appreciates the significant progress that has been made on the program since it started by the Frederick University, including drawing upon external expertise, quality assessments and program structure consistent with comparable programs. This evaluation is to keep delivering the program with some changes as suggested, under the supervision of Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

The EEC welcomes positively the program as it holds the potential of allowing the University to promote its DL programs and reputation. It also provides an opportunity to foster collaboration with the industry and business.

Similar to most program proposals, there is space for improvement. Indeed, we have identified some areas for which reflection, elaboration, and further development is recommended. We have elaborated on those in each section above. We expect that the program will be supported in these areas.

- (i) the delivery of all the elective courses;
- (ii) the program's general orientation, instead of the specializations that would be more suitable to a professionally-oriented program;
- (iii) the sustainability of the program, bearing in mind the increased competition of educational services in Cyprus.

All the above issues can be reflected in the program content, as well as the course content in the current proposed curriculum.

We also recommend Frederick University to promote the program to the local and international market (using Greek and English languages as delivery language), and if possible, to professionals.

It will be beneficial for the program and the university in the long run if the program is accredited by international bodies (such as ACCA, CIMA, CFA and ACA) rather than just being a member. Even though the fees may be higher, the program will benefit from these accreditations.

Additionally, the University should consider investing in more database subscriptions in the future to support the research and teaching of the faculty and the graduate and undergraduate programs. Some steps have been taken in this direction, but more work is required.

The EEC would like to take this opportunity to thank the CYQAA coordinator, Mr Lefkios Neophytou, for managing the process both efficiently and effectively. His facilitation has been exemplar and has made it possible for the evaluation to run smoothly.



Finally, should the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education require any clarifications with regards to the points raised in the report, the members of the EEC remain at the Agency's disposal.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Dimitrios Gounopoulos	
Olaf Zawacki-Richter	
Charilaos Mertzanis	
Dionisis Philippas	
Ioanna Onisiforou	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 19/1/2023