Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 15/06/2022

External Evaluation Report
(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: European University Cyprus**

- **Town: Nicosia, Cyprus**

- **School/Faculty (if applicable): School of Business Administration**

- **Department/ Sector: Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance**

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

  "Ανάλυση Δεδομένων στη Λογιστική και Χρηματοοικονομική (Μεταπτυχιακό)" Εξ' Αποστάσεως
  In English:

  Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance (MSc) E-Learning

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

A. Introduction
This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

On June 15th, 2022, the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) had virtual meetings with representatives of the European University Cyprus to evaluate two new programmes "Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance (MSc) of which one is to be delivered as a "conventional" programme, the other as an e-learning (distance learning) programme. Both are 90 ECTS Master of School of Business Administration.

European University Cyprus is one of the private Universities of Cyprus established in 1960s. The European University Cyprus is rising in the rankings, gaining local, regional and global acknowledgement of the commitment to have a student-focused and innovative institution, with an emphasis on an international orientation, sustainability and industry/community engagement. With a history of more than 60 years, European University Cyprus has grown into a leading academic and research institution in the region with Schools of Medicine, Sciences, Business, Law, and Humanities, Social & Education Sciences and a Distance Education Unit.

The European University Cyprus' academic and research staff have extensive scientific activities in collaboration with national and international research teams that have led to significant research results. It is among Cyprus's highest-ranked universities.

With respect to the (virtual) visit and relevant to this EEC report, the EEC understands that the time was limited for detailed discussions but would recommend for the next review meeting not to exclude the inclusion of university current students, even if the programme under evaluation is new.

The visit was arranged and facilitated by Natasa Kazakaiou, representing the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. Before the online visit, the EEC members were provided with relevant program documents and videos to review. The EEC was presented with detailed information about the University and the MSc program. During the visit the EEC requested and received additional material including statistics and policies. During the site visit, the EEC met University leadership peers and professors, instructors and administrators. It also met current students from the BSc in Accounting (4 final year students) on the 17th of June 2022.

The agenda on the 15th of June included a number of meetings with different stakeholder groups as outlined below:

09.30 – 10.00	Meeting of the committee with the representative of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.
10.00 – 11.00	Meeting with the senior management team and course leader. Presentations about the university, school and programme under evaluation.
11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with staff responsible for the e-learning platform
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting with the Heads of the relevant departments, the programmes Coordinators and the programmes coordination Committee.
13.00 - 14.00	Break for lunch and committee discussions related to the evaluations progress.
14.00 – 15.00	Meeting ONLY with members of the teaching staff on each course for the duration of the year(s) of study (Q&A session).
15.20 – 16.00	Meeting ONLY with members of the administrative staff.
16.00 – 16.30	Tour of the facilities on campus
16.30 – 17.00	Meeting with the Head of the relevant department and the programmes' Coordinators - exit discussion (questions, clarifications).

The report concerning the new «Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance (MSc)» **conventional programme** below, will detail the following main areas of improvement identified by the EEC and to be adequately addressed by the European University Cyprus:

1. The (strategic and content) positioning of the programme as a cross-over between data analytics (including big data, digital technologies in finance and accounting, artificial intelligence) in terms of the programme content. This includes several issues that need explicitation and/or clarification, amongst which

   (a) the discussion on the most appropriate/suited modules for both Data Scientists and graduates from Accounting and Finance ;

(b)   the added value in terms of cohesive (research, education and delivery) complementary to the MSc courses.

2.   The clear difference between « blended or hybrid learning » and full-fledged e-learning, the latter not so much being an intensification of digital technologies to offer online or distance education of the same content as of the « conventional » programme, but e-learning as a distinctive delivery mode with distinctive matching pedagogies, student assessment methods and even potentially diversified/differentiated content and competences/skills to focus on. As a result the workload in each programme requires the inclusion of the workload allocation for the students to know in advance the expectations ;

3.   Programme leadeship is highly recommended to clarify and (strategically) plan the scalability of the programme within the next years if it wants to grow to larger numbers of students while keeping the support systems essential to successful delivery of the conventional programme.

4.   The EEC commends the European University Cyprus to launch this new programme only when it clearly addresses a curriculum for the different intake of the students. Given the international collaborations and natioinal success,

Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the remote site visit, the EEC concludes that the program under evaluation is fully compliant with some standards, and partially compliant with some other standards. The EEC found the design, approval, plans for monitoring and review of the program partially compliant and the present assessment report describes and justifies the above assessment and provides recommendations and suggestions for improving the program under evaluation.

The EEC further commends the institution for the best-practice study guides with respect to the programme and for the enthousiasm of both faculty/staff and students (although the EEC interacted only with the final year conventional course students)for this programme.

Notwithstanding this commendations, the EEC feels that the programme in general is partially compliant but further finetuned curriculum is required, as will be detailed and contextualized below.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Eleni Mangina	Professor	University College Dublin
Wanli Zhao	Professor	Bocconi University
John Qi Dong	Professor	Trinity College Dublin
Santi Caballé	Professor	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
George Savva	Student	Cyprus University of Technology

D. 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

  o *is regularly monitored in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date*
  o *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*
  o *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:*
  o *selection criteria*
  o *intended learning outcomes*
  o *qualification awarded*
  o *teaching, learning and assessment procedures*
  o *pass rates*
  o *learning opportunities available to the students*
  o *graduate employment information*

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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

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CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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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 Master of Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance is an 18-month full-time program that requires a minimum of 90 ECTS.

The anticipated mix between Cypriot and international students is quite satisfactory, despite the relatively low number of planned class size of 30 students. This is expected to improve further over the years to come. The countries of origin of the majority of students is Cyprus. The study program is in English, which makes it easy for international students to participate.

In general, the program is well structured, its objectives are in accordance with the overall strategy of the college and the university, and the intended learning outcomes stem from and are consistent to the content of the program. The purpose, objectives, and learning outcomes are clearly communicated and well-justified. The expected learning outcomes of the program are known to the students from the first week of the semester through the course syllabi, the course outlines, the website of the college, as well as the college's electronic platform. Overall, the program is meant to supply both practical and theoretical knowledge to students, which can serve them well in their professional careers, be it as they enter employment or as they continue and upgrade their current posts.

The structure and content include nine (8) core courses (80 ECTS) and one (1) elective (10 ECTS). However, this composition or design of course plan lacks flexibility to accommodate different students' needs due to their distinct background and training as well as career planning.

Moreover, the program of study reflects the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe that is, 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. Lecturers are already cooperating in different projects and thus well connected. It can thus be assumed that the course contents are coherent and coordinated as well.

The admission criteria are clear and adequate. The criteria ensure a relatively small student intake per year and this is a plus for the program as the small cohort size allows for nearly personalized teaching per student. The selection criteria are consistent with the vision of the School to maintain a strong reputation and continue to be seen as the leading university in Cyprus not only in terms of student numbers but also, and perhaps more importantly, in terms of quality, employability of the graduates and the like.

Students with a variety of backgrounds are admitted to the program. It is not clear whether some students may need additional courses or support. There are no clear criteria to decide which additional activities are required for a given student. There are no quality assurance processes to evaluate how adequate additional activities are and to adapt them in time. There is no clear plan for incorporating students into faculty research activities.

The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated to the students. Quality assurance mechanisms are present and fairly well-aligned with international standards. There is a number of quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies for the development and the management of the program of study. Importantly, formal quality assurance mechanisms are accompanied by informal processes which also appear to be working quite well.

Quality assurance of the courses is mainly based on questionnaires filled in by students. Based on the feedback, teachers improve materials continuously. However, the process as described lacks transparency. Feedback from quality assurance questionnaires should be centrally collected and analyzed, and a summary should be made available to staff and students. Students should get feedback on their assessments.

Currently, there is no possibility for students to complete their study with a Master thesis. Potentially this could be a problem for students that are interested in pursuing PhD.

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

In summary, the strengths of the program are as follows:

1. The study program is very well designed. European University has a long experience in delivering educational programs in business and management. More importantly, it runs a number of relevant programs already and this generates spillovers that can assist both students and faculty. In addition, the school has collaborations with other prestigious international schools.

2. The majority of faculty are PhD holders. This ensures high academic standards, which coupled with the ties the school has with the business world (i.e. guest lectures) offer the students both practical and theoretical insights. Lecturers are already cooperating in different projects and thus well connected.

3. The information related to the program of study is publicly available. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated to the students. The course syllabuses and course outlines clearly define the expected learning outcomes, the content, the teaching and learning approaches and the method of assessing student performance.

5. The program is clearly designed with an application focus and an intention to integrate theory and practice.

6. Small classes, which contributes to the interactions between academic and students.

7. Skills learnt in the program enhance the students' employability.

8. The competition from peer schools is relatively weak.

9. The study program is in English.

10. The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of the university by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice. In particular, the university is encouraged to keep applying for recognised external accreditations to evaluate the quality assurance of its distance learning model.

11. The academic staff are active researchers and appear to be capable of integrating research and teaching in the regular courses. We assume this also happens in the distance learning programmes of the university in terms of teaching innovation to continuously improve the distance learning model.

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

While in broad terms the program of study is adequate there is space for improvement:

1. The program offers students only one elective course out of a list of five available elective courses. Taking into account the small number of students expected to attend the program, it appears that students do not have a broad palette of elective courses to choose from. The EEC recommends considering different options to address this issue.

2. The content of some courses has both finance and accounting topics, which may limit space for in depth analysis in each area.

3. A way to enhance the international dimension of the program is to invite more visiting professors from abroad who could help in the development of the quality of the program and in the strengthening of the research profile of the program and staff through collaboration. In addition, it is recommended to develop a policy or guidelines to encourage research collaborations between the faculty and the students.

4. The EEC recommends that feedback from student questionnaires should be centrally collected, analyzed and shared with staff and students.

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	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.

The Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance has prior experience of offering two bachelor programmes in accounting, economics and finance that are accredited by CYQAA. Such experience could be beneficial as they start offering master programmes. Based on the application for external evaluation and meeting with teachers, it seems that the process of teaching and learning supports students' development of knowledge and skills in data analytics in the context of accounting and finance. In particular, the Academic Committee is established and chaired by the programme coordinator to review student evaluation, exam/assignment and other material every semester to ensure that teaching methods are aligned with intended learning outcomes. Student-centred teaching methodology is used in the programme, where students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process. Teachers provide adequate guidance and support for student-centred learning and teaching, and view teaching as a co-developmental process with students. Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern and effective. Mutual respect within teacher-student relationship is implemented in teaching. There are appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning. Formal procedures are established to collect student evaluation of courses via survey.

Theory and practice are not fully interconnected in teaching and learning. Study guide for each course is developed and provided to ensure that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning. In particular, real data and practical examples are used in teaching. For example, EIKON and S&P Capital IQ Databases are available to be used in teaching and learning for technical skills. The organisation and content of practical training support achievement of intended learning outcomes. The Department has a number of partnerships with industries, which could offer internship to students.

Assessment is consistent and fair for all students, and correspond to the European Qualifications Framework. In particular, the Academic Committee is established and chaired by the programme coordinator to review student evaluation, exam/assignment and other material every semester to ensure that assessment methods are aligned with intended learning outcomes. The assessment methods are appropriate, and the criteria for assessment methods are published in advance. Typically, a course will assess students by 50% exam, 40% assignment and 10% participation and small activity, in accordance with the national regulation. Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes are achieved, and students are given individual-based feedback. A formal procedure for student appeals is in place. Assessors are familiar with assessment methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field. New teaching staff can participate in professional development programmes offered by the University.

Study guide and other material are in place on e-learning platform, where student-teacher interaction (email, teleconferences, forums, quizzes), student-student interaction (teleconferences, forums, breakout rooms), and student-platform interaction (study guide, case studies, videos) can take place. To facilitate e-learning in particular, student advisors are provided additionally.

The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: summary, objectives, learning outcomes, keywords, basic and complementary bibliographic references, activities to perform, self-assessment exercises, and recommended study time. Each course has a minimum of 6 hours of teleconferences, which is considered an adequate number of hours of synchronous communication between instructors and students through live teleconferences, which are recorded for further reuse.

Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online forums of the course and other forums that can be created ad-hoc for facing special needs. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted by collaborative activities based on project-based learning, though it was not shown the design, procedure, and technical support for these activities.

Formative assessment is mainly based on submitted mid-term assignments and reports with the provision of personalised feedback during the course counting to 40% of the final grade, while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting to 50% of the final grade. Assessment procedure during the course is completed with a number of online quiz-based and other interactive activities counting to 10%. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order to self-assess student knowledge and skills of the course. The provision of more complex forms of e-assessment to assess competences and skills, such as critical thinking, is also provided though was not shown the specific assessment procedures during the meetings.

Strengths

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

E-learning had good flexibility during the pandemic for conventional programmes by allowing students to engage in both synchronous and asynchronous learning in the programme. The EEC considers the university's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time online students who have professional duties and need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion. The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a good student-teacher ratio and student feedback of e-learning programmes is very positive. The provision of personalised feedback in the submitted assignments and during the teleconference sessions as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-review are considered best practices. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by collaborative activities and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the weekly study guides, which allow the students to determine the work to be done every week, is also considered a best practice. The EEC urges the university to keep up these strong elements of their e-learning model while reinforcing them when possible.

The Academic Committee is established and chaired by the programme coordinator to review student evaluation, exam/assignment and other material every semester to ensure that teaching and learning methods are aligned with intended learning outcomes. Some teachers not only consider student evaluation in the end of the course but also informal feedback during the course.

Customized, individual-based teaching approach is used in the programme. Teachers care about students' different learning needs and provide students personalized feedback.

The School and Department have strong integrative ability to put together a competent multidisciplinary teacher team across schools. Many of them from School of Business and School of Science are experienced teachers. While the School and Department have a small size, there is no shortage of good teachers in this programme.

The University provides strong support for new teaching staffs through professional development programmes. A hybrid mode has been used to allow new teaching staffs to adapt themselves to the teaching environments with training while teaching in practice. There are on-going teaching innovations given that they create new programmes, allowing a creative and open culture to be fostered in the Department.

There are good initiatives bridging research and teaching at the School and Department level. For example, the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance and the University have partnership in researching FinTech, which is very relevant to data analytics. Good industrial relation and support too. Students can be involved in research initiatives carried out in collaboration with industries.

E-learning and other technologies are promoted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Good facilities for teaching and learning. For example, the Blackboard Learn Ultra platform is used as the e-learning platform. All necessary software is purchased for teachers and students to use in teaching and learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

While a number of statistics, programming, accounting and finance courses are offered under the current structure of curriculum, they are delivered primarily as compulsory courses (8 out of 9 in total). There is only one elective course could be followed, which may not meet diverse background and different learning needs of the students. This is particularly an issue given the multidisciplinary nature of data analytics, which often attracts students from a variety of disciplines at the bachelor level.

It would be better to accommodate students' different abilities and learning needs by increasing the number of elective courses and reducing the number of compulsory courses in the programme. For example, a more balanced structure of curriculum may consist of 6 compulsory courses and 3 elective courses. No need to develop new courses given that there is already a large pool of elective options. The issue could be addressed by repositioning a couple of compulsory courses to elective courses.

After this structural change, it could also be sensible to offer electives throughout the programme starting from the first semester so students can learn what they are lack of earlier rather than later. It might be good to allow students to follow 2 compulsory courses and 1 elective course in each of three semesters in the programme.

There is no master thesis. While I see the rationale behind to make the workload more reasonable, this could push students away from developing their research skills and involvements that are essential at the master level. Thus, it would be important to strengthen the assessment in terms of research skills across other courses in the programme.

Study guide and material on the e-learning platform need to be dynamically developed and improved over time with more accumulated experience.

The EEC wants to point out that onsite final exams may not be in line with the learning style of online students, and formative continuous assessment through the writing assignments and project-based collaborative learning during the course could be reinforced instead.

From the documentation provided and the information gathered from the meetings, it was not clear if gamification strategies are used to increase the student levels of motivation and engagement with the e-assessment process. In addition, more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents are also encouraged to support immediate and automatic feedback to students and self-evaluate their advances.

While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences were perceived as problematic if in the next years the program is expanded internationally and attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.

The practical training is not embedded within the curriculum of the programme although the Department has strong links with Industry and the EEC recommends for the Teaching and Learning board to review the curriculum structure and activities to re-assure the intake students that they will be exposed and training within real data analytics in accountancy and finance industry.

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	Partially compliant
2.2	Practical training	Partially 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 University ensures that all teaching staff meet the minimum requirements with respect to their educational level and that they are educated in areas very close to the topics they teach. The procedures regarding promotion consider the quality of teaching and research activity of the staff. This is a new program and therefore the EEC cannot comment on student/staff ratio. All teaching staff have relevant M.Sc./PhD degrees. From the discussion with the staff, it became clear that everyone is satisfied with the workload model, although the Department should adapt a transparent process with specific identified % of workload allocation on Teaching, Research and Administration duties distribution. According to the information provided to the committee, the number of teaching staff is adequate to support the program. The teaching staff rank is appropriate to offer a quality program of study.

Although EEC met with students from the BSc in Accounting, the students confirmed that they evaluate the educational work, and the instructors receive feedback via different routines (via surveys as well as daily interaction and communication).

Research activity is something that all staff members engage in, and it is a required workload, although it is not clear how the program curriculum will leverage the outcomes of the staff reach portfolio of research activities.

Strengths

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

The School has followed good practices in terms of recruitment of new academic staff members with potential and has a good gender balance in leadership positions in the School (3/7 female).

It is very encouraging that staff members are very active in research and there is a rich portfolio of EU funding within the School. It is also commendable that the core teaching staff engage with top-tier research and publications, especially the formal research collaboration with Cambridge University. and the fact that all full-time staff take the compulsory training for the EUC Professional development course. Through the discussions with the staff members there was an uncertainty on the timeframe of taking the PD course.

The university tries to maintain an active commitment of professors in terms of research. Thus, different types of incentives are offered to promote research and the internal promotion processes for professors take as a reference the number of publications, the impact of the journals, etc.

Professors are periodically evaluated on several indicators (number of publications and impact index, research proposals submitted, teaching innovation, student feedback, etc.) and provide awards for teaching and excellence.

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 School has recruited academic staff and professional development activities for teaching staff focused on the Teaching and Learning skills will prove impactful in the years to follow on the quality of the teaching and learning in the programme and the reputation of the programme. The panel would advise as well in the future rounds of recruitment to review the curriculum needs of the programme and the research strategy of the School to identify candidates with potential to progress within your institution. The university tries to improve the teaching skills of the teaching staff through the compulsory training for PD but it is unclear on the timeframe that the staff has to take this training. Additionally, the EEC is recommending a progress for growth systematic yearly review of each academic staff member with a mentoring scheme in place and clear goals/tasks year on year, that will provide the specific needs of each staff for career development and prompt for training and services that are necessary for the University to provide to staff to advance their skills and therefore the quality of the programme long term.
It is also recommended based on the gender ratio of the academics to have special arrangements for the female staff upon return from maternity leave (this can be arranged locally with lowering teaching load for at least a semester to encourage the female academics to catch up with the research progress) and provision of funding to catch up with the research activities. A mentoring system would be extremely valuable for new recruits in the School.
The EEC recommends having clear documentation in terms of how the research activities of the staff members benefit the curriculum and the teaching and learning activities within this program.

The teaching staff is to some extent the same persons who will be serving both the conventional and e-learning programmes. While this may ensure the same high standard of both programmes, from the meetings with the teaching staff, the EEC identified cases who moved from conventional to e-learning delivery during the pandemic rather than following organised, systematic and sound training programs. Therefore, the EEC raises doubts of whether the teaching staff is well trained and qualified for giving e-learning courses following the distance learning methodology planned for this programme.

The EEC suggest incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's Agenda 2030 in the training programs to the teaching staff in order to redesign the teaching materials accordingly with the aim to empower students with emerging competencies and skills (climate change, gender equality, global and ethical engagement, etc.) to take action for a more sustainable world.

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

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

> ### Sub-areas
>
> **4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria**
> **4.2 Student progression**
> **4.3 Student recognition**
> **4.4 Student certification**

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.*

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> - *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 cannot comment on this programme's students' progression as it is new, for the BSc in Accounting the drop rate is concerning. The EEC recommends for the School to have a rigorous process for data collection year on year on drop out, progression and employment on a gender basis.

In terms of the admissions procedures the EEC found the following:

1. Admission requirements in the application indicated that applicants should hold an undergraduate degree with a Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) of 2.50 (or equivalent) but there is no specific information in terms of whether the UG degree should be from ICT or Accounting/Financing background. During the discussions the EEC was informed that both background type of intake students will be accepted, but it needs to be stated clearly and whether there is a minimum requirement of level of Maths. Additionally the English language requirement is not started clearly in the admissions criteria. The allowances for Recognition Prior Learning should also be stated clearly and the max number of ECTS a student can apply for RPL.

2. There are no clear pre-defined regulations regarding the selection and intake of students:
   The number of students is determined (max 15 for the first intake), with a steady increase of approx. 5 year on year. Although this might allow teaching staff to focus on individual needs, this might also hinder students' motivation and social learning activities. The study program is a key element in ensuring the progress of the students, and it clearly defines the number and workload of the various courses, and how they are distributed in the 3 semesters. Special attention in the pedagogy should be paid towards the group activities and there should be in place external evaluation to ensure the active communication and student centred approach.

Strengths

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

The EEC cannot comment on the strengths of this new programme, but the School is to be commended on the achievement on the students of the school in ACCE and ICAEW exams. In addition, student feedback is mandatory at course end and is also actively sought on an on-going basis throughout course delivery for the rest of the programmes and it was confirmed from the current students. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the university could not be verified.

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 identified the following areas for (further) improvement:

1. According to students' feedback during this evaluation process, the panel could not have a clear picture in terms of the students' input at the quality review of the programs (apart from a survey completed) but only generally on the satisfaction of students from other programs that are face to face.
2. The teaching staff could be supported from the Institution with career development skills in Teaching and Learning targeted to individual academics' needs.
3. The panel also recommends the development of a 5-10 year plan for the programme and the capacity of intake year on year, in order to plan for recruitment activities in EU and abroad and increase the number of applicants and of enrolled students over the next years (including the recommendation to consider a market research and identify other institutions that provide online programmes similar to this MSc). The EEC recommends that the joint programmes with the Chinese University could be a productive strategy for the progression to this MSc given that the relationship has been established.
4. To attract the right type of students, it may be helpful to review the modules taught with content highly relevant with current market needs, and to actively promote and advertise the positive values and high potential of this program to prospective students and relevant stakeholders.
5. Some students of current FT programmes have informed the EEC that they are working full time and although there is flexibility from the academics in terms of deadlines, there should be a rule applied for FT programmes for no more than 20 working hours per week during semester time and up to 40 hours a week for weeks outside term time to ensure the study-life balance for the students.

The plans of the college are coherent (so students' admission, progression and recognition is (or is going to be) well conducted). To attract students with the right background, it is recommended to review the courses taught and their prerequisites (as advised in Section 1) with content highly relevant with the current Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance industry.

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	Partially compliant
4.2	Student progression	Not applicable
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 notes that the university's Distance Learning Unit is responsible for providing pedagogical and technical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. The unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment. The university has a handbook with academic regulations underpinned by the university procedures and policies with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. Even if not shown during the meetings, this handbook is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity across all the e-learning courses.

1. During the online visit, the availability of computer laboratories, designated areas for group and individual work and library and the teaching and learning resources, which are accessible to students of all the programmes through Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment, was clearly described:
   The institution periodically assesses the adequacy and suitability of these resources and informs the responsible services of the university for their actions. Students appear satisfied with the programme, the teaching staff, and their interactions with the teaching staff. All regulations supporting student progress and satisfaction monitoring are in place.
2. The library subscribes to online learning resources and accounts are provided to students throughout their studies for remote access to the University server.
3. The academic staff provide ongoing support to students in the academic and personal problems and difficulties they may face along with the University support services.

The EEC overall finds that the physical and human resources are adequate to support the current needs of the study program of the college. If the college wants to increase its intake, it is important to assess its resources and conduct the necessary adjustments.

Strengths

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

The EEC commends the School for the following:

1. Student welfare mechanisms for monitoring the sufficiency of student support are in place. Nevertheless, it is recommended to introduce an Equality Diversion Inclusion (EDI) Committee. Online access to Library services are available but it is recommended to consider the introduction of an online data lab given the subject domain of the programme.
2. The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a highly detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time to carry out the proposed activities. This is considered by the EEC as a best practice.The exact workload of each course should be described per course activity in order to determine the course workload expectations
3. The IT support is effective and efficient, and it is accessible both for the academic staff and the students.
4. All the students agreed that there are good and strong bonds between them and the academic staff and an immediate response from the academics when the students need them.
5. The Distance Learning Unit, even if not explicitly shown during the meeting, is also considered a best practice, due to its potential structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced e-learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the provided teaching while providing a good ground to faculty members to face e-learning. Not least considering the focus on lifelong learning and needs for continuing education.

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.

1. The panel recommends the School to invest in teaching staff professional development in terms of growth for progress and in a timely manner instead of offering ad-hoc courses during the year, to enable career growth
2. In terms of student support, a potential solution could be a "buddy coder" mentor system in order for students to reach out to students that are doing research in the area or alumni that have secured jobs in the area.

3. The panel also recommends the T&L Committee to include student representation of the program and to monitor the T&L processes, curriculum review and resources for each semester needs taking into account the student and staff feedback year on year with inclusion of an official industry advisory Board and External examiner.

4. The students are provided with a departmental email account, and the department need to ensure that communications are enforced through this email, which should be imposed as the official channel of email communication with the students.

5. The School should consider a rigorous process of data collection in terms of reviewing the pipeline and year on year alumni of the students through the administrative office.

6. Especially with online program delivery, attention is needed as studying in isolation it can impact the students' sense of belonging which could bring high rates of dropout. The study guides show the estimated study time in terms of the total number of work hours for each week. The EEC believes that this weekly estimation could be broken down into the time devoted to study the basic materials as well as the time devoted to carry out each of the learning activities proposed. This will help online students to plan their study time more effectively

7. The students confirmed in the meeting with the EEC that they are very satisfied with the academic and administrative staff and with the IT support. It is recommended though for students to be assigned to academic advisors, to whom they can refer in case they have any problem.

8. While the online courses include a plethora of multi-format learning materials (e-books, articles, videos, audio, etc.) which are good for distance learning, the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be always usable and accessible for students by making them short, include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility. In addition, the EEC suggests that some considerations should be taken into account to the provision of entire volumes (instead of clearly selected chapters and book pages) as basic materials in order to adapt them to online part-time students who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

9. It is recommended to have in place procedures, appropriate training, guidance, and support, for teaching personnel, to enable personnel to efficiently support the online educational process. The EEC did not receive any information on the planning for online moderators and communication pedagogical strategy to have an interactive online program.

10. The EEC further recommends the School to deploy external visiting staff and guest speakers to enrich teaching and connect it with the industry of Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance.

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	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

E. 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 EEC reviewed and examined the materials provided by the University pertaining to its MSc in Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance e-learning programme that is a new programme. The one-day remote (virtual) visit was held on 15.06.2022.

The EEC was presented with detailed information about the program. During the site visit, the EEC met with university leadership peers, professors, teachers, administrators, and 4 students (2 female and 2 male final year students) from the current conventional programme BSc in Accounting.

Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the remote site visit, the EEC concludes that most of the standards are met, while some of them are partially met.

The EEC identified the following key strengths:

1. The study program is very well designed. European University has a long experience in delivering educational programs in business and management. More importantly, it runs a number of relevant programs already and this generates spill overs that can assist both students and faculty. In addition, the school has collaborations with other prestigious international schools.
2. The majority of faculty are PhD holders. This ensures high academic standards, which coupled with the ties the school has with the business world (i.e. guest lectures) offer the students both practical and theoretical insights. Lecturers are already cooperating in different projects and thus well connected.
3. The information related to the program of study is publicly available. The assessment system and criteria regarding student course performance are clear, adequate and well-communicated to the students. The course syllabuses and course outlines clearly define the expected learning outcomes, the content, the teaching and learning approaches and the method of assessing student performance.
4. The program is clearly designed with an application focus and an intention to integrate theory and practice. Small classes, which contributes to the interactions between academic and students. Skills learnt in the program enhance the students' employability.
5. The competition from peer schools is relatively weak.
6. E-learning had good flexibility during the pandemic for conventional programmes by allowing students to engage in both synchronous and asynchronous learning in the programme. They are better positioned to learn based on their own interests, needs, and paces.
7. The Academic Committee is established and chaired by the programme coordinator to review student evaluation, exam/assignment and other material every semester to ensure that teaching and learning methods are aligned with intended learning outcomes. Some teachers not only consider student evaluation in the end of the course but also informal feedback during the course. Customized, individual-based teaching approach is used in the programme. Teachers care about students' different learning needs and provide students personalized feedback. The School and Department have strong integrative ability to put together a competent multidisciplinary teacher team across schools. Many of them from School of Business and School of Science are experienced teachers. While the School and Department have a small size, there is no shortage of good teachers in this programme.
8. The University provides strong support for new teaching staff through professional development programmes. A hybrid mode has been used to allow new teaching staffs to adapt themselves to the teaching environments with training while teaching in practice. There are on-going teaching innovations given that they create new programmes, allowing a creative and open culture to be fostered in the Department.
9. There are good initiatives bridging research and teaching at the School and Department level. For example, the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance and the University have partnership in researching FinTech, which is very relevant to data analytics. Good industrial relation and support too. Students can be involved in research initiatives carried out in collaboration with industries. E-learning and other technologies are promoted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Good facilities for teaching and learning. For example, the Blackboard Learn Ultra platform is used as the e-learning platform. All necessary software is purchased for teachers and students to use in teaching and learning.
10. The School has followed good practices in terms of recruitment of new academic staff members with potential and has a good gender balance in leadership positions in the School (3/7 female). It is very encouraging that staff members are very active in research and there is a rich portfolio of EU funding within the School. It is also commendable that the core teaching

staff engage with top-tier research and publications, especially the formal research collaboration with Cambridge University. and the fact that all full-time staff take the compulsory training for the EUC Professional development course. Through the discussions with the staff members there was an uncertainty on the timeframe of taking the PD course. The university tries to maintain an active commitment of professors in terms of research. Thus, different types of incentives are offered to promote research and the internal promotion processes for professors take as a reference the number of publications, the impact of the journals, etc. Professors are periodically evaluated on several indicators (number of publications and impact index, research proposals submitted, teaching innovation, student feedback, etc.) and provide awards for teaching and excellence.

11. The EEC cannot comment on the strengths of this new programme but the School is to be commended on the achievement on the students of the school in ACCE and ICAEW exams. on the achievement on the students of the school in ACCE and ICAEW exams. In addition, student feedback is mandatory at course end and is also actively sought on an on-going basis throughout course delivery for the rest of the programmes and it was confirmed from the current students. However, the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement taken by the university could not be verified.

12. Student welfare mechanisms for monitoring the sufficiency of student support are in place. Nevertheless, it is recommended to introduce an Equality Diversion Inclusion (EDI) Committee. Online access to Library services are available but it is recommended to consider the introduction of an online data lab given the subject domain of the programme.

13. The proposed courses have a complete syllabus plus a highly detailed weekly student-centred study guides, which include relevant information: objectives, learning outcomes, material to use, activities to perform, and complementary bibliographic references and recommended study time to carry out the proposed activities. This is considered by the EEC as a best practice. The exact workload of each course should be described per course activity in order to determine the course workload expectations

14. The IT support is effective and efficient, and it is accessible both for the academic staff and the students.

15. All the students agreed that there are good and strong bonds between them and the academic staff and an immediate response from the academics when the students need them

The EEC also identified a number of key areas for improvement and therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. The program offers students only one elective course out of a list of five available elective courses. Taking into account the small number of students expected to attend the program, it appears that students do not have a broad palette of elective courses to choose from. The EEC recommends considering different options to address this issue. The content of some courses has both finance and accounting topics, which may limit space for in depth analysis in each area.

2. The programme can be enhanced with international dimension by inviting more visiting professors from abroad who could help in the development of the quality of the program and in the strengthening of the research profile of the program and staff through collaboration. In addition, it is recommended to develop a policy or guidelines to encourage research collaborations between the faculty and the students.

3. While a number of statistics, programming, accounting and finance courses are offered under the current structure of curriculum, they are delivered primarily as compulsory courses (8 out of 9 in total). There is only one elective course could be followed, which may not meet diverse background and different learning needs of the students. This is particularly an issue given the multidisciplinary nature of data analytics, which often attracts students from a variety of disciplines at the bachelor level. It would be better to accommodate students' different abilities and learning needs by increasing the number of elective courses and reducing the number of compulsory courses in the programme. For example, a more balanced structure of curriculum may consist of 6 compulsory courses and 3 elective courses. **No need to develop new courses (although in depth of Python and R knowledge would require 2 modules of 10 ECTS instead of the inclusion of both skills in one module) given that there is already a large pool of elective options. The issue could be addressed by repositioning a couple of compulsory courses to elective courses**. After this structural change, it could also be sensible to offer electives throughout the programme starting from the first semester so students can learn what they lack earlier rather than later. It might be good to allow students to follow 2 compulsory courses and 1 elective course in each of three semesters in the programme.

4. While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences were perceived as problematic if in the next years the program is expanded internationally and attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the university would support this type of collaboration from the coordination perspective while recommending the constant adaptation of their distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration

5. While the online courses include a plethora of multi-format learning materials (e-books, articles, videos, audio, etc.) which are good for distance learning, the EEC suggests that the recorded teleconferences and video lectures to be always usable
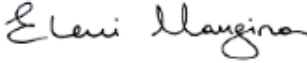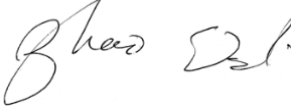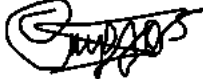
and accessible for students by making them short, include the teacher in all the videos to provide non-verbal communication, and add subtitles for accessibility. In addition, the EEC suggests that some considerations should be taken into account to the provision of entire volumes (instead of clearly selected chapters and book pages) as basic materials in order to adapt them to online part-time students who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

6. There is no master thesis. While I see the rationale behind to make the workload more reasonable, this could push students away from developing their research skills and involvements that are essential at the master level. Thus, it would be important to strengthen the assessment in terms of research skills across other courses in the programme.

7. Study guide and material on the e-learning platform need to be dynamically developed and improved over time with more accumulated experience.

8. The School has recruited academic staff and professional development activities for teaching staff focused on the Teaching and Learning skills will prove impactful in the years to follow on the quality of the teaching and learning in the programme and the reputation of the programme. The panel would advise as well in the future rounds of recruitment to review the curriculum needs of the programme and the research strategy of the School to identify candidates with potential to progress within your institution. The university tries to improve the teaching skills of the teaching staff through the compulsory training for PD but it is unclear on the timeframe that the staff has to take this training. Additionally, the EEC is recommending a progress for growth systematic yearly review of each academic staff member with a mentoring scheme in place and clear goals/tasks year on year, that will provide the specific needs of each staff for career development and prompt for training and services that are necessary for the University to provide to staff to advance their skills and therefore the quality of the programme long term.

9. Especially with online program delivery, attention is needed as studying in isolation it can impact the students' sense of belonging which could bring high rates of dropout. The study guides show the estimated study time in terms of the total number of work hours for each week. The EEC believes that this weekly estimation could be broken down into the time devoted to study the basic materials as well as the time devoted to carry out each of the learning activities proposed. This will help online students to plan their study time more effectively.

10. It is also recommended based on the gender ratio of the academics to have special arrangements for the female staff upon return from maternity leave (this can be arranged locally with lowering teaching load for at least a semester to encourage the female academics to catch up with the research progress) and provision of funding to catch up with the research activities. A mentoring system would be extremely valuable for new recruits in the School.

11. The EEC recommends having clear documentation in terms of how the research activities of the staff members benefit the curriculum and the teaching and learning activities within this program.

12. The EEC suggest incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's Agenda 2030 in the training programs to the teaching staff in order to redesign the teaching materials accordingly with the aim to empower students with emerging competencies and skills (climate change, gender equality, global and ethical engagement, etc.) to take action for a more sustainable world.

13. The panel recommends the School to to invest in teaching staff professional development in terms of growth for progress and in a timely manner instead of offering ad-hoc courses during the year, to enable career growth

14. In terms of student support, a potential solution could be a "buddy coder" mentor system in order for students to reach out to students that are doing research in the area or alumni that have secured jobs in the area.

15. The panel also recommends the T&L Committee to include student representation of the program and to monitor the T&L processes, curriculum review and resources for each semester needs taking into account the student and staff feedback year on year with inclusion of an official industry advisory Board and External examiner.

16. The students are provided with a departmental email account, and the department need to ensure that communications are enforced through this email, which should be imposed as the official channel of email communication with the students. It is recommended though for students to be assigned to academic advisors, to whom they can refer in case they have any problem.

17. The School should consider a rigorous process of data collection in terms of reviewing the pipeline and year on year alumni of the students through the administrative office.

18. The study guides show the estimated study time in terms of the total number of work hours for each week. The EEC believes that this weekly estimation could be broken down into the time devoted to study the basic materials as well as the time devoted to carry out each of the learning activities proposed.

19. The EEC further recommends the School to deploy external visiting staff and guest speakers to enrich teaching and connect it with the industry of Data Analytics in Accounting and Finance.

After carefully considering all the facts and evidence provided to the committee as part of this evaluation, the committee stresses that although all criteria are either "compliant" or "partial compliant", this report is to be read as a «pending evaluation» in the

light of revision of the curriculum as noted in the previous sections (number of electives, depth of modules and number of electives per semester)

F. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Eleni Mangina	
Wanli Zhao	
John Qi Dong	
Santi Caballé	
George Savva	

Date: 20/06/2022