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Date: 03/02/2023

External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:** University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Business
- **Department/ Sector:** Management
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**
In Greek: Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (4 έτη / 240 ECTS, Πτυχίο, Εξ Αποστάσεως)
In English: Business Administration (4 years/240 ECTS, Bachelor of Business Administration, E-Learning)
- **Language(s) of instruction:** English/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

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) expresses its gratitude to the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for the opportunity to evaluate the Bachelor of Business Administration (4 years/240 ECTS, E-Learning). This is an existing program currently on offer by the University of Nicosia. The program is delivered by the School of Business and more specifically by the Department of Management. The program equips individuals and working professionals with the necessary skills to excel in the challenging, constantly evolving business world. The program covers a broad range of modules, making it possible for students to study the full range of business topics.

On Tuesday 31st of January 2023, the evaluation took place on-site. It was conducted by a team of three academic experts, a professor in e-learning, and a student representative. The EEC met with key individuals at the University, including the Rector, the Heads of the School of Business and the Department of Management, staff involved in the delivery of the program (both academic and professional support staff) and students. The data gathered during these meetings, along with self-evaluation reports, presentations, and other materials, provided a comprehensive view of the program's strengths and areas for improvement.

The report contains a thorough analysis of the program's current state and identifies areas for growth. The recommendations put forward are based on best practice and it is hoped that they will lead to improvements in the Bachelor of Business Administration program. The EEC hopes that the report will be a valuable resource for the University and the program team, as they work towards their goals.

If CYQAA has any questions about the report, the EEC members are available to provide answers.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	Professor	Newcastle University
Christina Boutsouki	Professor	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Michele O'Dwyer	Professor	University of Limerick
Santi Caballe Llobet	Professor (E-learning Expert)	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Maria Agathangelou	Student Representative	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

Findings

The Department of Management of the School of Business Administration of the University of Nicosia, responding to its mission, offers a BA in Business Administration. The structure, management and operation of the Program are regulated by the Internal Regulations of Undergraduate Studies.

The Distance learning BA comprises a broad range of modules across the business spectrum to help students develop foundational business knowledge. The study program was designed and developed through the collaboration of teaching staff members and students, program coordinator, the Head of the Department and the Dean of the School. Student evaluations have also provided useful insights when it came to program development.

The program aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of business functions and the role of the external environment in which organisations operate. It focuses on developing analytical and interpersonal skills, as well as leadership and organisational abilities. Upon completion, students will be able to assess business risks and opportunities, utilise modern technology and analytical tools, communicate effectively, and demonstrate ethical behaviour. The program includes objectives such as enhancing marketing skills, understanding legislation and accounting principles, and analysing financial and economic conditions.

Market needs and student employment opportunities have been taken into perspective when selecting the subjects to be included in the curriculum. It was noted that a significant number of students on the program are working fulltime. This suggests that the program is particularly timely in that it address a societal need for education for those who cannot access such training during work hours.

The program adheres to the European Qualifications Framework. ECTS reflect the student workload that is necessary to complete a module. Student performance and completion statistics are in line with the expectations of the EEC.

Information on the program is publicly available.

Strengths

There is a logical sequence and coherence in the program with core modules offered in the first year of the program. They offer the foundational knowledge required and become a platform on which to stage the rest of the program.

Teaching staff in the same discipline work together in the development of the modules, exam and other forms of assessment preparation through peer review process.

Exams are double marked.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) The program learning outcomes and program content should be realigned so that they are compatible. For example, learning goal 2 seeks to develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills and leadership potential, but there are only 3 modules with management, 1 with entrepreneurship and none with leadership in the title. The same can be said for other program learning outcomes. It is recommended that the program team undertake a comprehensive revision of the learning outcomes.

- 2) The objectives need to be narrowed down and be more focused, so that they correspond with the subjects taught. The objectives and learning outcomes of each course should be considered within this respect and evidence should be provided when it comes to the various assessments used in the courses and their contribution to the learning objectives.

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	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.*

Findings

The nature of the program is compatible with distance learning delivery and the methodology provided is appropriate for the particular program of study. The University's distance learning quality assurance is evaluated by external and voluntary accreditations, such as QS Stars and EFQUEL.

The University's learning management system supports online teaching, learning and administrative processes. This is a Moodle installation with all the basic online services available. The platform specifically provides synchronous (through Webex) and asynchronous tools to support the interaction needs of students with the lecturers, the other students and with the materials. The platform also provides e-assessment procedures through quizzes with automatic feedback in order to assess students' knowledge. In addition, more complex forms of e-assessment to test complex competences and skills, such as critical thinking and teamwork, are provided, though were not shown during the visit. Each course has a minimum of 9 hours of synchronous communication (video conferencing) between lecturer and students.

Collaboration among teachers and students (and among students) is conducted through the online subject forums and other forums that can be created for ad-hoc events. In addition, collaboration among students is promoted, though more details about the design, procedure and technical support for such activities would have been welcome.

Formative assessment of the courses is provided through personalised feedback during the course on essays and reports submitted, this counts for up to 40% of the final grade; while summative assessment is based on a mandatory final exam counting for up to 60% of the final grade. In addition there are a number of weekly online quiz-based assignments. Optional formative (self-assessment) activities are included in the weekly study guides in order for students to self-evaluate course knowledge and skills.

Students with special learning needs are supported. Special needs are registered upon student enrollment and taken into consideration, especially with respect to exams (oral exam/extra time).

Strengths

The EEC believes that continually evaluating the quality assurance of distance learning by non-mandatory external accreditation organisations is a good practice.

The EEC considers the University's distance learning model to be in line with the specific profile of full and part-time students with professional and/or family duties, who need to learn effectively and in a timely fashion.

The provision of personalised feedback in the assignments submitted and during the teleconference sessions, as well as the feedback based on rubrics and peer-assessment (even if they were not shown during the meeting), are considered best practice. In addition, the EEC recognises the many benefits of collaboration among students promoted by the collaborative activities and discussions organised in online teams. Finally, the weekly study guides, which make it possible for the students to determine the work to be done every week, are also considered best practice.

The EEC urges the University to keep up these strong elements of their distance learning model, while reinforcing them where possible.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) 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.
- 2) The University could use more sophisticated forms of feedback based on intelligent tutoring systems, and conversational pedagogical agents can be used to support immediate and automatic feedback to students helping them to monitor their progress.
- 3) While the EEC emphasises the benefits of any form of interaction and collaboration, the online synchronous teleconferences and the online teamwork among students were perceived as potentially problematic as the programme expands. This is likely to become a bigger challenge if the program continues to expand internationally and is attended by many students across different time zones. It was not clear how the University would support and coordinate this type of collaboration, the EEC therefore recommends continual adaptation of the distance learning model to support this situation by increasing the asynchronous online interaction and collaboration.

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.*

Findings

The School of Business has 34 full time members of Faculty, 14 visiting Faculty and 38 adjunct Faculty, 3 Departments and more than 2000 students, half of which are approximately distance learning. Considering the above in conjunction with the e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit, the EEC feels that there is sufficient resource invested in delivering this program at present.

University of Nicosia produces strong research outputs both with regards to research publications and externally funded projects. Members of the teaching team are typically engaged in relevant research activities which can inform teaching. Such spillovers can positively affect the student learning experience and offer a more up-to-date insights into the areas that the program covers. It was positive to see that the University recognises their efforts and has an established process for managing research time for those engaged with research.

The distance learning BA is underpinned by a coherent distance learning pedagogical strategy which is supported by a strong Distance learning unit with E-learning pedagogical expertise. This unit, called "e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit", assists faculty members by providing technical training and support for distance learning education. These services enable the online delivery of a multimodal approach which reflects the on-campus learning supports in a virtual environment, e.g., e-learning and e-assessment strategies, tools and techniques.

Faculty are consulted annually to identify new training and development needs, and may make additional suggestions as the need arises. In addition, the unit provides a 13-week program eLearning training and development which faculty can take in consecutive weeks or over a two year period. The program aims to strengthen the technical skills and technological abilities of faculty in online teaching. The program is also certified by the University, as part of its distance learning professional development.

The distance learning unit also generates and monitors reports on student participation in the distance learning BA. When difficulties are noted, they are brought to the attention of either the academic lead for the module or the technical support unit, depending on the nature of the difficulty. The system also facilitates student evaluation of the program team's teaching performance which feeds back into the module.

Strengths

Appropriate systems and procedures are in place to address a range of challenges faced by faculty in devising online learning. These pedagogical and technical support mechanisms are well structured and are offered on a face-to-face basis and recorded for later access. In this manner the school has built up a good repository of e-learning training and development resources for faculty which is updated on an ongoing basis.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) The University is encouraged to continue investing in developing teaching and learning supports for online learning and to explore innovative new technologies and methodologies which will enrich the faculty teaching and student learning experience.
- 2) The University could articulate all aspects of faculty workload in a single place. In turn, workload management could be organised in a more structured and transparent system.

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	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.*

Findings

The admission criteria are based on well-defined criteria that are in line with the EEC's expectations for such a program. This applies to both the High School grades (or equivalent) and English Language proficiency. The entry criteria for accepting new students and transferring students (who need to complete a minimum of 120 ECTS for the Bachelor Degree) are clear and consistently applied.

The regulations governing the University, School, Department and program operations were very detailed and covered a wide range of areas. With regards to the program, there were provisions for student progression, recognition and certification.

When it comes to online delivery, the University's Moodle platform provides learning analytics tools for monitoring student progression and performance based on collecting information related to student with lower grades, poor participation or with undelivered activities. This information is useful to identify students at risk, so that the lecturers can intervene with corrective measures. However, the positive impact in terms of improvement of student success from the specific corrective measures was not shown during the meetings.

Student participation and engagement is monitored on a weekly basis. There is a process in place to cater for students at risk. Support on various levels (coaching, psychological support, etc.) is readily available. Students regularly communicate with academics. The response time to (problems/questions) is very good, typically, issues are resolved within 24 hours.

Students are also supported through online seminars, and have access to a repository of training videos and a helpdesk when necessary. The distance learning unit also generates and monitors reports on student participation in the distance learning BA. Where difficulties are noted, either the academic lead for the module or the technical support unit are alerted, depending on the nature of the difficulty.

Strengths

Student feedback was actively sought throughout and at the end of each course through online anonymous surveys. The EEC would like to note the response rate is quite high for this type of survey (55%), which makes the information collected fairly reliable. However, evidence of the effectiveness of this information in terms of specific measures for improvement and actions plans taken by the University, was not provided during the evaluation.

A relevant strength was noted around the low drop-out rate (less than 10%).

The EEC would like to note that students benefit from a very good student-teacher ratio and that student feedback is very positive.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) The University is encouraged to adopt more sophisticated forms of learning analytics mechanisms based on AI, and specifically Machine Learning, to monitor and predict student performance and dropout, in order to be able to provide timely corrective measures. This is strongly recommended in the context of the University's plans to increase its academic portfolio and the number of online students.

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	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.*

Findings

The EEC had an opportunity to meet with representatives from various academic support services, including academic quality, e-learning support unit and library. The EEC also had an opportunity to consider these services from a student's point of view. During the tour of the facilities, the committee observed that the University of Nicosia offers high quality facilities in all areas, with diverse teaching spaces to accommodate various teaching styles and groups, excellent library facilities. The University of Nicosia is a founding member of the Cyprus Libraries Consortium.

The University provides support for students with special learning needs. Student support services have also been migrated online to support students on the distance learning BA. For example the careers services have built an online repository for e-learning students and offer online seminars and training, one to one virtual consultations for students etc. Student welfare services are also available online to support students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health issues and medical concerns.

The proposed modules have a syllabus plus a weekly study guide that includes relevant information: course objectives and learning outcomes, course contents, learning activities, assessment methods and required textbooks. However, both the bibliography and assessment are not detailed, but refer to the LMS.

The University's ePSU unit is responsible for providing pedagogical support for designing, creating, implementing and evaluating online courses. This Unit addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative and summative assessment in accordance with international standards. The Unit also provides a Faculty Handbook with guidelines for the development and delivery of distance learning that establishes the main characteristics a distance learning course should have. It is a good reference that guarantees the quality and homogeneity of distance learning courses. Finally, as mentioned previously, the Unit includes a variety of training programs, some of them officially certified, to faculty members for distance learning professional development.

Strengths

The ePSU unit, is considered best practice, due to its structure, resources, infrastructures and services devoted to enhanced distance learning. The EEC believes that it can be a powerful support for guaranteeing and maintaining the quality of the teaching provided, while providing a good foundation for faculty members engaging with distance learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- 1) Based on the study guides provided by the University, the EEC recommends that they are kept separate to the LMS. It is also recommended that they include more information in order to guide online students through the course, such as a detailed learning methodology and bibliography, both required and complementary, self-assessment exercises, and recommended study guide, so that online students can plan their study effectively. The EEC would like to draw attention to this point in order that the study guides would be updated based on the recommendations above.
- 2) From the feedback collected in the meeting with the students, the EEC would like to suggest to make teleconference sessions shorter and/or organise short breaks in the middle if they last more than 2 hours in order to make these online sessions more effective in terms of learning absorption and fruitful discussion and collaboration

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	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

D. Conclusions and final remarks

In this report, the EEC has provided feedback on the program evaluated. The report includes the main findings, showcases the program’s strong points, and suggests ways to improve.

Overall, it was positive to see a group of enthusiastic and committed coordinators and lecturers who teach in their area of expertise, within a properly designed distance learning environment. As it became apparent based on the formal presentations and interviews with teaching and administrative staff, there is a high level of enthusiasm and passion and willingness to make the programme succeed.

The EEC hopes that this feedback will guide future growth and contribute to the success of the program. If the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education requires any clarification on the report, the EEC is available to assist. Finally, the EEC would like to express its gratitude to the CYQAA coordinator for his efficient and effective management of the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Savvas Papagiannidis	
Christina Boutsouki	
Michele O’Dwyer	
Santi Caballe Llobet	
Maria Agathangelou	

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