

Doc. 300.1.1/2

Date: 11/05/2023

# External Evaluation Report (E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
University of Nicosia
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** School of Law
- **Department/ Sector:** Politics and Governance
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**In Greek:**

Δημόσια Διοίκηση (1,5 έτη, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ, Εξ Αποστάσεως)

**In English:**

Public Administration (1,5 years, 90 ECTS, Master of Arts, Distance Learning)

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

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Concentrations



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

## A. Introduction

*This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.*

The site visit at the University of Nicosia took place on 10 May 2023. During the site visit the committee had the opportunity to meet with a full range of institutional and faculty leaders, teaching staff, administrative staff, and current and former students. The work of the committee was supported by good documentation which was provided to the committee in advance. The documentation was helpful in assessing the programme according to the criteria set by the agency. The committee members benefited from a number of informative presentations on the institution and the planned programme. In addition, the committee found that all participants were very thoughtful and open during the discussion.

The EEC would like to express its gratitude to Mrs. Loucia Constantinou, the CYQAA coordinator, for her efficient and very supportive management of the process and for her preparation for the evaluation day.

As we detail below, we find that the Masters programme is operating in compliance to the stated criteria and standards. The EEC has some suggestions provided below to enrich and strengthen the programme in the medium to long term, without inducing any constraints to the current application's success in this round.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>University</i>
<b>Kevin Orr</b>	Professor of Management	University of St Andrews
<b>John K. Christiansen</b>	Professor	Copenhagen Business School
<b>Vasileios Kefis</b>	Professor of Public Management	Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences
<b>Albert Sangrà</b>	Full Professor	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
<b>Manolis Diakourakis</b>	Ph.D. Candidate	University of Cyprus

## C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

### **Findings**

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

### **Strengths**

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

### **Areas of improvement and recommendations**

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

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

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

### Sub-areas

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

### 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

#### Standards

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

### 1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

#### Standards

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

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

### 1.3 Public information

#### Standards

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

### 1.4 Information management

#### Standards

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

### Findings

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



There appear to be well-developed processes for Quality Assurance. These are informed by European Guidelines and Standards for Quality Assurance - 2015; European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes; and Greek Law on Higher Education: 4957/2022 “New Horizons in Higher Education Institutions: Strengthening the quality, functionality and connection of Higher Education Establishments with society and other provisions”.

There are Quality Assurance Committees which operate at both Department and School levels. In addition, there are regular (and many) external accreditation exercises by recognised bodies which the School and institution engages with. These provide international benchmarks.

The development of programmes benefits from a team-based collaborative approach among academic staff, and also involves student feedback and stakeholder involvement.

The School has a high degree of awareness of the external strategic environment - including the labor market, student and employee expectations, competitors’ provision and pricing, and so on - and this is used to help review and develop provision. Data on completion rates (including drop out rates) were not immediately available on the day but were provided to the committee the following day.

The content and delivery correspond to the EQF. There is little overlap between courses, and there is awareness among academic staff of how individual components fit within the whole. The logic of the overall coherence could perhaps be communicated more explicitly, and this would also help in the orientation of students and the recruitment and marketing processes.

The opportunities for international students to participate are limited by the language of delivery.

Student feedback is used regularly by academic staff as part of departmental and school-level discussions. Staff are aware of the challenges of studying alongside employment.

### Strengths

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

- The Masters programme is consistent with the mission and vision of the School and University, especially in relation to social responsibility and impact.
- The Department and School have excellent experience of external accreditation processes. We were pleased with the approach to this Evaluation. It was evident that it was being seen as an opportunity for learning and development.
- The administrative staff are very engaged with academic staff and with students, and there seems to be a strong collegial ethos. There appears to be good quality working relationships within the Department.
- The level of provision of e-learning support and development was impressive.

- The alumni that we spoke to were clear that the programme has very positive impacts upon their career progression.
- There is very strong awareness of the strategic environment of the programme, informed by a rigorous PEST and SWOT analysis.
- As detailed in later sections of this Report, there is sound pedagogy for the DL elements.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- We see some scope for the improvement of the articulation of student progress across the curriculum. i.e. the accumulation of skills from one course to the next.
- We would encourage the comprehensive use of student feedback in considering improvements in the programme design and content for the future.
- As the Programme matures, there is an opportunity to take stock of what the distinctiveness of the Programme might look like in the medium and longer term.

**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	Partially 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 e-learning programme of studies covers several disciplines. All students follow the same progress through two choices (3 semesters or 1 year with master thesis). The e-learning programme study guide includes particular information about the aim, content and structure of the programme and its modules, and describes student related processes and services regarding admission, progression throughout the programme and courses and regulations offered by University. This seems to be updated regularly, although care must be taken to ensure an ongoing update and review.

The Unit is making an effort to meet the needs of modern student-centred learning.

This specific e-learning programme helps improve the students' soft skills. Processes in place help ensure programme regulations and requirements are available in a timely manner to students and staff alike, and documentation needed on course content and results is available.

A majority of the students at the national entry competition choose the e-learning programme as one of their top choices. Students are admitted with relatively high grades and admittance with lower grades is rare, which enables teaching to students with a uniform body of knowledge and preparedness. The e-learning programme has a formal process of reviewing and annotating its annual postgraduate programme of studies also taking into consideration the regular course evaluations by the students.

The academic staff showed open interest in promoting student-centred learning practices including lectures, course workshops, seminars, individual or team projects and the use of the education platforms, although there is some room for improvement. Staff access to students needing further support was mentioned as an additional provision to ensure necessary support was made available.

All postgraduate courses are available on the university platforms. The platform is also used for the regular evaluation of courses, teaching, examinations and communications. All courses, core and elective, are evaluated by the students taking them, which provides useful feedback to the programme on student perceptions as well as performance. Also, there is extensive use of online access to course material. The online access provides students with early and timely access to course material and supports significant flexibility for the student in their preparations for each course, further strengthening the learning environment.

Regulations of the programme ensure that course delivery and examination take into account student mitigating circumstances, e.g., family events and illness, as well as continuous circumstances such as learning disabilities. So there are procedures at the university to accommodate students with special learning disabilities as well as care for students with disabilities and their access to different spaces. The programme has "Studies Counsellor" advising students on issues related to course content, course selection and processes of course evaluation and grading. Students can also contact academic staff directly or online for consultation and advising. This was encouraged, as stated by both staff and the interviewed students. It is noteworthy that current and graduated students of the programme highlighted the same high level of staff accessibility and support.

The e-learning programme reflects the objectives of the university to provide a broad yet critical education with familiarity of ongoing topics, including law, technology development, policy changes, management and broader scientific concerns.

Student interaction with academic staff seems wide open, as noted by both current and former students and by academic staff interviewed. Support is in place to ensure students' progress in the programme.

Assessment is provided through in-presence final examinations (60%) and other online activities, some synchronous and some asynchronous. Projects and essays score another 30% of the final mark, and weekly activities suppose another 10%.

All courses, core and electives, are evaluated by students taking them every semester using the online system. There is student mobility through the Erasmus programme. The Department has established relations with similar programmes and Units abroad, so there is scope for collaborative expansion.

The e-learning programme encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research and innovation in teaching methods and use of new technologies. The Unit has adopted good practices of technological support and extensive use of information technology for the delivery of teaching, teaching support and student information, both in person and online.

Student progress is followed electronically through their course and programme performance and there is effort to support those students that fall short of expectations.

Course workloads are aligned with international standards. Interviewed current and former students of the programme highlighted the support staff provided them on - or off- student hours for individual courses, as well as ad hoc for selection of specialisation, careers, and external academic activities such as student competitions.

Many programme graduates find employment in their field of study, including without further postgraduate studies, so the programme offers strong employment opportunities.

### Strengths

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

- The e-learning programme is making an effort to meet the needs of modern student-centred learning. There is ongoing assessment of the programme, course content and examination formats.
- The use of the platform is commendable, but there is scope for expanding it, for instance guest talks available online.
- Longer term courses could be made available to alumni as a form of continuous learning and a way to retain close relationships with the programme and the university. There is also a clear opportunity to make greater use of the programme alumni in the various courses, as guest speakers and student project expert panelists.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- Consider strengthening the e-learning programme use of practitioners with relevant expertise, offering ongoing learning events with alumni together with current students for improved programme relevance and impact.
- Assessment practices could take greater advantage of the potential of asynchronous tools and more advanced assessment strategies.
- This can be done, first, by reinforcing the continuous assessment approach as a way for formative assessment, giving a higher score for the weekly activities; and second, by initiating some co-assessment practices through the use of electronic rubrics.

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

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



### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### **Sub-areas**

#### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

### **3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development**

#### **Standards**

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

### **3.2 Teaching staff number and status**

#### **Standards**

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

### **3.3 Synergies of teaching and research**

#### **Standards**

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

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

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

The teaching staff is recruited from the two departments involved in the program, and the departments follow the university guidelines for recruitment. It is reported that the university has a systematic process for evaluating faculty and courses.

Candidates for Distance Learning programs must possess a certain level of ICT skills depending on the type of course and specific program. Besides, the e-learning program has regular professional activities and workshops on ITC and e-learning.

The teaching staff comprises active researchers in their areas of specialization, mainly in law and politics and governmental issues. The program reflects the qualifications of the academics, being much focused on the local context of Cyprus and Greece in their dissemination and research publications.

The number of involved academic staff in the program is adequate to support the programme, and their staff status is relevant to ensure the desired level of teaching. Their experiences and background is relevant. There is no mention of visiting professors but there are a few adjunct faculty. The extent of engagements and contribution to the programme from these two groups under study is not clear. The number of visiting staff does not exceed the number of permanent staff.

The teaching staff collaborates across departments and have been very active in the development of the proposal under study here. Staff mentions the focus on active collaboration with society as important and especially the Law department has a history with much public exposure. The publications of the staff are within the relevant disciplines and related to the courses in the proposed programme.

There seems to be a struggle between allocation of time for teaching and research, and some academics seem to have limited time for research.

Teaching staff is provided with induction training and professional development for their e-learning teaching.

### Strengths

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

- The program represents an interesting combination of two adjunct research fields intertwined in the complex practice of local, national, and international governance.
- The program allows researchers from two fields and departments to blend and offer an interesting program to students.
- The teaching staff are very professional and highly motivated, with a great deal of teaching experience.
- The teaching staff have a strong public profile and are regularly engaged in outward-facing activities.
- The faculty training and development strategy, especially related to supporting the e-learning capacity for the academic staff, is really very well structured and organized.
- The academic staff has used the development of the new program as an opportunity to collaborate across the departments, and they positively mentioned “team spirit.”

### 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 present learning objectives for the overall program under evaluation mention learning objectives in areas such as understanding issues from a “rich theoretical background,”; “communication skills,”; “managerial skills,” and being able to promote “innovation and leadership” in the public sector. These areas of research are presently not strongly represented in the qualifications of the academic staff. This needs to be considered.
- Could and should the two departments further establish collaborative teaching in some courses? This could facilitate the program’s interdisciplinary nature and expose students and scholars to various perspectives, e.g., by using shared cases.

- Could the positive experiences from developing the new program be used for increasing collaborative research, e.g., on shared international publications between two or more researchers? Eventually, teaming up with relevant international collaborators?
- Improvements in research and internationalization of the research will require further opportunities to meet colleagues in relevant international forums and have an exposure of researchers' own research. This will require further allocation of funding for going to conferences, workshops and other relevant events.
- Research should show more evidence in the teaching materials. Development of digital materials from the academic staff would be a good chance for improving the synergy between research and teaching.
- Although the training provided to the academic staff seems to be impressive, it is important to consider how they reach higher levels of “digital teaching competence”, as established in the current European framework (DigComEdu)

**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.*

*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 student admission process is based on specific criteria, which in turn are based on the University's Academic Rules and Regulations (available in the university website). Even though the program is delivered in Greek, a specific level of proficiency in English is required, in order to be able to access material in English, as well as to be able to operate the e-Learning platform.

Student admission is performed bi-annually (Fall and Spring Semesters). The reported pool of students admitted comes from Cyprus and Greece, with the vast majority currently employed in the Public Sector.

In order to reach their decisions, the Unit evaluates the provided information, including academic qualifications, letters of reference, the extent of professional experience and the potential for performing research.

Regarding student progress, course syllabi provide the necessary information and criteria on which the students are evaluated upon, while the actual progress was reported as being monitored on a continual basis through submission of essays, participation in class delivery, and participation in online discussions on specific topics.

### Strengths

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

- Provision of a very good level of assistance in all issues related to access and operation of the e-Learning platform.
- Availability of assistance for students with special needs.

- Level of cooperation between the different units of the University, in order to accommodate student requests and issues.
- Homogeneity of the student body, which allows for easier comprehension of examples provided and enables the academic staff to provide cases and examples tailored to the previous, similar user experiences. Nevertheless, the homogeneity could also be a limitation, by limiting the introduction of references external to the regional public sector environment. There is scope to increase the international scope of the theoretical and empirical focus.

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.*

- Provide additional assistance in developing further the level of English proficiency, in order to overcome the language barrier and access additional material in English.
- Provide material in interactive format and in new technologies, which will allow the students to experience a rich content. This is of course useful for conventional programs, but even more useful for Distance Learning programs, in order to enhance student engagement.

**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)**

<u>Sub-areas</u>
<b>5.1 Teaching and Learning resources</b>
<b>5.2 Physical resources</b>
<b>5.3 Human support resources</b>
<b>5.4 Student support</b>

## 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.*

A Pedagogical Support Unit (PSU), as well as a more specific e-Learning Pedagogical Support Unit (e-PSU), are giving support to the design and implementation of the courses and the training of the academic staff in the proper use of

technology for their teaching purposes. They are responsible for the implementation of the University's Pedagogical and e-Learning Strategy.

In addition, there is a Technology Enhanced Learning Center, which among other things, is responsible for the assessment of courses and programs using advanced assessment tools, such as learning analytics.

The e-learning programme is organized taking into consideration the use of different kinds of materials and activities. Although most of the materials are text-based, with a strong presence of textbooks, the activities are carried out in the virtual learning environment (VLE). This VLE is a Moodle platform, which is customized considering the structure of the programme's courses. Video recorded sessions, PDF documents, and discussion boards are common to most of the courses. Also, live sessions are provided using the Webex conference tool.

Weekly activities per each course are set. Interaction in these activities has to be understood as the possibility of participating in discussion boards, making partial assignments, and receiving feedback from the academic staff. Case studies are also used, although they are PDF-based.

Although some academic staff introduce some more interactive applications, which are very well valued by the students, the use of digital materials is quite scarce. The HEI justifies it by regretting the lack of programme-related digital materials in Greek. In that sense no simulations in virtual environments nor augmented or virtual reality-based activities, and just a few interactive learning and formative assessment games were found.

The programme wants to be students-centered, but it has to be acknowledged that its flexibility is more depending on the beliefs of the academic staff than on the opportunities for being more flexible, for instance by increasing the asynchronous activities.

Physical resources are adequate to support the study programme. The Library is well equipped, all the classrooms have an appropriate IT infrastructure, and regarding the needs for the e-learning programme, the virtual learning environment covers the needs of the students and the academic staff.

Human resources seem to be adequate as well. The ratio between academic staff and students in a single virtual classroom is around 1:25, so it allows a very personal interaction when it is required. Also, the Distance Learning Unit, which supports both teachers and students in the e-learning study programme has a staff of 20 people, which seems enough for providing this support.

The Academic Advising Unit covers the needs of the diversity of the student population: mature, part-time and international. Solutions for visually impaired and deaf people are also set.

### Strengths

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

The strengths include the following:

- Both physical and human resources are in place and adequate.
- Support to the pedagogical and e-learning strategy of the study programme is professionally provided by different units: PSU, e-PSU and TELC.
- Student support is provided at the start and during the studies, and is adequate, as well the consideration and care to respect to the students with disabilities or special needs.
- The library offers both hard and electronic copies of academic texts and research literature. It seems to be adequate. Although most of the textbooks are paper-based, there is an important provision of e-books.
- The student workload seems to be balanced. Students mentioned that they manage to address all the requirements of the course.
- Students are adequately informed about the online services available to them (e.g. e-learning facilities/computer labs/library support, student career services/alumni services).

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

The EEC has the following recommendations:

- Although the available teaching resources could be sufficient at this stage, some room for improvement is clear, considering the e-learning study programme in the mid-term. In that sense, the kind of materials used would have to be updated, especially by using tools that could permit introducing more interaction and innovations in the teaching strategies (simulation applications, augmented or virtual reality tools, simpler but efficient engaging tools and applications, etc.).
- Teaching (or learning) materials should specially be diversified by using more digital-based materials and, probably, more audio-visual ones (like podcasts, short videos with learning content -not necessarily the lecturer speaking-, etc.) providing more interaction when students use them. Although this can be a matter of investment, it is important to consider this as a priority, as there is a risk of obsolescence of the programme, maybe not because of the content, but the way it is delivered in comparison to other institutions. To respect the fact that it is difficult to find digital materials in Greek, there are several options: a) to subtitle materials in other languages; b) to reach an agreement with some Greek digital publisher for creating these materials; c) to allocate extra time to the academic staff to elaborate new materials under the coordination of the PSU, e-PSU, TELC, and the Mediazone centre.
- This EEC thanks academic staff and the officers for the willingness to provide the data on academic students' performance and satisfaction during our visit. As this data exists, this committee thinks it could be better

organized, as the following step to properly use data analytics to improve the quality of the provision. Comparative tables to look at the increase or decrease of satisfaction and academic results would be very useful.

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

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

## D. Conclusions and final remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.*

The Committee was impressed with the School's learning orientation to the evaluation process, and it was an engaging experience to learn more about the Programme and the wider context. We would like to record our appreciation for the time and effort that went into the process.

In closing, we offer the following conclusions and final remarks.

The Programme benefits from a small and focused teaching team. Teaching staff are professional and experienced.

To support the research ambitions and internationalisation strategy, it is important for research time for staff to be adequately resourced within workload allocation processes. Relatedly, the capacity for staff to extend their participation in international research networks (e.g. participation in appropriate conferences) needs to be supported.

Presently the programme appears to be cross-disciplinary while the departments and university might want to consider if the future development should move it into a more tightly integrated inter-disciplinary approach. This will have consequences for teaching and research as well.

The School and University are well-rated according to various external metrics. The extensive list of cooperations with other Universities should also be underlined.

There is well-developed knowledge and understanding of the strategic context of the School, and the context of the Programme. This offers an informed basis for making judgements about future developments as the Programme matures.

The School has a large number of alumni in various public sector roles. However, alumni engagement is underdeveloped. This should be addressed as there is a big opportunity to utilise alumni contacts and experience for the benefit of teaching and research. Given the internationalization of the students, fostering a virtual community of Alumni would be strongly suggested.

The provision of the study programme in the e-learning modality has shown some of the strengths of the work being done by the different supporting units and the departments, as well the serious approach the university is giving to this modality.

The distinctiveness of the Programme (beyond the parameters of external ranking systems) could be articulated in ways which reflect the strengths and developing profile of staff.



The EEC would like to thank all involved in the University of Nicosia for the high engagement throughout the evaluation process and strongly suggests taking into consideration the different recommendations for improvement that can be found at the end of every single section.

## E. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<b>Kevin Orr</b>	
<b>John K. Christiansen</b>	
<b>Vasileios Kefis</b>	
<b>Albert Sangrà</b>	
<b>Manolis Diakourakis</b>	

**Date:** 11/05/2023