Doc. 300.3.1/1

External Evaluation Report

(Programmatic within the framework of Departmental Evaluation)

Date: 27 Sep 2025

- **Higher Education Institution:**

University of Nicosia, Cyprus

- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School/Faculty: Business**
- **Department: Digital Innovation**
- **Programme(s) of study - Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

Programme 1 – Master

In Greek:

Αλυσίδα Συστοιχιών και Ψηφιακό Νόμισμα(1.5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ(MSc))

In English:

Blockchain and Digital Currency (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master(MSc))

Language(s) of instruction: English

Programme 2 – Master / E-Learning

In Greek:

Αλυσίδα Συστοιχιών και Ψηφιακό Νόμισμα(1.5 ακαδημαϊκά έτη, 90 ECTS, Μάστερ(MSc), Εξ Αποστάσεως)

In English:

Blockchain and Digital Currency (1.5 academic years, 90 ECTS, Master(MSc), E-Learning)

Language(s) of instruction: English

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 Committee (or the External Evaluation Committee/EEC) held meetings with the key stakeholders, including the Vice-Rector, the Dean of the Business School, the Head of Digital Innovation, Faculty Staff, students, members of the teaching and administrative staff, and others.

The visit took place on Thursday, 25 September 2025, between 9am and 7pm. During the meeting, the Committee attended and received copies of the presentations in addition to the pre-circulated material. There were several Q&A sessions that addressed questions raised by the members of the Committee and provided additional information.

The Committee would like to commend the cooperation and openness of all participants. The Committee notes that the agency evaluated the Blockchain and Digital Currency programme in 2020 which this Committee took into consideration when evaluating the programme at this cycle.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Professor William J Knottenbelt	Chair	Imperial College London, UK
Professor Michel Avital	Member	Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
Professor Katinka Wolter	Member	Free University of Berlin, Germany
Professor Santi Caballé Llobet	Member (E-Learning expert)	Open University of Catalonia, Spain
Paraskevas Kyriakou	Member (Student representative)Position	University of Cyprus, 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 each 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.

Findings for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency

UNIC has established a range of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. External procedures align with the regulatory frameworks applicable to higher education institutions in Cyprus, particularly those governing private universities. According to the information provided to the EEC, the internal quality assurance standards follow the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) as well as the relevant provisions of the Greek Law on Higher Education.

The documentation reviewed suggests that these standards effectively support the institution through the implementation of appropriate structures, regulations, and processes. Regarding teaching and learning, the EEC noted that the workload for each course is clearly stipulated in terms of ECTS credits.

Findings for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Findings for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths

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

Strengths for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency

The curriculum demonstrates strong alignment with the evolving landscape of blockchain and digital currencies. The programme's content is continually updated to reflect technological advancements, regulatory developments, and emerging use cases within the blockchain ecosystem. This ensures that students are not only grounded in core principles but are also well-versed in the latest trends, such as decentralized finance (DeFi) and tokenization, with some movement towards convergence such as integration of blockchain with AI and IoT. The dynamic nature of the curriculum prepares graduates to navigate and contribute to a fast-changing industry.

The program is intentionally designed to foster active student engagement and participation. Learning activities emphasize dialogue, critical thinking, and hands-on experimentation through a mix of seminars, case studies, workshops, and project-based assignments. Students are encouraged to contribute to discussions, co-create knowledge, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Guest lectures and research-based group work further enhance an environment where students are active participants rather than passive recipients.

As one of the first academic programs of its kind, it benefits from a first-mover advantage and a strong reputation. The programme has earned recognition as a pioneer in blockchain education, establishing credibility early in the field and maintaining its position through ongoing innovation and academic rigor. This reputation is supported by a growing global network of alumni who have

gone on to assume influential roles in startups, consultancies, corporations, and international institutions focused on digital assets and blockchain technologies.

The programme has a broad international appeal, as evidenced by the diverse student body. The programme provides a truly global learning environment, with students from Europe, North America, and Africa. This international composition enriches classroom discussions and fosters intercultural competencies, exposing students to a wide range of perspectives on the societal, economic, and regulatory dimensions of blockchain adoption worldwide.

The programme attracts both recent bachelor's graduates and seasoned professionals from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. It is structured to accommodate learners from both the social sciences (e.g., business, economics, and law) and the technical disciplines (e.g., computer science, engineering). This interdisciplinary mix encourages cross-pollination of ideas and prepares graduates to work in interdisciplinary teams, a hallmark of the blockchain industry. Its flexible structure and professionally relevant content make it equally appealing to fresh graduates and mid-career professionals seeking to pivot or upskill.

The programme provides an excellent foundation for future employment in blockchain and adjacent industries. With a reported employment rate of over 90%, graduates of the programme are in high demand across various sectors, including fintech, consulting, cybersecurity, and government. The programme combines theoretical foundations with practical skills, enabling students to make immediate contributions to real-world projects and organizational innovation. Career support services, alumni connections, and industry partnerships further enhance employment prospects.

Student feedback consistently reflects high levels of satisfaction and value. Both current students and alumni consistently give the program strong evaluations across various dimensions, including teaching quality, content relevance, level of support, and overall experience. These positive assessments suggest a well-structured program that delivers on its promises and continues to meet or exceed expectations over time.

Strengths for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency

While the curriculum offers a diverse and rich selection of courses that thoroughly cover the technical and financial dimensions of blockchain and digital currencies, the social, ethical, and organizational implications of these technologies remain largely implicit. Addressing these aspects with explicit course offerings in the curriculum would foster interdisciplinary thinking and better

prepare graduates to navigate complex real-world environments where technical and financial systems intersect with social structures and governance frameworks.

Several technology-oriented courses could benefit from a more open and adaptive course design that accommodates ongoing innovation. Given the rapid pace of technological advancements in blockchain and related fields, it is essential for course content to remain up to date. While institutional procedures for modifying accredited curricula are understandably time-consuming, incorporating modular or open-ended course frameworks can help ensure that students are exposed to the latest industry developments without necessitating external approval of continuous realignments of the courses. A proactive approach to curricular agility would enhance both the program's relevance and its appeal.

The course descriptions currently lack a clear breakdown of the expected student workload to justify the allocation of 10 ECTS credits. In line with best practices in higher education, it is important to provide a transparent and structured accounting of the learning activities associated with each course, such as contact hours, self-study, group work, assessments, and practical assignments. This information would not only support accreditation and quality assurance processes but also help instructors and students align their expectations and better manage time and learning outcomes. Clarifying this breakdown would strengthen the pedagogical coherence of the programme and ensure the workload is commensurate with the credits awarded.

The programme's responsiveness to labor market demands could be improved through more systematic and structured stakeholder engagement. While the programme has strong ties to industry, there appears to be room for formalizing these relationships into a structured feedback mechanism. This might include an advisory board for the programme or structured consultations with alumni to continuously refine course content and programme focus. A more deliberate integration of external input would not only ensure alignment with market trends and professional standards but also enhance the programme's employability outcomes and practical relevance.

Retention and completion rates appear to be within acceptable norms, but there is clear potential for improvement through strategic interventions. Fine-tuning the admission criteria to ensure stronger alignment between student profiles and programme demands, particularly in relation to prior academic background and motivation, could help reduce early dropouts. In addition, enhancing student support mechanisms, including academic advising, mentoring, and early-warning systems, would likely contribute to improved retention and timely completion. Proactive monitoring and continuous guidance throughout the study period can play a crucial role in ensuring students remain engaged, successful, and on track.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for *Master / E-Learning*

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***		
		Master	*Master / E-Learning*	[Title 3]
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
1.3	Public information	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
1.4	Information management	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer

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

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

Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of 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 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

- *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 and 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 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.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *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.

Findings for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

The programme demonstrates a deliberate integration of student-centered learning principles, reflected in its interactive pedagogical approaches, varied assessment strategies, and academic support infrastructure. Teaching methods are designed to promote active engagement, using both synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery to accommodate diverse learning preferences and schedules. Courses incorporate a range of interactive activities that foster critical thinking, reflective learning, and knowledge co-construction.

Assessment practices within the programme are thoughtfully balanced between formative and summative components, allowing students to monitor their progress, receive constructive feedback, and refine their understanding throughout the learning process. This alignment ensures that assessments not only evaluate learning outcomes but also contribute to the learning journey itself. Based on the provided information, it appears that the students' assessments align with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The programme is further supported by the university's quality assurance framework, which includes systematic course evaluations, regular feedback loops, and evidence-based enhancements to teaching and learning. Student support services, such as academic advising and counseling, enable the early identification of challenges and provide personalized interventions to enhance student success and progression.

In summary, the programme reflects a strong institutional commitment to student-centered teaching, learning, and assessment, underpinned by pedagogical innovation, students' support systems, and a culture of continuous quality improvement.

Findings for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Findings for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Strengths for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency *Master*
Systematic use of intended learning outcomes: Each course in the programme is anchored in learning outcomes that are explicitly articulated in the course descriptions. These learning outcomes are designed to align with broader programme objectives and ensure that students are aware of the competencies and knowledge areas they are expected to acquire. This transparency supports focused learning and enhances both student motivation and curricular coherence.

Diverse teaching methods: The programme utilizes a wide range of pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences. This multimodal approach enhances student engagement, encourages critical reflection, and supports active knowledge construction.

Development of digital competencies and applied technical skills: A strong emphasis is placed on building students' digital fluency, particularly through the integration of blockchain platforms, coding environments, smart contract development, and simulation tools. These technical components are embedded within the coursework and projects, enabling students to develop practical, hands-on skills that are directly transferable to professional and research contexts.

Integration of research and real-world practice: The programme aims to bridge academic theory with professional application by offering students opportunities to engage in applied projects, industry case analyses, and optionally, a research thesis. This integrative approach fosters analytical thinking, deepens domain expertise, and prepares students to contribute to both academic and practitioner communities within the blockchain and digital innovation space.

Student support mechanisms: A range of support services is available to address the academic and personal needs of the student body. These include individual counselling, academic advising, tutoring labs, and career development services. Such structures ensure that students are not only supported in mastering course content but also guided through their academic journey, professional planning, and personal growth.

A two-pronged assessment strategy: The programme's assessment framework includes a balanced combination of formative and summative evaluation methods. This variety ensures that student learning is assessed holistically, as well as through continuous feedback that supports reflection, progression, and skill refinement.

Strengths for *Master / E-Learning*
Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

Workload intensity and time constraints: The programme's structure, which includes formative assessments, interactive learning activities, and multiple learning modalities, fosters deep engagement and sustained academic rigor. However, this intensity may inadvertently place considerable pressure on students, particularly on working professionals balancing employment and study commitments. The cumulative demands of frequent assignments, collaborative projects, and research-based tasks can challenge time management and lead to student fatigue if not carefully calibrated. Consideration could be given to introducing more flexible pacing options, differentiated deadlines, or alternative learning pathways to better support part-time and professionally active learners.

Variation in student preparedness due to interdisciplinary intake: The programme's appeal to students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, including finance, law, computer science, and business, enriches the learning environment and fosters interdisciplinary dialogue. However, this diversity also presents pedagogical challenges in maintaining a balanced teaching pace and ensuring equitable learning outcomes. Disparities in foundational knowledge can result in uneven student experiences, particularly in technical or domain-specific courses. To address this, the programme might consider offering preparatory modules, bridging resources, or differentiated learning support that help align baseline competencies and ensure that all students are equally empowered to succeed across the curriculum.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***		
		Master	*Master / E-Learning*	[Title 3]
2.1	Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
2.2	Practical training	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
2.3	Student assessment	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer

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.*
- *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:

- *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.

Findings for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

The recruitment and promotion of teaching staff are governed by the university's internal regulations, ensuring that academic appointments are transparent, merit-based, and aligned with institutional priorities. The faculty body comprises a mix of full-time professors, associate/assistant professors, and adjunct instructors, combining deep academic knowledge with practical industry experience. This blend enhances the programme's relevance and enables students to benefit from both theoretical insight and real-world application.

The university actively invests in faculty development, offering ongoing support through pedagogical training units, workshops, and structured professional development opportunities. These efforts are reinforced by systematic quality assurance mechanisms, including course evaluations, peer reviews, and performance appraisals, which help maintain the aspired standards of teaching and learning.

A key strength of the programme is the integration of teaching and research. Faculty members are engaged in a wide range of EU-funded and industry-sponsored research projects, ensuring that their academic work remains at the forefront of innovation. The insights and findings from these projects are regularly translated into course materials, case studies, and classroom discussions, enriching the curriculum and keeping it aligned with current developments in the field.

Furthermore, the university maintains a culture of continuous improvement through student feedback. Teaching performance is systematically evaluated by students at the end of each course and the aggregated results are reviewed in faculty coordination meetings. These reviews serve as a basis for identifying strengths, addressing areas for improvement, and adapting teaching approaches to better meet student needs.

Overall, the program benefits from a highly engaged teaching staff that is committed to the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes.

Findings for Master / E-Learning
Click or tap here to enter text.

Findings for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Strengths for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master
Research-teaching synergies: The programme benefits from positive synergies between teaching and research. Faculty members are actively engaged in internationally funded research projects, particularly in the fields of blockchain, decentralized systems, and digital innovation. These research activities feed directly into the curriculum, enriching lectures with cutting-edge case studies, emerging theoretical perspectives, and up-to-date empirical data. Moreover, students are provided with opportunities to participate in faculty-led research, which helps bridge the gap between theory and practice while cultivating advanced academic and analytical skills.

Staff profile and expertise: The faculty consists of a mix of academic scholars and adjunct professionals with significant industry experience. This hybrid profile ensures that the programme strikes a balance between academic depth and practical relevance. Core academic staff contribute strong theoretical foundations, while adjuncts and guest lecturers provide real-world insights drawn from current industry practices, regulatory environments, and entrepreneurial ventures. This composition enhances the learning experience and strengthens the employability of graduates.

Teaching development and quality enhancement: All teaching staff benefit from structured professional development opportunities, including access to pedagogical training programs, instructional design support, and digital teaching resources. Faculty members regularly engage with quality assurance measures, which contribute to the continuous enhancement of teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

Monitoring and feedback mechanisms: A systematic process for collecting and reviewing student feedback is in place. Course evaluations are conducted every semester and the results of these evaluations are analyzed and discussed in departmental and program-level meetings, where they inform strategic decisions on curriculum development, faculty training needs, and teaching methodologies. This feedback loop is a cornerstone of the program's commitment to ongoing improvement and responsiveness to student needs.

External input and international orientation: The involvement of adjunct faculty and industry fellows, both from Cyprus and abroad, significantly enhances the program by incorporating external perspectives and international best practices. These contributors bring first-hand experience from blockchain startups, financial institutions, regulatory bodies, and multinational organizations, which deepens students' understanding of the global landscape of digital innovation. Their participation also fosters international networking opportunities for students and strengthens the programme's global orientation.

Strengths for Master / E-Learning
Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master
Dependence on senior academics: The programme currently relies heavily on a small core group of senior faculty members, whose expertise and leadership are clearly instrumental to its success. However, this concentration of institutional knowledge and teaching responsibilities within a limited number of individuals poses a structural vulnerability. Should one or more of these key professors retire, take leave, or transition out of the institution, the programme may face challenges in maintaining continuity, academic quality, and leadership capacity. The limited pool of junior academic staff highlights the need for succession planning through targeted recruitment, faculty mentoring, and strategic hiring to mitigate long-term risks.

Balance between full-time and adjunct staff: The inclusion of adjunct faculty, particularly those with current industry roles, adds valuable real-world perspective and enhances the practical relevance of the curriculum. However, a high dependency on part-time instructors may impact the long-term pedagogical stability of the program. Adjuncts typically have limited availability for student consultation, advising, or involvement in curricular development. Overreliance on external

lecturers may also affect the consistency of student support and limit opportunities for integrated, cross-course coordination. Maintaining an appropriate balance between core academic staff and adjunct contributions is essential for ensuring institutional memory, programme cohesion, and the overall student experience.

Faculty workload and role strain: Faculty involved in the programme are actively engaged in research, funded projects, external collaborations, and teaching, which reflects their professional vitality and the programme's strong academic reputation. However, this multifaceted engagement may contribute to workload pressures that constrain the time available for course innovation, curriculum renewal, and student mentoring. High workloads can also affect responsiveness to emerging pedagogical trends and evolving student needs. To safeguard sustainability and promote innovation, the university may consider reviewing workload distribution, providing teaching relief where appropriate, and investing in additional academic support capacity.

Student feedback utilisation and transparency: The program collects student feedback systematically through semester-based course evaluations. While this represents a positive commitment to quality assurance, the extent to which such feedback informs faculty development, recognition, and promotion processes remains unclear. Greater transparency in how student evaluations are analysed, reported, and acted upon would strengthen the feedback loop and reinforce a culture of responsiveness and continuous improvement.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for *Master / E-Learning*

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***		
		Master	*Master / E-Learning*	[Title 3]
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer

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.

Findings for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

The programme welcomes applications from candidates holding a bachelor's degree in business, finance, information technology, law, economics, or related disciplines. In line with the programme's interdisciplinary ethos, applicants from other academic backgrounds may also be considered, particularly if they can demonstrate relevant professional experience, certifications, or strong references attesting to their suitability for postgraduate study in this domain.

English language proficiency is a prerequisite for admission. Where applicable, candidates must demonstrate their competence through recognized international tests or equivalent qualifications, in accordance with the university's language policy.

The programme provides flexibility and recognition of prior learning. This includes the possibility of credit transfers for relevant coursework completed at other accredited higher education institutions, as well as the recognition of professional experience portfolios and certified non-formal or informal learning. Such recognition follows established academic frameworks and quality assurance guidelines to ensure consistency and fairness.

Student progression is closely monitored through a system of continuous assessment, which may include quizzes, assignments, group projects, and research components. In addition, students have access to comprehensive academic advising, tutoring, and student support services throughout their studies. These support structures are designed to ensure timely feedback, early identification of challenges, and personalized guidance, all contributing to academic success and student well-being.

The recognition and certification of completed studies adhere to international higher education standards. Upon graduation, students receive a blockchain-verifiable diploma along with a Diploma Supplement, both of which ensure transparency, authenticity, and global recognition of their academic credentials. This secure digital certification enhances mobility and facilitates verification by employers, professional bodies, and academic institutions worldwide.

Findings for Master / E-Learning
Click or tap here to enter text.

Findings for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Strengths for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master
Structured yet flexible admission criteria: The programme offers clearly defined admission criteria, prioritizing applicants with academic backgrounds in business, economics, IT, law, finance, or related disciplines. At the same time, it maintains a discipline-open structure, allowing for the inclusion of candidates from other academic domains, provided they can demonstrate relevant professional experience or provide strong academic or employer references. This inclusive yet standards-driven approach ensures access for a broader talent pool while maintaining academic quality.

International accessibility through language standardization: The programme is designed with a global student body in mind, and its English language requirements follow internationally recognised standards. These standards promote linguistic inclusivity, while ensuring that students can engage effectively with the course materials, participate in academic discussions, and complete assignments in English. This enhances the programme's accessibility to applicants from a wide range of countries and educational systems.

Recognition of prior learning and experience: The institution has in place formal procedures for recognizing prior academic achievements and professional experience. These include credit transfer mechanisms for coursework completed at accredited institutions, as well as structured frameworks for the assessment of prior learning and experience-based portfolios. Such practices acknowledge the diversity of students' educational and professional journeys while promoting academic continuity and reducing redundancy.

Comprehensive student progression support: The programme integrates a wide array of student support mechanisms to monitor and promote academic progress. These include academic

advising, counselling services, and targeted interventions for at-risk students. Personalized support plans help ensure that students receive timely guidance throughout their academic journey, thereby improving retention and completion rates.

Secure and globally recognized certification: To enhance credential transparency and authenticity, the program issues blockchain-verifiable diplomas and NFT-backed diploma supplements. These innovative digital credentials provide tamper-proof validation of academic qualifications, facilitating cross-border recognition by employers, institutions, and licensing bodies. The use of blockchain technology also reflects the programme's alignment with cutting-edge practices in digital trust and verification.

Strengths for Master / E-Learning
Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for [Title 3]
Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master
Broad disciplinary intake and student preparedness: While the programme's openness to applicants from a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds promotes inclusivity and interdisciplinary learning, it also introduces significant variation in baseline competencies. Students entering from unrelated fields, such as humanities, arts, or non-technical disciplines, may lack foundational knowledge in areas such as finance, computer science, or blockchain principles. This disparity can affect the pace and depth of instruction, placing additional strain on teaching staff and potentially impacting the overall learning experience. To mitigate these challenges, the programme may need to develop targeted academic support, such as bridging courses, foundational modules, or differentiated instructional tracks tailored to students' prior knowledge levels.

Recognition of prior learning and administrative complexity: The programme's commitment to recognising diverse forms of prior learning is commendable and aligns with international best practices in lifelong learning. However, implementing this recognition framework introduces a non-trivial administrative burden, particularly in cases involving complex or non-standard qualifications. Assessing equivalency, validating experiential learning, and ensuring consistency in credit allocation requires significant institutional resources, staff training, and clear procedural guidelines. Without robust support and infrastructure, there is a risk of delays, inconsistency, or lack of transparency in the recognition process, which could impact student satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for *Master / E-Learning*

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***		
		Master	*Master / E-Learning*	[Title 3]
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
4.2	Student progression	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
4.4	Student certification	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer

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

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *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 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.

Findings for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

Learning resources and student support: The University of Nicosia offers a comprehensive and well-integrated resource base to support its MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency. The programme is underpinned by an extensive infrastructure that facilitates high-quality teaching, learning, and student engagement across both physical and virtual environments.

Teaching and learning resources: Instruction is supported through a blend of asynchronous and synchronous learning materials. These multimodal resources enable flexible learning pathways and promote active participation from both full-time students and working professionals across time zones.

Physical and technological infrastructure: The university maintains an extensive physical infrastructure, including 65 classrooms, 10 amphitheatres, and 79 laboratories, all equipped with modern audiovisual and computing technologies. Of particular relevance to the programme are the specialized blockchain programming labs and high-speed IT infrastructure, which allow students to engage in hands-on development and testing of decentralized applications, smart contracts, and other blockchain-based systems. Dedicated computer labs provide access to a range of tools and platforms, supporting technical coursework in programming, data analysis, and simulation. The university's digital learning environment is stable, scalable, and supported by responsive IT services.

Student support and human resources: Students benefit from a spectrum of support services, ensuring a rounded academic experience. These include academic counselling to assist with course selection and study planning, a centralized Student Success Centre offering holistic support, tutoring services for individualized or group academic assistance, career guidance workshops, and dedicated distance learning advisors who monitor student engagement and provide personalized support. These services are designed to address the diverse learning needs, backgrounds, and schedules of the program's international student body.

Library and information access: The university library provides extensive access to academic resources, both physical and digital. Students have access to over 100,000 print books, more than 500,000 e-books, approximately 30,000 electronic journals, and a wide array of specialized academic and industry databases, including blockchain- and fintech-relevant sources. All library resources are accessible on-campus and remotely, supporting the flexible learning model and ensuring that students can conduct research and access course materials from anywhere in the world.

Findings for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Findings for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths

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

Strengths for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

Facilities and technological infrastructure: The University of Nicosia operates a well-equipped and modern campus that supports both traditional and technology-enhanced learning. The physical infrastructure includes 65 fully equipped classrooms, 79 specialized laboratories, and modern conference and amphitheatre spaces designed for large-scale presentations, seminars, and academic events. Of particular relevance to the MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency is the dedicated blockchain programming lab, which provides students with hands-on access to smart contract environments and other distributed ledger technologies.

Digital innovation and technological integration: The university is recognized for its technological agility and forward-looking approach to education. It actively integrates learning analytics, artificial intelligence tools, and emerging educational technologies across its teaching and administrative systems. These tools are used not only to enhance pedagogical effectiveness but also to streamline operations such as enrollment, assessment tracking, and student support interventions.

Enhanced digital infrastructure: Students benefit from a high-performance digital infrastructure, including high-speed internet access, secure campus-wide networks, and access to virtual learning environments that support synchronous and asynchronous teaching modalities. These platforms enable effective content delivery, online collaboration, and real-time student engagement. The university's digital backbone ensures that all enrolled students enjoy equitable access to learning tools and resources.

Comprehensive teaching resources and library services: Instructional resources are rich and varied, combining asynchronous materials with interactive synchronous sessions. This hybrid model supports diverse learning preferences and enables flexible engagement. Complementing these teaching resources is the university’s comprehensive library system, which includes both physical holdings and extensive digital collections. Students have access to a vast repository of academic literature, including books, journals, databases, and industry reports, relevant to blockchain, finance, technology, and related fields. The library also offers interlibrary loan services, customized support for distance learners, and online research guidance modules, ensuring that all students can access high-quality academic content and support regardless of their location.

Strengths for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Strengths for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency Master

Incorporating AI into the curriculum: While the programme is already technologically forward-looking in its focus on blockchain and digital currencies, there remains untapped potential in the deeper integration of AI-driven tools and frameworks within the pedagogy of the course design. Embedding AI not merely as a supplementary topic but as a core design element across relevant courses would provide students with a more holistic view of the evolving digital landscape. Such integration would enhance both the technical relevance and interdisciplinary strength of the programme.

Learning management system and digital delivery infrastructure: The continued use of Blackboard as the primary learning management system is understandable, particularly in facilitating a smooth migration from legacy systems such as Module. Blackboard offers a stable and widely recognized platform for asynchronous learning, content delivery, and assessments. However, in light of emerging pedagogical trends and the increasing importance of seamless, user-friendly digital learning environments, a strategic transition to a next-generation learning management system such as Canvas may better support the program's long-term development. Canvas offers more intuitive navigation, deeper integration with third-party tools (including AI-enhanced platforms), mobile responsiveness, and stronger support for collaborative and adaptive learning. Leapfrogging to Canvas could position the program to more effectively deliver interactive, scalable, and future-ready learning experiences, particularly for its globally distributed, digitally savvy student cohort.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for Master / E-Learning

Click or tap here to enter text.

Areas of improvement and recommendations for [Title 3]

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Sub-area		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***		
		Master	*Master / E-Learning*	[Title 3]
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
5.2	Physical resources	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer
5.4	Student support	Compliant	Choose answer	Choose answer

6. Additional for doctoral programmes *(ALL ESG)*

Sub-areas

6.1. **Selection criteria and requirements**
6.2. **Proposal and dissertation**
6.3. **Supervision and committees**

6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

Standards

- *Specific criteria that the potential students need to meet for admission in the programme, as well as how the selection procedures are made, are defined.*
- *The following requirements of the doctoral degree programme are analysed and published:*
  - *the stages of completion*
  - *the minimum and maximum time of completing the programme*
  - *the examinations*
  - *the procedures for supporting and accepting the student's proposal*
  - *the criteria for obtaining the Ph.D. degree*

6.2 Proposal and dissertation

Standards

- *Specific and clear guidelines for the writing of the proposal and the dissertation are set regarding:*
  - *the chapters that are contained*
  - *the system used for the presentation of each chapter, sub-chapters and bibliography*
  - *the minimum word limit*
  - *the binding, the cover page and the prologue pages, including the pages supporting the authenticity, originality and importance of the dissertation, as well as the reference to the committee for the final evaluation*
- *There is a plagiarism check system. Information is provided on the detection of plagiarism and the consequences in case of such misconduct.*
- *The process of submitting the dissertation to the university library is set.*

6.3 Supervision and committees

Standards

- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the advisory committee (to whom the doctoral student submits the research proposal) are determined.*
- *The composition, the procedure and the criteria for the formation of the examining committee (to whom the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation), are determined.*
- *The duties of the supervisor-chairperson and the other members of the advisory committee towards the student are determined and include:*
  - *regular meetings*
  - *reports per semester and feedback from supervisors*
  - *support for writing research papers*
  - *participation in conferences*
- *The number of doctoral students that each chairperson supervises at the same time are determined.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *How is the scientific quality of the PhD thesis ensured?*
- *Is there a link between the doctoral programmes of study and the society? What is the value of the obtained degree outside academia and in the labour market?*
- *Can you please provide us with some dissertation samples?*

Findings

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

The University of Nicosia regulates its PhD programmes through a comprehensive Code of Practice that is fully aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF, Level 8) and the principles of the Bologna Process. This alignment aims to ensure that doctoral training follows internationally recognized standards for advanced research education. Admission to the programme typically requires a Master's degree or its equivalent from a recognized institution. However, in exceptional cases, applicants with only a Bachelor's degree may be admitted, provided they demonstrate outstanding professional achievements or a strong record of research engagement.

As part of the application process, candidates are required to submit a preliminary research proposal outlining their intended project. This proposal must be further developed and formally defended within 18 months of enrolment. The doctoral thesis must demonstrate a significant and original contribution to knowledge, supported by a comprehensive review of relevant literature, and must reflect the candidate's ability to conduct independent research and exercise critical judgement. The quality of the work is expected to meet academic publishing standards.

Doctoral students are guided by a supervisory committee composed of three members, including at least one senior academic, at the rank of Professor or Associate Professor, who has prior experience in PhD supervision. The student's academic progress is reviewed annually by the Department Postgraduate Programmes Committee (DPPC), which ensures that milestones are met and adequate academic support is provided throughout the research journey.

Upon completion of the thesis, the candidate's work is evaluated by an Examination Committee that includes at least one external examiner, thereby ensuring impartiality and academic rigor. The examination concludes with a public defence (viva), during which the candidate presents and defends their research findings. This process reflects the university's commitment to upholding high standards of doctoral education and scholarly excellence.

Strengths

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

Clear and structured programme requirements: The doctoral programme follows a well-defined and academically oriented structure that reflects international standards of research training. Requirements include the successful completion of doctoral-level coursework that equips students with advanced theoretical, methodological, and analytical skills relevant to their field of study. Candidates must submit and defend a research proposal within the first 18 months, demonstrating the feasibility, relevance, and originality of their intended research. To support the development of scholarly communication and academic networking, students are required to present their work at academic conferences, ideally at international venues. In addition, each candidate is expected to produce a peer-reviewed publication or publishable paper in a Scopus-indexed journal, ensuring that research outcomes are externally validated and contribute to global academic discourse.

Thesis standards and expectations: Doctoral theses must adhere to clearly articulated standards of academic excellence. Each dissertation is expected to make an original and significant contribution to knowledge, grounded in a comprehensive and critical engagement with existing literature. The research must demonstrate methodological soundness, transparency, and academic integrity, with the chosen methods appropriately aligned to the research questions. Theses should reflect intellectual independence, critical analysis, and an ability to synthesize complex ideas. Importantly, the final output should be of a quality suitable for publication in reputable academic venues, either as a monograph or as part of a series of journal articles, reinforcing the research's value beyond the institutional context.

Quality assurance and oversight mechanisms: The programme is supported by a multi-layered quality assurance system designed to uphold scientific standards and monitor student progress throughout the doctoral journey. Each student undergoes annual progress reviews conducted by the Department Postgraduate Programmes Committee (DPPC), ensuring that key academic milestones are met and that any challenges are identified early. The final thesis is subject to an independent examination process, which includes at least one external examiner to provide an impartial assessment and benchmark the research against global disciplinary standards. The defense concludes with a public viva voce, promoting transparency and scholarly exchange.

Relevance to society and the labour market: The doctoral programme is grounded in principles of engaged scholarship, emphasizing both theoretical innovation and practical applicability. Research projects are encouraged to address real-world challenges, generate policy-relevant insights, and make meaningful contributions to professional practice across various sectors. By fostering close connections with industry, civil society, and public institutions, the program enhances the employability of graduates and ensures that their research responds to current societal needs and emerging labour market demands. This dual focus on academic grounding and societal impact positions doctoral graduates as leaders who can advance both knowledge and practice in their respective fields.

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.

Admission flexibility and academic rigor: While the programme's inclusive admissions policy supports wider access to doctoral education, the absence of explicit GPA thresholds or minimum Master's thesis grades introduces a potential risk of admitting candidates who may lack the academic rigor or research preparedness required to complete a doctoral dissertation successfully. Although the review of professional experience and research potential can provide valuable context, the absence of formal academic benchmarks may undermine consistency and transparency in admission decisions. In particular, the provision for admitting exceptional candidates holding only a Bachelor's degree, though well-intentioned, could lead to the enrollment of underqualified or ill-prepared applicants who may not possess the methodological training or academic maturity expected at the doctoral level. Introducing minimum academic performance criteria alongside provisions for exceptional cases would help ensure quality without compromising flexibility.

Supervisory workload and resource allocation: The requirement that each doctoral student be supported by a three-member supervisory committee, including a senior academic, is commendable in its intent to provide well-rounded mentorship and academic oversight. However, this structure may place undue strain on faculty resources, particularly in smaller departments or highly specialized fields with limited supervisory capacity. In such contexts, maintaining three active supervisors per student may not be sustainable in the long term, particularly when considering the supervisors' existing research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities. A more balanced model, such as two formally assigned supervisors, with a third member available in an advisory or reserve role, could preserve academic support while easing pressure on academic staff and ensuring more scalable supervision models across departments.

Thesis examination committee composition: The current examination model, which includes one internal and one external examiner, provides a basic level of objectivity and academic scrutiny. However, for doctoral degrees, especially those intended to meet international standards of credibility and portability, this may be insufficient. A more robust and defensible model would involve a three-member examination committee, comprising one internal examiner and two external experts with demonstrated academic standing and recent publication activity in the candidate's field. This approach not only enhances the credibility and impartiality of the assessment process, but also strengthens the academic legitimacy of the final award, particularly in disciplines where external validation is essential for scholarly and professional recognition.

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

Sub-areas		***Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant***
6.1	Selection criteria and requirements	Compliant
6.2	Proposal and dissertation	Compliant
6.3	Supervision and committees	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 each programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC affirms that the University of Nicosia largely meets the required standards of academic quality, institutional governance, and student support, as outlined in the evaluation framework and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG).

The EEC is satisfied that the University sets and maintains high standards in delivering top-level education to its students. It is regarded as one of the leading institutions in Cyprus and demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement and the development of new programmes aligned with the evolving needs of society and students. Overall, the EEC finds that the MSc in Blockchain and Digital Currency program is compliant with the Agency's standards.

The EEC wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to the leadership, faculty, administrative staff, students, and external stakeholders of the University for their openness, collaboration, and active engagement throughout the evaluation process. The EEC particularly values the constructive dialogue, transparent exchange of ideas, and forward-looking orientation that characterised all meetings and discussions. These interactions provided valuable insights into the institution's operational strengths, educational philosophy, and strategic ambitions.

At the same time, the EEC would like to offer the following recommendations for further improvement:

- While the curriculum provides strong technical and financial coverage of blockchain and digital currencies, it would benefit from explicitly addressing their social, ethical, and organizational dimensions to foster further interdisciplinary thinking and real-world readiness.

- To keep pace with rapid innovation in blockchain and related fields, several technology-focused courses would benefit from a more modular and adaptive design that allows timely updates without requiring full curricular reapproval.

- To justify the 10 ECTS credit allocation, course descriptions should include a transparent breakdown of student workload—covering contact hours, self-study, group work, assessments, and practical assignments—in line with best practices in higher education.

- The programme's heavy reliance on a small group of senior faculty poses a structural risk, underscoring the need for succession planning through targeted recruitment, mentoring, and the strategic hiring of junior faculty as permanent staff to ensure continuity and long-term resilience.

- While adjunct faculty bring valuable industry perspectives, overreliance on part-time instructors can undermine program cohesion, student support, and long-term pedagogical stability, underscoring the need for a balanced mix of core academic and adjunct staff.

- While the programme is already technologically forward-looking, integrating AI tools and frameworks more deeply into course design—as core pedagogical elements rather than supplementary topics—would enhance its technical relevance and interdisciplinary strength.

- While the PhD program's inclusive admissions policy broadens access, the lack of explicit academic thresholds—such as GPA or Master's thesis grades—risks admitting underprepared candidates, highlighting the need to introduce minimum performance criteria alongside case-by-case flexibility to ensure academic rigor and transparency.

- While the three-supervisor model ensures strong support, it may overburden faculty, and a two-supervisor structure with an advisory third could offer a more sustainable alternative.

- While the three-supervisor model ensures strong support for PhD students, it may overburden faculty and risk delivering conflicting guidance, whereas a two-supervisor structure with an optional advisory third could offer a more sustainable and coherent alternative.

- As for doctoral thesis assessment, while the current model of one internal and one external examiner provides basic oversight, a three-member committee—including two external experts with strong academic credentials—would significantly enhance the credibility, impartiality, and international recognition of the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name	*Signature*
Professor William J Knottenbelt	[redacted]
Professor Michel Avital	
Professor Katinka Wolter	
Professor Santi Caballé Llobet	
Paraskevas Kyriakou	

Date: 27 Sep 2025