



Doc. 300.1.3

Date:

Feedback Report from EEC Experts

- **Higher Education Institution:**
Philips University
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **School/Faculty:** School/Faculty
- **Department:** Department/Sector
- **Programme of study under evaluation
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

In Greek:

Programme Name

In English:

Master in Environmental Management
(18 months, 90 ECTS, MSc, Distance-Learning)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek & English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **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. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
Professor Andreas Troumbis	Chair	University of the Aegean
Professor Matthew Cashmore	Member	University of Life Sciences NMBU
Professor Luca Di Corato	Member	Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos	Member	University of London
Ms Ioanna Agathokleous	Member	University of Cyprus
Name	Position	University



B. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

The EEC based on the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) and the Higher Education Institution's response (Doc.300.1.2), must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area.

Please refer to the overall conclusion of this compliance Report, presented as a single recommendation, in page 22.

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

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>As a proposed programme, no information has been collected to-date on KPIs, etc. It is noted that there will need to be a fairly considerable scaling up of services for collecting such data if the programme is launched and achieves the stated goal of attracting 60 students per year. The provision of administrative support for 'information management' needs to be carefully planned for if/when the programme is approved.</p>	<p>Philips University appreciates the EEC's observation about the need to collect data and establish KPIs for the program. We also acknowledge the importance of carefully planning administrative support for effective information management. To address the above concerns, we have established a comprehensive plan for data collection ensuring that relevant data points are identified and appropriate KPIs are established. The plan involves key metrics to assess program performance such as student enrollment, retention rates, graduation rates, academic achievements and employment outcomes. By collecting and analyzing this data, we can track the program's progress and make informed decisions to enhance its effectiveness. Please see Appendix 1 - a plan for data collection and administrative support with specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Furthermore, we have decided to scale up our administrative services to support the program's information management system so as to ensure that sufficient support is available. After the approval of the Senate, we have already hired additional administrative personnel (namely Flora Pourkou). Upon the operation of the program, if it is requested by the School of Education and Science, and approved by the Senate, of more Administrative Staff will be hired.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Progression across the programme and within individual courses requires further consideration. It is recommended that a common introductory course is developed for semester 1, possibly using ENV 120 (Introduction to sustainability) as a basis. Further consideration should also be given to progression within individual courses as the content appears very broad and ambitious in some instances.</p>	<p>To address the EEC's concerns and ensure a well-structured and progressive program, we have evaluated the feasibility of developing a common introductory course for semester 1 by transferring the course ENV-120 (Introduction to Sustainability) to the 1st semester becoming a module of the general core studies. Moreover, the module ENV-112 (Environmental and Waste to</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Choice of recommended readings should be given further consideration. The extensive use of</p>	<p>We appreciate the EEC's feedback on the choice of recommended readings,</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

<p>journal articles as core readings might not be the most effective strategy from a pedagogic viewpoint, particularly given that students may come from academic or professional backgrounds where they have limited experience with key concepts or subjects.</p>	<p>particularly the extensive use of journal articles as core readings. To address this concern and ensure an effective pedagogical approach we carefully reviewed the recommended readings and included other relevant resources alongside journal articles such as textbooks, book chapters, industry reports and case studies. Furthermore, recognizing that students may have limited experience with certain concepts or subjects, we ensured that the chosen readings provide clear explanations and contextualization of key ideas. Moreover, in addition to the core readings, supplementary material and resources have been incorporated to support students'</p>	
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2. Student - centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>There seems to be a disjunction between (1) the descriptions and intentions in the study guides, where inclusion of technologies such as simulations and serious games (conflated as „simulation games“), case based scenarios, interactive activities, group work online and (2) embedding such activities in the online environment. The EEC did not have the opportunity to see examples of such technologies used in this or other e-learning programmes of the institution. We would recommend an alignment between what is mentioned in the study guides and what is available on the online environment. This resulted in partial compliance for 2.4</p>	<p>Philips University appreciates the EEC's feedback on the disjunction between the descriptions and intentions in the study guides and the actual embedding of technologies such as simulations and serious games in the online environment.</p> <p>To address this concern a thorough review of the study guides was conducted to ensure that they accurately reflect the intended use of technologies. Furthermore, the Distance Learning Unit has built upon the identified technologies and has embedded effectively activities such as simulations, serious games, case-based scenarios and interactive activities within the online environment. By implementing these measures, we have aligned the descriptions in the study guides with the available Learning Management Systems. This alignment ensures a consistent and cohesive learning experience, providing students with the expected opportunities for engagement, interaction, and application of knowledge.</p> <p>Furthermore, we have developed a methodology (Appendix 7) to streamline the process, improve compliance with the intended use of technologies in online courses, ensure consistency and facilitate effective communication among different teams or individuals, responsible for content creation, course development and technology integration.</p> <p>Considering the above, technology such as simulations and serious games, case-based scenarios, interactive activities, and group work online for the specific program have been developed. Finally, we wish to bring to your attention that an MoU has been signed with the Hellenic Open University aiming to enhance collaboration between the two institutions regarding the course guidelines of the program and technical support.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>PU and the MSc in Environmental Management would likely benefit from: ● revisiting the operational rationale of the programme and re-allocating tasks, time and activities between junior and senior members of staff.</p>	<p>We appreciate EEC's suggestion. To address it we conducted a comprehensive review of the operational rationale of the program by assessing the current distribution of tasks, responsibilities, and activities among junior and senior staff members. Based on the review findings, we have realigned and reallocated tasks, time, and activities between junior and senior staff. More specifically, the alignment includes redefining roles, adjusting workload distributions, and optimizing the expertise and capabilities of both junior and senior staff. The goal was to ensure a more efficient and effective utilization of resources while maximizing the expertise and potential contributions of each team member.</p> <p>Finally, we foster a culture of collaboration and mentoring within the program. Senior staff members provide guidance, mentorship, and support to junior staff members, allowing for knowledge transfer and professional development.</p> <p>This collaboration facilitates a balanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities, as well as creating opportunities for junior staff members to contribute meaningfully to the program's operations.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>● transforming the general academic concepts, e.g., quality, research, synergy, etc., into specific and measurable goals and targets. This, hopefully, will guarantee a sustained path to continuous improvement in the future.</p>	<p>Distance learning instructors participate in the University's 'Staff Development Plan', which includes financial and other support to participate in local and international conferences and seminars, to have membership in international professional associations, and offering in-house training seminars. As the case is with all instructors at the University, distance learning instructors undergo annual evaluation, a fundamental</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>



	component of which is the development by each faculty member of an annual plan with measurable goals and targets, a self-assessment	
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>The information provided to the EEC did not fully clarify what academic backgrounds prospective students should have in order to be accepted for admission. This information is crucial for students when they apply (see also section 1).</p>	<p>We appreciate EEC's suggestion. We have already conducted a comprehensive analysis of the program's objectives, curriculum, and industry requirements to identify the preferred backgrounds of applicants based on academic disciplines, professional experiences, and specific areas of expertise that align with the program's focus on environmental management.</p> <p>This information is communicated to prospective students, enabling them to make informed decisions about their eligibility for the program. The specified applicants' backgrounds are taken into account during the admissions process to ensure a holistic evaluation of the applicants' background and help the students to make informed decisions about their suitability for the program. Please see Appendix 5 - the criteria and aspects considered during the admission process of the program.</p> <p>The Program is addressed to graduates of the Departments of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Sciences • Agricultural Sciences • Environmental Sciences • Polytechnic Schools • Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Veterinary medicine, Nursing, Health Economics, Departments whose subject is related to public health actions, primary health care and health services administration and other Health Sciences departments • Economics, Management and Social Sciences • Law, and other departments of related subjects <p>of Universities from Cyprus, Greece and recognized institutions abroad.)</p> <p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well specified and detailed categories of applicants 	<p>See general comments below</p>

5. Learning resources and student support
 (ESG 1.6)

EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>In general, there are no major issues for what concerns physical resources, human support resources and student support services. We would recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to assess before the programme starts the actual level of digital literacy and technical knowledge that the students have and organise, if needed, a DL course covering any gap in that respect. 	<p>In order to address the first recommendation, we conduct an assessment, prior to the start of the program, to gauge the digital literacy and technical knowledge of incoming students.</p> <p>This assessment helps identify any gaps or areas where additional support may be needed. The assessment includes surveys, self-assessment questionnaires, or practical exercises to evaluate students' proficiency in relevant areas such as computer skills and basic technical competencies. Based on the assessment results and if it is needed, we offer to our students a Digital Literacy (DL) course to address any identified gaps in students' digital literacy and technical knowledge.</p> <p>The DL course provides essential training and guidance on using digital tools, software applications, online research, data analysis, and other relevant technical skills needed for successful participation in the program.</p> <p>Over and above that, the Technical Support Committee of the Distance Education Unit provides individualized support to students who require further assistance in developing their digital literacy and technical skills. This support includes one-on-one mentoring, tutoring session, or access to online resources and tutorials.</p> <p>A comprehensive support system was established by the Distance Education Unit, as already described, to address students' specific needs and provide guidance throughout their academic journey.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>to assess previous experience and provide, if needed, training on DL to the newly recruited teaching faculty.</p>	<p>In order to address this recommendation and ensure that the teaching faculty is well-equipped to deliver effective instruction, we</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>included an assessment of previous experience as part of the onboarding process for newly recruited teaching faculty.</p> <p>The specific assessment evaluates faculty's previous experience and familiarity with digital learning platforms, online teaching methodologies, and instructional technologies. Based on the assessment results we provide training on digital learning to the teaching faculty who may benefit from it.</p> <p>The training was set to cover various aspects of online instruction, including the effective use of learning management systems, engaging students in virtual classrooms, facilitating online discussions, designing and delivering multimedia content, and leveraging interactive tools for assessment and feedback. The training is tailored to meet the specific needs and objectives of the program.</p> <p>Furthermore, we offer ongoing professional development opportunities to the teaching faculty to enhance their skills and knowledge in digital learning. These opportunities include workshops, webinars and online courses. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, we ensure that faculty members stay updated with emerging trends and best practices in digital learning, enabling them to deliver high-quality instruction in the online environment.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to continuously monitor the knowledge and use of DL tools by the entire teaching faculty (including necessary updates). 	<p>To address this recommendation, we have ensured that the teaching faculty has access to ongoing technical support for DL tools.</p> <p>This involves a dedicated technology support team (Technical Support Team) that faculty members can reach out to for assistance with troubleshooting, software updates, or guidance on using specific DL tools. In addition, we have in place, a mechanism for continuous evaluation and feedback. We gather feedback from students and faculty</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>



	<p>on effectiveness of digital learning strategy and on the use of DL tools and their effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning. This feedback results on ongoing improvements and refinements to instructional approaches, ensuring that faculty members are continuously supported in their professional development journey. Moreover, regular evaluations provide opportunities for faculty members to reflect on their teaching practices and identify areas of growth and enhancement. This enables us to support faculty members in staying current with DL advancements and empower them to deliver high-quality instruction using the latest tools and practices.</p>	
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C. Conclusions and final remarks

The EEC must provide final conclusions and remarks, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	EEC's final recommendations and comments on the HEI's response
<p>In our view, the programme under consideration is currently Partially Compliant.</p> <p>We recommend that the following issues are addressed before approval. Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice of recommended readings should be given further consideration. The extensive use of journal articles as core readings might not be the most effective strategy from a pedagogic viewpoint, particularly given that students may come from academic or professional backgrounds where they have limited experience with key concepts or subjects. 	<p>To address this concern and ensure an effective pedagogical approach we carefully reviewed the recommended readings and included other relevant resources alongside journal articles such as textbooks, book chapters, industry reports and case studies.</p> <p>Furthermore, recognizing that students may have limited experience with certain concepts or subjects, we ensured that the chosen readings provide clear explanations and contextualization of key ideas.</p> <p>Moreover, in addition to the core readings, supplementary material and resources have been incorporated to support students' comprehension and engagement with the subject matter.</p> <p>Finally, to further enhance the pedagogical approach, we encourage guided reading and discussion activities into the curriculum. These activities motivate students to engage with the readings and participate in collaborative discussions. Please refer to Appendix 4 – Course Outlines and suggested Reading Lists.</p> <p>As is shown in Appendix 4, the following are Recommended Books: "Zarook Shareefdeen, Hazardous Waste Management, Advances in Chemical and Industrial Waste Treatment and Technologies, ISBN 978-3-030-95261-7, ISBN 978-3-030-95262-4 (eBook) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95262-4, Springer 2022.", have been added to supplement recommended papers, to the study weeks 6, 7 on Hazardous waste and Hazardous waste treatment and disposal, respectively.</p> <p>Also, the following Recommended Books: K.G. Ramawat, Jean-Michel Méryllon, Jaya Arora, Agricultural Waste: Environmental Impact, Useful Metabolites and Energy Production, Springer 2023 ISBN:</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>978-981-19-8773-1.”, has been added to supplement suggested papers for study weeks 8, 9 on Agricultural waste and Agri-waste disposal, respectively. Conclusively, the above books have been added to support journal articles readings.</p>	
<p>Learning design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There seems to be a disjunction between (1) the descriptions and intentions in the study guides, where inclusion of technologies such as simulations and serious games (conflated as „simulation games“) as simulations and serious games (conflated as „simulation games“), case based scenarios, interactive activities, group work online etc. and (2) embedding such activities in the online environment. The EEC did not have the opportunity to see examples of related technologies used in this or other e-learning programmes of the institution. We would recommend an alignment between what is mentioned in the study guides and what will be available on the online environment. 	<p>Philips University appreciates the EEC’s feedback on the disjunction between the descriptions and intentions in the study guides and the actual embedding of technologies such as simulations and serious games in the online environment.</p> <p>To address this concern a thorough review of the study guides was conducted to ensure that they accurately reflect the intended use of technologies. Furthermore, the Distance Learning Unit has built upon the identified technologies and has embedded effectively activities such as simulations, serious games, case-based scenarios and interactive activities within the online environment.</p> <p>By implementing these measures, we have aligned the descriptions in the study guides with the available Learning Management Systems. This alignment ensures a consistent and cohesive learning experience, providing students with the expected opportunities for engagement, interaction, and application of knowledge.</p> <p>Furthermore, we have developed a methodology (Appendix 7) to streamline the process, improve compliance with the intended use of technologies in online courses, ensure consistency and facilitate effective communication among different teams or individuals, responsible for content creation, course development and technology integration.</p> <p>To address this recommendation to consider strategies for building a student community to enhance the student experience, we have developed an online orientation program specifically designed for new students entering the M.Sc. program in Environmental Management.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme team should consider strategies for building a student community to enhance the student experience. This is fundamental as the institution still has a small number of e-learning programs (three, including the one under consideration). 	<p>This specific action provides them with essential information about the program, its structure, available resources, and opportunities for engagement. Furthermore, it serves as an opportunity for students to connect with faculty members and support staff, establishing initial connections and setting the foundation for a sense of community.</p> <p>Another action taken are virtual collaborations spaces where students can interact and collaborate with each other. This is in the form of online discussion forums, chat platforms and social media groups exclusive to the program. These spaces serve as platforms for students to ask questions, share insights and resources, engage in academic discussions, and establish connections with their peers.</p> <p>Moreover, according to our distance learning strategy, we encourage regular and meaningful engagement between faculty members and students. This includes scheduled virtual office hours, online Q&A sessions, guest lectures delivered by faculty members.</p> <p>Finally, we actively involve alumni of the program by inviting them to participate in panel discussions and career mentoring activities. Alumni offer valuable insights and experiences to future students providing inspiration and guidance as they progress in their studies and embark on their professional careers.</p> <p>In Appendix 9, one may find our Strategy and Initiatives to build a student community.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Student admission and progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give further thought to specifying what types of backgrounds applicants are expected to come from. This will aid prospective students in understanding whether the programme is appropriate for them, plus help the institution develop a position on what kind of applicants it is seeking to recruit. 	<p>We have already conducted a comprehensive analysis of the program’s objectives, curriculum, and industry requirements to identify the preferred backgrounds of applicants based on academic disciplines, professional experiences, and specific areas of expertise that align with the program’s focus on environmental management. This information is communicated to prospective</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>students, enabling them to make informed decisions about their eligibility for the program. The specified applicants' backgrounds are taken into account during the admissions process to ensure a holistic evaluation of the applicants' background and help the students to make informed decisions about their suitability for the program. Please refer to Appendix 5 - the criteria and aspects considered during the admission process of the program. The Program is addressed to graduates of the Departments of: • Natural Sciences • Agricultural Sciences • Environmental Sciences • Polytechnic Schools • Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Veterinary medicine, Nursing, Health Economics, Departments whose subject is related to public health actions, primary health care and health services administration and other Health Sciences departments • Economics, Management and Social Sciences • Law, and other departments of related subjects of Universities from Cyprus, Greece and recognized institutions abroad.) Overall: • Well specified and detailed categories of applicants for admission have been introduced, as indicated above.</p>	
<p>• Progression across the programme and within individual courses requires further consideration. It is recommended that a common introductory course is developed for semester 1, possibly using ENV 120 (Introduction to sustainability) as a basis. Further consideration should also be given to progression within individual courses as the content appears very broad and ambitious in some instances.</p>	<p>To address the EEC's concerns and ensure a well-structured and progressive program, we have evaluated the feasibility of developing a common introductory course for semester 1 by transferring the course ENV 120 (Introduction to Sustainability) to the 1st semester becoming a module of the general core studies. Moreover, the module ENV-112 (Environmental and Waste to Energy) is transferred from the 1st semester to the 2nd semester. This modification improves indeed the overall offered program and</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>optimizes its pedagogical layout (please see Appendix 2- Revised Structure of the program).</p> <p>In addition, we have implemented the necessary modifications and additions to align it with the objectives and learning outcomes of the program. Furthermore, we have ensured that the course content for each module aligns with the intended learning outcomes, throughout the program. This alignment is based on a careful analysis of the program’s goals and the specific learning outcomes established for each course.</p> <p>Finally, an ongoing evaluation process has been established to monitor the effectiveness of the course progression and content. This evaluation process includes feedback from students, faculty, and external stakeholders to identify possible areas of improvement and make any necessary adjustments to ensure a cohesive and engaging learning experience (please see Appendix 3 - the process for ongoing program evaluation).</p>	
<p>Internship and placement opportunities for this MSc should be given consideration and linked to career advice the university provides to e-learning students. Such initiatives should take advantage of the university networks and partnerships.</p>	<p>The Internship is organized and implemented precisely and punctually according to the specifications and requirements of the relevant policy of CYQAA, and It is part of the program of study. It operates, it is assessed on its one capacity, and it is required for completion of the program of study.</p> <p>The University and the pertinent Department provide every support to the students involved to fully participate in, complete all requirements of the practicum and acquire all learning outcomes and practical skills in order to successfully complete and pass it on a Pass/Fail basis. In the remote case that a student fails the Practicum, most likely due to absences and not full participation, the student has to repeat the entire Practicum in order to graduate and receive the respective degree.</p> <p>Upon completion of the internship, the Supervisor, the Instructor and the Coordinator of each institution</p>	

	<p>evaluate each intern student in relation to his / her entire academic and practical performance, based on the requirements of the specific internship.</p> <p>The internship involves an intensely supervised experience in the student's designated programme area at an approved site. While gaining direct service experience, students regularly meet with an approved supervisor. Student performance is evaluated throughout the Internship. The student's professional and career development is an essential area of focus.</p> <p>To ensure that internship and placement opportunities are effectively integrated into the program, the University developed a strategy that incorporates career advice and leverages its networks and partnerships (please see Appendix 8).</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was not clear at the time of the visit whether the programme would run in English or in Greek (depending on recruitment). We recommend that the team develops materials and two versions of the programme VLE (in English and in Greek) ahead of the commencement of the programme to accommodate both possibilities in recruitment for this MSc. 	<p>The program has been designed and developed in such a way in order to be offered in both Greek and English. To this end, the University has developed and prepared the necessary instructional material in both Greek and English languages</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Quality assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links with relevant professional associations and environmental organisations should be developed to provide input to (a) quality assurance procedures and (b) continuous development of the programme. 	<p>To address this, we have actively sought collaborations with relevant professional associations, both at the local and international levels, dedicated to environmental sustainability, climate change, and other related disciplines.</p> <p>This enables Philips University to gain valuable insights into industry trends, best practices and emerging challenges.</p> <p>Their input is instrumental in ensuring that the program remains aligned with current industry standards and practices.</p> <p>In addition, this collaboration enhances the program's relevance and provide students with practical exposure to real-world environmental</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>challenges. Finally, professionals are invited from professional associations and environmental organizations to deliver guest lectures and conduct workshops for students.</p> <p>These sessions provide students with valuable insights into current industry practices, real-life case studies, and emerging research. These collaborations, enhance the program's quality, relevance and practical applicability, preparing students for successful careers in environmental management.</p> <p>The MSc in Environmental Management is accredited by the following British Professional Environmental Organizations, dedicated to environmental sustainability, water and other related disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM), CIWEM.pdf • The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), UK. IEMA.pdf <p>Holders of our MSc degree in Environmental Management are eligible to join CIWEM and IEMA to Graduate membership.</p> <p>Also, as has been shown at the SWOT analysis, Philips University maintains close links with the community and responds to the needs of society in the right manner. Furthermore, there are strong links with stakeholders, the government, NGOs, industrial partners, etc.). We are in the process to establish collaboration with the following professional associations and organizations in Cyprus, dedicated to environmental sustainability:</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyprus Energy Agency (CEA) which is a non-profit organization focused on promoting sustainable energy practices and policies in Cyprus. • Cyprus Environmental Organizations Network (CYEN) which is a network of environmental NGOs and organizations working together for environmental protection and sustainability in Cyprus. • Cyprus Association of Environmental Impact Assessment (CAEIA), an association dedicated to promoting best practices in environmental impact assessment and sustainable development. • Terra Cypria – The Cyprus Conversation Foundation focused on nature conservation and environmental education initiatives in Cyprus. • Cyprus Institute of Environmentalists (CIE), an institution focused on environmental research, education and advocacy in Cyprus. <p>Conclusively, the design of the specific program was based on the needs of the society of Cyprus, Greece, Europe, the Mediterranean and the world. Overall, links with relevant associations and environmental organizations have been performed, but further ones are aimed during the first 3 years of the program.</p>	
<p>Programme structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming the general academic concepts, e.g., quality, research, synergy, etc., into specific and measurable goals and targets. This, hopefully, will guarantee a sustained path to continuous improvement in the future. 	<p>Distance learning instructors participate in the University's 'Staff Development Plan', which includes financial and other support to participate in local and international conferences and seminars, to have membership in international professional associations, and offering in-house training seminars. As the case is with all instructors at the University, distance learning instructors undergo annual evaluation, a fundamental component of which is the development by each faculty</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>member of an annual plan with measurable goals and targets, a self-assessment of which is evaluated at the annual evaluation. The annual evaluation includes (a) the evaluation/feedback by the students at the end of each semester, (b) an evaluation by the pertinent Dean of School based on the instructor's self-assessment report, as well as periodic observations and meetings between the Program Coordinator and the on-site instructors.</p>	
<p>Staff workload and career progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisiting the operational rationale of the Program and re-allocating tasks, time and activities between staff and between juniors and seniors. 	<p>We appreciate EEC's suggestion. To address it we conducted a comprehensive review of the operational rationale of the program by assessing the current distribution of tasks, responsibilities, and activities among junior and senior staff members. Based on the review findings, we have realigned and reallocated tasks, time, and activities between junior and senior staff. More specifically, the alignment includes redefining roles, adjusting workload distributions, and optimizing the expertise and capabilities of both junior and senior staff. The goal was to ensure a more efficient and effective utilization of resources while maximizing the expertise and potential contributions of each team member. Finally, we foster a culture of collaboration and mentoring within the program. Senior staff members provide guidance, mentorship, and support to junior staff members, allowing for knowledge transfer and professional development. This collaboration facilitates a balanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities, as well as creating opportunities for junior staff members to contribute meaningfully to the program's operations.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Engaging senior staff more actively in the teaching process</p>	<p>Senior faculty members are certainly actively engaged in the teaching process by carrying the required teaching load prescribed for full-time faculty members.</p> <p>Synergies of teaching and research:</p> <p>The faculty members teaching in the Program have an excellent record of</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>both already published and on-going research. The outcomes of their research are included in the teaching material and bibliography of the pertinent courses and they are presented and discussed in group discussions. In addition, students are introduced to research methodology and they are assigned with research papers in the appropriate courses. The Master Thesis also involves substantial research.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a medium-term policy for supporting juniors to mature scientifically, improve their international presence and visibility, and cultivate the mind ground for becoming the future leaders of PU, according to the vision of its Founder. 	<p>Philips University implements a Faculty Mentoring Program, which ensures that the junior faculty members get in a position to succeed professionally. Issues handled by this program through continuous interaction between a senior and a junior faculty member are orientation to the University, excelling at teaching and research, understanding the criteria for annual evaluations/reviews, positioning the faculty member for promotion, developing professional networks, and achieving career goals. In addition, distance learning instructors participate in the University's 'Staff Development Plan', which includes financial and other support to participate in local and international conferences and seminars, to have membership in international professional associations, and offering in-house training seminars.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme team should consider trends in pedagogy towards authentic assessment opportunities while they design and produce assessment activities and exam papers, including an open book approach if applicable. 	<p>The University has already considered trends in pedagogy towards authentic assessment opportunities. In order to incorporate more up-to-date innovations in pedagogical approaches and teaching methods into the program, the following actions were taken from the Pedagogical Planning Committee of the Distance Education Unit:</p> <p>e) We introduced the flipped classroom model where students engage with instructional materials and content outside of</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>class and use class time for active learning discussions and collaborative activities.</p> <p>f) It was agreed with the faculty members of the program to provide online resources for students to access before the class, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the content at their own pace. In addition, to use class for interactive discussions, problem-solving activities, case-studies, or group projects that promote deeper understanding and application of concepts.</p> <p>g) We incorporated problem-based learning (PBL) approaches, where students tackle real-world problems or case studies relevant to the field of education. Also, to present students with authentic scenarios that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative decision-making. Finally, to facilitate group discussions and provide guidance as students work through the problem, encouraging them to apply their knowledge and skills to develop innovative solutions.</p> <p>h) The Faculty, the Pedagogical Planning Committee & the Technical Support Committee emphasize the integration of technology tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences. We explored the use of educational apps, online platforms and multimedia resources to engage students and facilitate concept mastery. Furthermore, the Technical Support Committee provides training and support for faculty and students to effectively use technology tools in their teaching and learning processes. Finally, we encourage faculty to engage in research on innovative teaching methods.</p> <p>Furthermore, the University employs a mapping assessment and student assessment Rubrics for the M.Sc. to maintain high levels of student participation, motivation and engagement.</p> <p>Grading Rubrics, (Appendix 10 - Assessment of Learning Outcomes), are effective tools which</p>	
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	<p>allow for objective and consistent assessment of a range of performances, assignments, and activities.</p> <p>Rubrics can help clarify students' expectations and show students how to meet them, making students accountable for performance in an easy-to-follow format. The feedback that students receive through a grading rubric can help them improve their performance on received or subsequent work. Rubrics allow for consistency in grading for those who teach the same course.</p> <p>In addition, by aligning the content, activities and assessment of each unit with the desired ILO's, it provides a visual representation of how the content and assessment of each unit contribute to the overall program outcomes. This mapping report serves as a valuable tool for both the teaching team and the students, as it enhances transparency and understanding of the curriculum structure (Appendix 11 – Curriculum Mapping Guide).</p> <p>In addition, the program follows a blended learning model that combines traditional face-to-face instruction, online teleconferences with online activities and resources. This approach allows students to access course materials, engage in discussions, and complete assignments through online platforms. Furthermore, we use interactive multimedia such as videos, interactive presentations to explain complex concepts and engage students in hands-on activities. These resources can be accessed through the Moodle Platform and provide interactive learning experience. Moreover, students can work together on group assignments, research projects, or problem-solving tasks using online communication and collaboration tools.</p> <p>Finally, we emphasize that all students complete an assessment questionnaire concerning Teachers' courses and University's facilities.</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the programme is offered for distance learning and the university has a strong technical infrastructure, the exams should also be offered online as well. The students should be able to choose if they prefer an online or onsite examination, depending on their location and/or ability to travel. 	<p>Under normal conditions, onsite final exams are required by CYQAA. However, the University has already been equipped with an appropriate platform and technology with lockdown proctoring for online examinations in case this would be needed.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Thesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dissertation should be positioned as part of the programme of specialisation in one of the three themes, if this is not already the case. 	<p>Philips University appreciates the EEC's suggestion to position the dissertation as part of the program's specialization in one of the three theme categories. We have reviewed the existing dissertation's requirements and made the necessary adjustments to clearly position the dissertation as an integral part of the specialization in one of the three themes. Furthermore, according to our procedure, the students receive guidance and support from the faculty members through the dissertation process. Faculty provide expertise and mentorship specific to the chosen specialization theme, helping students shape their research questions, methodology, and analysis to address key issues within their specialized field.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>There is a trend in distance learning to include the thesis in the modular structure of a programme rather than superimposing it a separate entity outside the modular structure. This helps with student tasks and progression towards the thesis production. We recommend that the university considers this approach.</p>	<p>Please see Appendix 6 - the dissertation process and the key components of positioning the dissertation as part of the program of specialization within one of the three themes of the program. Philips University applies the instructions and directions given by CYQAA concerning Master Thesis. These instructions and directions of CYQAA are applied in this educational program.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>
<p>Staff and student training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising training for trainers, especially in the virtual mode of teaching selected for this program. 	<p>Philips University implements a training and development program for the instructors in the Distance Learning Programs of Study, which consists of a three-day seminar (Appendix 12), and which includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to distance learning • Theories supporting online education, such as self-regulated learning, conversational framework, etc. • Quality in distance learning 	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of adult students • Organization of Group Counseling meetings / Tele-Meetings, communication, OSS • elements, alternative scenarios in OSS and others • Assessment of written assignments • Plagiarism • Rights / Obligations of teachers • Technological and Technical skills to support distance education. • Online interactive elements, including Moodle add-ons such as HSP <p>In addition, the faculty training program, includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a comprehensive Faculty Handbook. • Orientation sessions for newly hired faculty members. • Implementation of a Faculty Mentors Program, by which older faculty members are assigned as Mentors to new faculty members for advising and consultations on a continuous basis. <p>Periodic offerings of training programs to all members of the teaching staff on pedagogical, research and other faculty-related matters.</p> <p>In order to address the first recommendation, we conduct an assessment, prior to the start of the program, to gauge the digital literacy and technical knowledge of incoming students.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing before the programme starts the actual level of digital literacy and technical knowledge that the students have and organise, if needed, a DL course covering any gap in that respect. 	<p>This assessment helps identify any gaps or areas where additional support may be needed. The assessment includes surveys, self-assessment questionnaires, or practical exercises to evaluate students' proficiency in relevant areas such as computer skills and basic technical competencies.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>Based on the assessment results and if it is needed, we offer to our students a Digital Literacy (DL) course to address any identified gaps in students' digital literacy and technical knowledge.</p> <p>The DL course provides essential training and guidance on using digital tools, software applications, online research, data analysis, and other relevant technical skills needed for successful participation in the program.</p> <p>Over and above that, the Technical Support Committee of the Distance Education Unit provides individualized support to students who require further assistance in developing their digital literacy and technical skills. This support includes one-on-one mentoring, tutoring session, or access to online resources and tutorials.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing previous experience and provide, if needed, training on DL to the newly recruited teaching faculty. 	<p>A comprehensive support system was established by the Distance Education Unit, as already described, to address students' specific needs and provide guidance throughout their academic journey.</p> <p>In order to address this recommendation and ensure that the teaching faculty is well-equipped to deliver effective instruction, we included an assessment of previous experience as part of the onboarding process for newly recruited teaching faculty.</p> <p>The specific assessment evaluates faculty's previous experience and familiarity with digital learning platforms, online teaching methodologies, and instructional technologies. Based on the assessment results we provide training on digital learning to the teaching faculty who may benefit from it.</p> <p>The training was set to cover various aspects of online instruction, including the effective use of learning management systems, engaging students in virtual classrooms, facilitating online discussions, designing and delivering multimedia content, and leveraging interactive tools for assessment and feedback. The</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

	<p>training is tailored to meet the specific needs and objectives of the program.</p> <p>Furthermore, we offer ongoing professional development opportunities to the teaching faculty to enhance their skills and knowledge in digital learning. These opportunities include workshops, webinars and online courses. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, we ensure that faculty members stay updated with emerging trends and best practices in digital learning, enabling them to deliver high-quality instruction in the online environment.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously monitoring the knowledge and use of DL tools by the entire teaching faculty (including necessary updates are implemented). 	<p>To address this recommendation, we have ensured that the teaching faculty has access to ongoing technical support for DL tools. This involves a dedicated technology support team (Technical Support Team) that faculty members can reach out to for assistance with troubleshooting, software updates, or guidance on using specific DL tools.</p> <p>In addition, we have in place, a mechanism for continuous evaluation and feedback. We gather feedback from students and faculty on effectiveness of digital learning strategy and on the use of DL tools and their effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning. This feedback results on ongoing improvements and refinements to instructional approaches, ensuring that faculty members are continuously supported in their professional development journey. Moreover, regular evaluations provide opportunities for faculty members to reflect on their teaching practices and identify areas of growth and enhancement. This enables us to support faculty members in staying current with DL advancements and empower them to deliver high-quality instruction using the latest tools and practices.</p>	<p>See general comments below</p>

EEC's final conclusions and remarks

The EEC considers that significant steps have been taken and planned by PU to comply with the suggestions, comments, and remarks following the in-situ evaluation exercise (June 2023).

Although a consistent body of arguments is extensively described in a series of relevant Appendices, the overall operational compliance with CYQAA standards is a medium-term process. It is therefore unsuitable for the EEC to confirm definitive compliance on a point-by-point basis.

There are issues that have already been addressed, e.g., the readings' material, hiring of personnel, re-allocation of Courses, or Junior staff mentoring. Other issues of operational or strategic character, e.g., the preferred academic backgrounds, professional experiences, or areas of expertise of potential applicants, learning technologies, and how they are used in practice, are expected to reach maturity as the programme progresses.

This maturation process should be monitored by CYQAA internal procedures as to the implementation and efficiency of planned improvements, in the years to come, as PU institutional experience accumulates in the specific scientific area.

In that sense, the EEC recommends that the overall marking of the PU proposal should be upgraded to compliance taking our points above into account.



D. Signatures of the EEC

Name	Signature
Prof Andreas Y. Troumbis	
Professor Matthew Cashmore	
Professor Luca Di Corato	
Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos	
Click to enter Name	
Click to enter Name	

Date: 25/10/2023

