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Date: 02/07/2026

External Evaluation Report

(E-learning programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution: Open University of Cyprus**
- **Town: Nicosia**
- **School/Faculty (if applicable): Faculty of Economics and Management**
- **Department/ Sector: N/A**
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

  In Greek:

  Διδακτορικό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών στη Διοίκηση

  In English:

  Doctoral Programme of Study in Management
- **Language(s) of instruction: 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. Introduction

This part includes basic information regarding the onsite visit.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the premises of the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) in Nicosia on the 29th of June 2026. Prior to the visit we were provided with the necessary documentation for the External Evaluation process, which included the programme's academic profile and orientation, quality assurance policies and procedures, administration processes, teaching practices, resources and infrastructure.

Throughout the day, the EEC met with relevant parties and stakeholders, including Prof. Constantinos Leonidou, Vice-Rector of OUC (who is also the director of the programme under evaluation) and the members of the internal Evaluation Committee. The EEC also met with Dr. Alexandros Tsadiras, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management, members of the e-Learning Unit and members of teaching staff from various disciplines who presented academic aspects of the programme.

The EEC wishes to highlight the importance of the onsite meetings for collecting insightful information that helped to develop a concrete picture of the programme. Given the often-abstract nature of the preparatory documents, these meetings provided real life examples and specifics regarding institutional procedures and organisational approaches.

Presentations throughout the various sessions summarised key elements of OUC and of the programme of study and expanded on some core areas. The documentation was thorough and very helpful in enabling the EEC to understand the programme's academic profile and structure, its management and the wider operational context. It was also consistent with the information provided throughout the onsite visit.

Furthermore, the EEC spoke to a group of OUC students, as well as to external stakeholders and members of the administrative personnel related to IT support, academic affairs, student welfare and library facilities.

Every effort was made to assist the EEC during the on-site visit, and all parties were very accommodating in adapting and responding to the EEC's requirements.

The EEC is of the opinion that the submitted material conforms to the CYQAA's stated assessment requirements, contains the desired documentation and information, and acknowledges all the efforts that have gone into producing and presenting the material.

B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	*Position*	*University*
Fergal O'Brien	Professor	University of Limerick
Teerooven Soobaroyen	Professor	Aston University
Dimitrios Kousenidis	Professor	Aristotle University
Stylianos Hatzipanagos	Professor	University of London
Denis Derendovschii	Student	University of Cyprus

C. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

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

Findings

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

Strengths

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

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

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

Sub-areas

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

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Standards

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

1.2 Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review

Standards

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

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

1.3 Public information

Standards

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

1.4 Information management

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The Doctoral Programme in Management is a new distance-learning programme requiring a minimum of 180 ECTS, with a duration spanning between three and eight years. In general, the programme is well structured, well aligned with the mission of the OUC and follows established institutional quality assurance procedures.

The programme aims to provide comprehensive, high-quality doctoral training and produce high-quality scientific research and knowledge in management studies. It provides students with the necessary theoretical background and research specialisation in the fields of strategic management, marketing, accounting and finance, human resource management, and healthcare management.

The programme's purpose, objectives and learning outcomes are clearly communicated and well justified. The curriculum structure which is research-oriented rather than course-intensive is coherent and consistent with doctoral-level expectations. Public information is available and the programme benefits from the OUC's extensive experience in open and distance education.

The programme's structure and content includes two compulsory taught modules ("Academic Writing" and "Research Methodology"), each worth 15 ECTS, delivered at the beginning of studies. These courses are taken on a pass/fail basis. Successful completion of these courses is a requirement for progressing to writing the doctoral thesis.

The admission criteria are adequate and ensure sustainable recruitment. The programme's language of instruction is English. According to the programme's feasibility study, the number of students is limited to ensure meaningful supervision and close academic guidance, in line with best practices in doctoral studies. Each of the seven permanent faculty members may be allocated students based on the relevance of their research interests and their ability to conduct high-quality research within the thematic areas covered.

A number of quality assurance mechanisms and formal policies have been put in place and are well aligned with international standards. The programme is supported by formal regulations governing admissions, supervision, progression, annual monitoring, comprehensive examinations and thesis defence.

Strengths

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

- OUC is one of the three public Universities in Cyprus and has long experience in the delivery of educational programmes in the broader fields of management, providing a strong institutional foundation and extensive expertise for the successful implementation of the programme.
- The programme is supported by a strong institutional quality assurance framework, ensuring the continuous monitoring (including progression reviews), evaluation, and enhancement of academic standards and student learning experiences.
- Clear and comprehensive doctoral regulations provide a well-defined governance structure, outlining the rights, responsibilities, and academic requirements of doctoral candidates and supervisors.
- The programme demonstrates strong alignment with European principles and best practices in doctoral education, promoting research excellence, academic integrity, and international comparability.
- A transparent and well-structured programme design enables candidates to clearly understand the progression of their studies, milestones, and expected academic outcomes.
- Robust supervision and monitoring arrangements ensure continuous academic guidance, effective progress tracking, and timely support throughout the study period at the faculty level.

- The academic staff comprise highly qualified permanent and adjunct faculty members, all of whom hold doctoral degrees and possess substantial teaching and research experience in their respective fields. Key (five) areas of specialisation have been identified around the permanent staff members and are credible given the expertise
- The programme exhibits a high degree of coherence between its intended learning outcomes, curriculum content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies, thereby effectively supporting the achievement of its educational and research objectives.
- The inclusion of Research Methodology and Academic Writing courses further strengthens the programme by fostering advanced analytical, critical thinking, scholarly communication, and independent research skills essential for doctoral-level study.
- The use of established and reliable e-learning systems enhances accessibility, supports flexible learning and supervision, and facilitates effective communication and resource sharing among students and faculty.

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 maximum number of PhDs under supervision per faculty is 10. This is a very high number (albeit a maximum) to ensure a quality experience for both supervisors and students.
- External stakeholders can offer valuable insights into market needs and emerging research trends. Furthermore, an important consideration of research quality is impact beyond academia, and this largely flows from interacting and working with external stakeholders. Therefore, given the focus on part-time working students/professionals, the programme should systematically involve external stakeholders, employers and doctoral candidates in periodic programme reviews, while keeping academic assessment and degree-quality decisions within the established internal committees.
- The University should further develop and formalise mechanisms for the systematic collection, documentation, and utilisation of feedback from doctoral candidates, graduates, and external experts. This should be complemented by the establishment of robust alumni tracking and data maintenance procedures to ensure the availability of reliable information on programme graduates, facilitate continuous stakeholder engagement, and support evidence-based quality enhancement and future programme development.
- While there is some indication of PhD progress monitoring at the institutional level, it would be useful to reflect on the annual progress review process to include areas of student activity (e.g. attending research seminars, presenting at workshops, enrolled in training sessions, assisting teaching) other than academic progress with the research/thesis.
- The current English language requirement is pegged at IELTS 5.5 or equivalent. This can represent a challenge for PhD students both in terms of engaging with academic material as well as writing at the required level (and seeking publication in high-quality journals). Typically, an overall IELTS 6.5 (with no individual components below 6) is appropriate for PhD entry.
- There needs to be consideration on the make-up of the Advisory Committee to ensure continuity of supervision throughout the research, e.g., if the main supervisor is unable to continue with supervision duties.
- For the five-member Examination Committee, the majority decision to recommend an award should include at least one of the additional members i.e. the majority decision cannot be purely based on the three-member Advisory Committee.
- There should be provision for joint supervision arrangements in the case of multidisciplinary PhDs.
- The publicly available information for prospective students on the website should be made more engaging.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
1.1	Policy for quality assurance	Compliant
1.2	Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review	Partially compliant
1.3	Public information	Compliant
1.4	Information management	Compliant

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment *(ESG 1.3)*

Sub-areas

2.1 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology
2.2 Practical training
2.3 Student assessment
2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

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

Standards

- *The e-learning methodology is appropriate for the particular programme of study.*
- *Expected teleconferences for presentations, discussion and question-answer sessions, and guidance are set.*
- *A specific plan is developed to safeguard and assess the interaction:*
  - *among students*
  - *between students and teaching staff*
  - *between students and study guides/material of study*
- *Training, guidance and support are provided to the students focusing on interaction and the specificities of e-learning.*
- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of e-learning delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the e-learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*
- *For distance learning programs, the number of students in both undergraduate and Master's level postgraduate programs does not exceed **30** students per class.*

2.2 Practical training

Standards

- *Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.*
- *The organisation and the content of practical training, if applicable, support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.*

2.3 Student assessment

Standards

- *A complete assessment framework is designed, focusing on e-learning methodology, including clearly defined evaluation criteria for student assignments and the final examination.*
- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for the method of assessment, as well as criteria for marking, are published in advance.*
- *Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the e-learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

2.4 Study guides structure, content and interactive activities

Standards

- *A study guide for each course, fully aligned with e-learning philosophy and methodology and the need for student interaction with the material is developed. The study guide should include, for each course week / module, the following:*
  - *Clearly defined objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme, of the modules and activities in an organised and coherent manner*
  - *Presentation of course material, and students' activities on a weekly basis, in a variety of ways and means (e.g. printed material, electronic material, teleconferencing, multimedia)*
  - ***Weekly schedule of interactive activities and exercises (i.e. simulations, problem solving, scenarios, argumentation)***
  - *Clear instructions for creating posts, discussion, and feedback*
  - *Self-assessment exercises and self-correction guide*
  - *Bibliographic references and suggestions for further study*
  - *Number of assignments/papers and their topics, along with instructions and additional study material*
  - *Synopsis*
- *Study guides, material and activities are appropriate for the level of the programme according to the EQF.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Is the nature of the programme compatible with e-learning delivery?*
- *How do the programme, the material, the facilities, and the guidelines safeguard the interaction between students, students and teaching staff, students and the material?*
- *How many students upload their work and discuss it in the platform during the semester?*
- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*
- ***Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?***
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

Findings

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

The EEC found that the programme is appropriately designed and implemented for the delivery of doctoral studies through distance learning. Doctoral candidates are supported through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning tools, online supervision arrangements, structured progression milestones, and continuous communication with their supervisors.

Assessment procedures are clearly defined and include annual progress reviews, evaluation of research outputs, comprehensive examinations, and the final assessment of the doctoral thesis. The pedagogical approach effectively promotes independent and original research while ensuring sustained academic guidance and support throughout the candidates' studies.

Strengths

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

- The programme benefits from a well-established and mature digital learning environment that effectively supports doctoral education through distance learning.
- The supervision framework is robust and provides candidates with appropriate academic support. Particular strengths include the strong emphasis placed on research methodology and academic writing, the transparency and consistency of assessment procedures, and the flexibility offered to doctoral candidates, including working professionals, in managing their studies.
- To overcome "limited academic and community integration" issues, the OUC encourages and supports students to attend discipline-specific seminars and conferences.

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 recommends that the programme further enhance opportunities for academic interaction and scholarly exchange among doctoral candidates. This could be achieved through the systematic organisation of online research seminars, annual OUC doctoral conferences, doctoral colloquia, peer-learning activities, and participation in international research workshops and networks.
- The programme should establish and systematically monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to doctoral candidate engagement, progression, completion rates, and research activity to support evidence-based quality enhancement and continuous programme improvement.
- There is a policy deficit with respect to the use of generative AI specifically related to the Doctoral programme. More guidance is required on confidential research data and research integrity in general, including acceptable use of generative AI for research purposes.
- There should be better incentive/disincentive processes to encourage PhD completion in shorter timeframes. The view of the EEC is that six years should be considered as a maximum.

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

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

3. Teaching staff *(ESG 1.5)*

Sub-areas

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development
3.2 Teaching staff number and status
3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

Standards

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

3.2 Teaching staff number and status

Standards

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

3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

Standards

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

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

You may also consider the following questions:

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

Findings

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

The EEC found that the proposed doctoral programme is supported by a highly qualified academic team with strong international research profiles and substantial publication records in the programme's areas of specialisation. Academic staff recruitment, appointment, and promotion procedures are transparent, merit-based, and governed by the relevant state legislation. In addition, academic personnel receive dedicated training in distance learning pedagogies and the effective use of digital technologies, ensuring alignment with the University's distance education model.

The EEC noted that the Faculty of Economics and Management currently comprises seven permanent academic staff members across different academic ranks. While this number is relatively limited, the programme has been designed to ensure adequate academic support and supervision. Adjunct Academic Staff may contribute only to the compulsory thematic modules in "Academic Writing" and "Research Methodology" offered at the beginning of the doctoral studies. Furthermore, the supervision and examination framework allows for the participation of academics from other accredited universities in Cyprus and abroad. While the principal supervisor must be a permanent faculty member of the University, members of the Advisory and Examination Committees may be drawn from external institutions, thereby broadening the available expertise and strengthening the programme's research capacity and international orientation.

Strengths

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

- The programme benefits from highly qualified academic staff who are active in research and have a strong publication record and international recognition.
- The established framework for staff recruitment, promotion and professional development helps to maintain high academic standards.
- Involving distinguished academics from other accredited universities in doctoral advisory and examination committees further enhances the programme's research environment and international dimension.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- While the current staffing arrangements are adequate for the proposed programme, the EEC recommends that the university continues to strengthen the permanent academic base of the faculty in line with the anticipated growth in the number of doctoral students and research activities.
- As enrolments increase, supervision workloads should continue to be monitored carefully. Attention should be given to ensuring the long-term sustainability of supervision capacity, while maintaining an appropriate balance between student enrolment, faculty workload and research support.
- The programme could be strengthened in terms of internationalisation by establishing joint supervision arrangements, inviting visiting scholars, holding international doctoral seminars, and undertaking collaborative research projects.
- Sharing of resources (e.g. financial databases) could also be explored between institutions, through networks (e.g. Open European University)

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
3.1	Teaching staff recruitment and development	Compliant
3.2	Teaching staff number and status	Compliant
3.3	Synergies of teaching and research	Compliant

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

Sub-areas

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria
4.2 Student progression
4.3 Student recognition
4.4 Student certification

4.1 Student admission, processes and criteria

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student admission are in place.*
- *Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.*

4.2 Student progression

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student progression are in place.*
- *Processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression, are in place.*

4.3 Student recognition

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student recognition are in place.*
- *Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.*
- *Appropriate recognition procedures are in place that rely on:*
  - *institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention*
  - *cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country*

4.4 Student certification

Standards

- *Pre-defined and published regulations regarding student certification are in place.*

- *Students receive certification explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Are the admission requirements for the study programme appropriate? How is the students' prior preparation/education assessed (including the level of international students, for example)?*
- *How is the procedure of recognition for prior learning and work experience ensured, including recognition of study results acquired at foreign higher education institutions?*
- *Is the certification of the HEI accompanied by a diploma supplement, which is in line with European and international standards?*

Findings

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

The EEC found that the admission, progression, and certification procedures of the doctoral programme are clearly defined, transparent, and aligned with institutional policies and national regulatory requirements. Admission criteria are publicly available and ensure that candidates possess the necessary academic background and research potential to undertake doctoral studies. Admission to the programme requires a recognised Master's degree or equivalent qualification in a discipline relevant to at least one of the programme's research areas, as well as demonstrated proficiency in the English language. Applicants are also required to submit a preliminary doctoral thesis title and a concise research proposal outlining the intended area of investigation.

The EEC noted that the programme incorporates appropriate mechanisms for monitoring doctoral candidates' academic progress. During the first year of study, candidates are required to successfully complete the compulsory thematic modules in "Research Methodology" and "Academic Writing", which provide the necessary foundations for advanced research. Progression requirements are clearly articulated and include annual evaluations, formal monitoring of research development, and a comprehensive examination process designed to assess candidates' readiness to proceed to the thesis stage. Certification procedures are well documented and comply with both institutional and national standards governing doctoral education.

Student recruitment, based on student feedback, is heavily dependent on the reputation of OUC and word-of-mouth. The flexible nature of the PhD programme is very attractive to students seeking admission.

Strengths

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

- UOC demonstrates a transparent and well-structured admissions framework supported by clearly communicated entry requirements and selection procedures.
- The EEC particularly commends the rigorous system of progression monitoring, the clearly defined doctoral milestones, and the comprehensive assessment mechanisms that support the successful completion of doctoral studies. The overall structure is consistent with European standards and expectations for third-cycle higher education programmes.

- Student resources and supports are aligned with changing needs and underpinned by staff training and investment in robust digital infrastructure.
- There is acknowledgement of and support for students with additional needs in OUC.

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 recommends that, as the programme matures, the University systematically collect, monitor, and publish key performance indicators related to doctoral education, including completion and attrition rates, average time-to-degree, doctoral graduate destinations and career outcomes, research outputs, and broader measures of research impact. The systematic use of such data will strengthen evidence-based quality assurance processes, support strategic planning, and contribute to the continuous enhancement of the programme.
- In addition, the EEC encourages the University to further strengthen the research culture and publication profile of doctoral candidates by considering the introduction of a requirement, or a strongly encouraged milestone, for candidates to achieve at least one publication in a peer-reviewed journal of recognised academic standing (e.g., an ABS-rated journal) prior to the oral defence of the doctoral thesis. Such a measure would enhance the visibility, quality, and international impact of doctoral research outcomes.
- Doctoral students should be surveyed for student satisfaction purposes.
- Consideration should be given to an annual internal Doctoral Conference.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
4.1	Student admission, processes and criteria	Compliant
4.2	Student progression	Compliant
4.3	Student recognition	Compliant
4.4	Student certification	Compliant

5. Learning resources and student support *(ESG 1.6)*

Sub-areas

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources
5.2 Physical resources
5.3 Human support resources
5.4 Student support

5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

Standards

- *Weekly interactive activities per each course are set.*
- *The e-learning material and activities take advantage of the capabilities offered by the virtual and audio-visual environment and the following are applied:*
  - *Simulations in virtual environments*
  - *Problem solving scenarios*
  - *Interactive learning and formative assessment games*
  - *Interactive weekly activities with image, sound and unlimited possibilities for reality reconstruction and further processing based on hypotheses*
  - *They have the ability to transfer students to real-life situations, make decisions, and study the consequences of their decisions*
  - *They help in building skills both in experiences and attitudes like in real life and also in experiencing - not just memorizing knowledge*
- *A pedagogical planning unit for e-learning, which is responsible for the support of the e-learning unit and addresses the requirements for study materials, interactive activities and formative assessment in accordance to international standards, is established.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of e-learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

5.2 Physical resources

Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*

- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.3 Human support resources

Standards

- *Human support resources, i.e. tutors/mentors, counsellors, other advisers, qualified administrative staff, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

5.4 Student support

Standards

- *Student support is provided covering the needs of a diverse student population, such as mature, part-time, employed and international students and students with special needs.*
- *Students are informed about the services available to them.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing student support.*
- *Students' mobility within and across higher education systems is encouraged and supported.*

You may also consider the following questions:

- *Evaluate the supply of teaching materials and equipment (including teaching labs, expendable materials, etc.), the condition of classrooms, adequacy of financial resources to conduct the study programme and achieve its objectives. What needs to be supplemented/ improved?*
- *What is the feedback from the teaching staff on the availability of teaching materials, classrooms, etc.?*
- *Are the resources in accordance with actual (changing) needs and contemporary requirements? How is the effectiveness of using resources ensured?*
- *What are the resource-related trends and future risks (risks arising from changing numbers of students, obsolescence of teaching equipment, etc.)? How are these trends taken into account and how are the risks mitigated?*
- *Evaluate student feedback on support services. Based on student feedback, which support services (including information flow, counselling) need further development?*
- *How is student learning within the standard period of study supported (student counselling, flexibility of the study programme, etc.)?*

- *How students' special needs are considered (different capabilities, different levels of academic preparation, special needs due to physical disabilities, etc.)?*
- *How is student mobility being supported?*

Findings

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

The EEC found that the doctoral programme is supported by a well-developed and comprehensive learning environment that is fully aligned with the University's distance education model. Doctoral candidates have access to an extensive range of electronic learning resources through the University's digital platforms, including the eClass learning management system, synchronous and asynchronous communication tools, online teaching materials, self-assessment resources, and research support services.

The University provides access to a wide range of electronic library resources, scientific journals, databases, and digital repositories that support advanced research activity and doctoral-level study. In addition, doctoral candidates benefit from specialised library services, training sessions on information literacy, bibliographic resources, plagiarism software, and the effective use of research databases. However, there is no direct access to financial databases (e.g. WRDS, Compustat). While understandable given the significant financial implications, this somewhat limits the potential for quantitative research in areas such as management, accounting, finance and governance. At this stage, it appears that external members of the advisory committee can be called upon to support access to data.

The EEC noted that the technological infrastructure supporting the programme is robust and appropriate for doctoral education. The e-learning environment has the potential to facilitate communication and collaboration between students, supervisors, and academic staff through virtual classrooms, teleconferencing systems, discussion forums, instant messaging tools, and electronic submission and feedback mechanisms. Dedicated technical support services are available to assist students and academic staff in the effective use of digital learning technologies.

Student support is provided through multiple institutional structures, including the Faculty, the Programme Director, the Department of Academic Affairs and Student Welfare, and the University Library. These services offer academic, administrative, and personal support throughout the student lifecycle. Attention is given to supporting students with disabilities and addressing individual circumstances through established institutional procedures and regulations.

The EEC further noted that the doctoral supervision framework contributes significantly to student support by ensuring continuous academic guidance, monitoring of progress, and integration into an active research environment.

Strengths

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

- The programme benefits from an excellent digital infrastructure that effectively supports doctoral studies in a distance-learning environment. The availability of extensive electronic library resources, research databases, and online learning tools provides doctoral candidates with the resources necessary to conduct high-quality research.
- The EEC particularly commends the comprehensive library services, the accessibility of learning resources irrespective of geographical location, and the responsiveness of the OUC's technical support mechanisms. The integrated use of synchronous and asynchronous technologies facilitates continuous interaction

between doctoral candidates and academic staff and contributes to an effective and flexible learning experience.

- The existence of dedicated student support services, combined with structured academic supervision and well-established administrative procedures, creates a supportive environment conducive to doctoral success.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- While the existing learning resources and support mechanisms are comprehensive and appropriate for the programme's current stage of development, the EEC recommends that the University further strengthen initiatives aimed at fostering a vibrant doctoral research community. Consideration should be given to the development of structured mentoring schemes (Faculty Mentoring Schemes, Peer Mentoring Schemes, Alumni Mentoring Schemes etc), doctoral networking activities, peer-support initiatives, and opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction among doctoral candidates.
- Furthermore, the University is encouraged to introduce additional measures promoting doctoral student wellbeing, research culture, and social integration within the distance-learning environment. Regular doctoral seminars, research colloquia, writing retreats, and virtual community-building activities could further enhance student engagement, reduce isolation, and contribute to the overall doctoral experience.
- As the programme matures, the EEC also recommends the systematic monitoring of doctoral candidates' satisfaction with learning resources and support services through dedicated feedback mechanisms, enabling continuous enhancement of the student experience and support provision.
- Consideration of how financial databases could be accessed via formal sharing arrangements with other institutions in Cyprus or abroad.
- The EEC recommends that the UOC reviews the (statistical) software available to doctoral students.

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

Sub-area		*Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant*
5.1	Teaching and Learning resources	Compliant
5.2	Physical resources	Not applicable
5.3	Human support resources	Compliant
5.4	Student support	Compliant

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?*
- *Are the criteria reflected in 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 EEC found that the doctoral programme has established a comprehensive and well-structured framework governing admission, progression, supervision, assessment, and completion requirements. Admission criteria are clearly defined, transparent, and publicly available. Candidates are required to hold a recognised Master's degree in a discipline relevant to the programme's research areas, demonstrate proficiency in the English language, and submit a preliminary thesis title together with a concise research proposal.

The programme provides a clearly articulated doctoral pathway comprising compulsory modules in "Research Methodology" and "Academic Writing", followed by the development and completion of the doctoral dissertation. The stages of progression are well defined and include the submission and approval of a detailed research proposal, annual progress evaluations, a comprehensive examination, and the final thesis defence. The minimum and maximum duration of studies are specified, and certification procedures comply with institutional and national regulations.

The EEC noted that robust mechanisms are in place for monitoring doctoral candidates' progress. A three-member Advisory Committee is appointed early in the programme and is responsible for overseeing the candidate's research development, evaluating annual progress reports, and providing academic guidance. The supervisory framework is further strengthened through the requirement of a comprehensive examination prior to progression to the final dissertation stage.

The procedures governing the examination and award of the doctoral degree are clearly established. A five-member Examination Committee, including external academics from accredited universities or recognised research institutions, is responsible for evaluating the dissertation and conducting the oral defence. The inclusion of external members contributes to the objectivity, academic rigour, and international orientation of the programme.

The EEC further noted that the University operates a plagiarism detection system through its digital learning environment and has established procedures for addressing academic misconduct. Students receive information and guidance regarding academic integrity, plagiarism prevention, and ethical research practices.

Strengths

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

- The programme demonstrates a transparent and rigorous framework for doctoral admissions, progression, supervision, and assessment. Strengths include the clearly defined doctoral milestones, the systematic

monitoring of student progress through annual evaluations and a comprehensive examination, and the well-structured supervisory arrangements involving both internal and external academics. The composition of the Advisory and Examination Committees promotes academic quality, objectivity, and international engagement.

- The EEC also commends the strong emphasis placed on research preparation through the compulsory modules in "Research Methodology" and "Academic Writing", as well as the institutional mechanisms that support academic integrity through plagiarism detection and awareness-raising activities. Overall, the programme is aligned with established European standards and expectations for third-cycle higher education.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

- While the procedures governing research proposals and thesis evaluation are adequately defined, the EEC believes that more detailed and publicly accessible guidelines regarding dissertation preparation should be provided. These should include requirements relating to thesis structure, formatting conventions, referencing style, declarations of originality, minimum length, final submission procedures, and deposit in the University Library.
- The EEC also recommends the further formalisation of supervisory expectations through the establishment of minimum requirements regarding the frequency of supervisory meetings, documentation of feedback, support for scholarly publications, and encouragement of participation in academic conferences and research dissemination activities. Such measures would strengthen consistency in supervision practices and further enhance the doctoral research experience.
- Consideration needs to be given to establishing a clear institutional approach to research ethics approval policies and processes.
- AI-related policies and procedures should be developed that clearly articulate the OUC position on doctoral research specifically.

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

Sub-area		*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 the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) concludes that the proposed Doctoral Programme in Management of the Open University of Cyprus is a well-designed, academically robust, and strategically relevant programme that demonstrates a high degree of alignment with the mission of the University and with established European standards for doctoral education.

The programme is characterised by a clear academic vision, a coherent structure, transparent regulations, rigorous quality assurance mechanisms, and strong supervision arrangements. Its design effectively supports the development of advanced research competencies, independent critical thinking, scholarly communication skills, and the production of original research contributions in the broad field of Management. The EEC is particularly satisfied that the programme's objectives, learning outcomes, admission requirements, progression procedures, assessment mechanisms, and supervision framework are fully consistent with the expectations of third-cycle higher-education.

The EEC believes that the programme is designed to enable doctoral candidates to generate new knowledge through original research, demonstrate substantial authority and innovation within their field of study, and contribute to academic and professional practice through high-quality scholarly work. The emphasis placed on research methodology, academic writing, independent inquiry, and rigorous thesis examination further supports the achievement of the intended doctoral-level learning outcomes.

The Open University of Cyprus benefits from considerable experience in distance education and has developed a mature digital learning environment supported by effective technological infrastructure, comprehensive library resources, and well-established student support services. The programme is further strengthened by the expertise and research achievements of its academic staff and by the institutional commitment to quality enhancement and continuous improvement.

While the EEC finds the programme to be fully capable of delivering high-quality doctoral education, several opportunities for further enhancement have been identified. These include the systematic involvement of external stakeholders in programme review processes and proposals of research ideas, the development of comprehensive alumni tracking and performance monitoring systems, the strengthening of doctoral research culture through seminars and networking activities, the further internationalisation of doctoral studies, and the formalisation of certain aspects of doctoral supervision and dissertation guidance. The EEC views these recommendations as developmental measures that will further enhance an already strong programme and support its long-term sustainability and international visibility.

As the programme progresses and grows its identity within UOC should become clearer and ambition can be shown in terms of research funding applications and more industry engagement on research projects.

In conclusion, the EEC considers that the proposed Doctoral Programme in Management provides an appropriate and rigorous framework for doctoral education and research training. Subject to the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report, the programme has strong potential to make a significant contribution to doctoral education, research excellence, and knowledge creation in Management both within Cyprus and internationally.

The EEC would also like to express its appreciation to OUC's leadership, academic staff, administrative personnel, and all participants involved in the evaluation process for their professionalism, openness, and cooperation

throughout the review. Their commitment and constructive engagement greatly facilitated the EEC's work and contributed to a comprehensive and productive evaluation process.

Finally, the EEC would also like to express our gratitude to Dr. Lefkios Neophytou for organising and facilitating the evaluation process.

E. Signatures of the EEC

Name
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Date: 02/07/2026