

Doc. 300.1.1

Date: Date.

# External Evaluation Report (Conventional-face-to-face programme of study)

- **Higher Education Institution:**

The American University of Cyprus

- **Town:** Larnaca

- **School/Faculty (if applicable):** Business and Economics

- **Department/ Sector:** Marketing and Management
- **Programme of study- Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)**

**In Greek:**

Πρόγραμμα Εκμάθησης της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας για Εισδοχή σε Ιδρύματα Τριτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης στην Κύπρο

**In English:**

- Foundation Course in English Language for Entrance to Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus
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- **Language(s) of instruction:** English
- **Programme's status:** New
- **Concentrations (if any):**

**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].**

**In Greek:** Concentrations

**In English:** Concentrations

The visit started with the presentation of the institutional profile and organizational structure. This part of the visit was attended by Dr. Marc Zabbal, the Rector of the University. Prof. Marios Katsioloudes (Vice Rector Academic Affairs), Mr. Christos Karas (Board Member), Mr. Joe Ibrahim (Director of Finance), Dr. Carla Abi Hanna (Programme Coordinator) and Prof. Marios Katsioloudes (Academic oversight representative). The presentation was delivered by Mr. Farid Haikal (Director of Admissions and Marketing).

The institution is a relatively new one and was established and accredited in 2021. The university is affiliated with several international universities and is planning to offer double-degree accreditations. It is the only university in Cyprus affiliated with UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research). A large percentage of lecturers and instructors hold a PhD and are research active. The university places strong emphasis on supporting research. The tuition fees are aligned with fees of European private universities to remove barriers to participation. The proximity of the campus to the airport in Larnaca is a great advantage. Teaching is conducted from early morning to late in the evening. Extracurricular opportunities are available in abundance to the students. The training offered by the university is career oriented and 89% of the students find a job on the market. There are more 1500 students, and more than 15 international affiliations and the campus has a multicultural environment. The university consists of three faculties (Business Administrations and Economics, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sciences and Technology) and provides on-site and online teaching. Generous scholarship and financial aid are offered to students based on merit and socio-economic status and there is also a work-study grant. Social and psychological support is provided to the students.

The visit continued with a meeting with the Coordination Committee of the programme, which was attended by Dr. Carla Abi Hanna (Programme Coordinator) and Ms. Victoria Kalogerou (English Language Instructor). The presentation on the content, structure and learning outcomes was delivered by Ms. Victoria Kalogerou who explained that they follow a communicative, task-based, differentiated and student-centred pedagogical approach. She also provided a detailed explanation of the assessment

methods and tasks. A major innovation of the programme is the careful integration of AI-tools. Ms. Kalogerou also described how the institution monitors students' progression and supports them in case of difficulties. She also gave account of quality assurance mechanisms including external observation and student feedback. Dr. Csizér requested information on mitigation policies. Dr. Pawlak was interested in finding out more information about how the programme will support the development of learner autonomy and learning strategies. Papaspyrou Chrysostomos asked if the programme tutors will seek feedback on the digital tools used in the teaching and learning process.

After a short break, the next session of the visit involved meeting the teaching staff of the programme. Ms. Eleni Papachristoforou presented the structure and content of each course and its implementation, learning outcomes, the content and the assessment of each course, course materials and assessment criteria and test content. The members of the teaching staff who were present in person: Dr. Carla Abi Hanna (Programme Coordinator), Ms. Victoria Kalogerou (English Language Instructor) Ms. Eleni Papachristoforou and Mr. Stylianos Sphikas and Ms. Chirine Aoun who were attending online also introduced themselves and described their academic and professional background. The teaching staff expressed high level of satisfaction with the support the institution gives attending professional development courses. Professor Csizér asked for more detail about how teaching quality is monitored and autonomous language learning opportunities, which was answered in detail by the members of the teaching staff.

The last session was held with the administrative team of the university. The student member of the committee asked questions about available disability and infrastructure support. The possibility of offering the IELTS exam on site was also discussed and the panel chair suggested a cautious approach to recommending specific exams for the students.

The accreditation visit concluded at 14.00 Cyprus time with a brief exit discussion in which the panel informed the representatives of the university that they found the proposed programme compliant in all relevant criteria.

## A. Introduction

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

| <i>Name</i>             | <i>Position</i> | <i>University</i>          |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Prof. Judit Kormos      | Chair           | Lancaster University       |
| Prof. Kata Wein Csizér  | Member          | Eötvös Loránd University   |
| Prof. Mirosław Pawlak   | Member          | Adam Mickiewicz University |
| Papaspyrou Chrysostomos | Student member  | University of Cyprus       |

## 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

The analysis of the documentations submitted by the American University of Cyprus (AUCY) and the online meetings with the representatives of the institution allowed the following observations:

- 1.1. The institution has adopted transparent policies for quality assurance (QA) that will also be applicable to the English Language Foundation Course. Based on the documentation provided, the QA policy applies to all academic programs, teaching and learning activities, student support services, research endeavors, and administrative procedures. The main objectives of this policy are to (1) guarantee that academic programs meet European and national quality standards, (2) maintain the integrity and transparency of academic assessment and evaluation, (3) ensure student satisfaction and continual development of learning outcomes, (4) monitor and promote professional development of academic as well as administrative staff, and (5) encourage stakeholder engagement, including employers and alumni, in program evaluation and enhancement. The framework for quality assurance within the AUCY comprises several elements: (1) Internal Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC), which includes representatives from academic faculties, administration, student body, and the quality office, and is tasked with the oversight of internal monitoring, reporting directly to the Rector and Senate, (2) Departmental and Faculty QA Representatives, who ensure compliance with quality standards at the program level and coordinate regular reviews and feedback, (3) Program Review Boards, which evaluate the design, delivery, and outcomes of academic programs in coordination with IQAC and the Academic Senate, and (4) Student and Graduate Feedback Mechanisms, whereby structured feedback on academic and administrative performance is gathered with a view to contributing to continuous improvement. Distinct mechanisms and processes are in place to ensure successful implementation of QA policies, such as Program Validation and Review (i.e., periodic program reviews taking place every five years or sooner if need be), Teaching and Learning Quality (i.e., course syllabi are developed with clear intended learning outcomes and course-specific benchmarks; course evaluations by students take place every semester), Assessment

and Examinations (i.e., transparent regulations are in place that guide assessment procedures promoting fairness and academic integrity), Research Quality (i.e., institutional support is offered for research activities, funding mechanisms, ethics), Staff Recruitment and Development (i.e., recruitment is merit-based, subject to peer review and Rector approval; ongoing performance evaluation), and Student Support Services (i.e., counseling, library, -e-learning, IT support). Both new and active programs are subject to external accreditation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAAE). With respect to monitoring and reporting, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include annual quality reports presented to the Senate and Council, department-level academic performance evaluations, risk assessment audits and improvement plans, as well as feedback from alumni and industry stakeholders. Corrective actions are coordinated through the Internal Quality Assurance Committee and implemented institution-wide. Internal evaluation of programs of study are based on the following indicators: student academic performance, graduation and employability rates, student satisfaction and feedback (regular surveys on the level of student satisfaction with teaching, course content, facilities, etc.; end-of-course evaluations to inform course and instructor development), faculty research and publications, curriculum relevance and review, graduate competency and market demand, academic staff qualifications and learning resources and facilities. On the whole, the QA policies and procedures adopted by the AUCY are effective in that they ensure monitoring and review of the programs of study as well as other areas of activity, offering an evidenced-based impulse for change if necessary. The documents outlining QA policies are available internally to all parties involved (i.e., students, administrative and academic staff).

The review of the documentation provided by the AUCY shows that the institution follows policies of inclusion, equal opportunities, academic freedom and freedom of expression, academic integrity and ethical conduct. With respect to the latter, specific, highly transparent policies and procedures have been adopted to prevent and deal with cases of plagiarism. Steps are taken to prevent discrimination when it comes to age, gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation or religious beliefs.

1.2. The Foundation Course in English will be run within the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics, Department of Marketing and Management. In line with the guidelines provided by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Course aims to prepare international students for admission into institutions of higher education by enhancing their proficiency in order to meet the B1 CEFR/HEI admission threshold demonstrated by successfully passing one of the Ministry-approved examination scores. The institution provides a convincing rationale for initiating the program which is related to the predominantly international student intake, links

with the labor market and employability prospects, based on the data drawn from the Statistical Service of Cyprus as well as Eurostat.

The Foundation Course fosters the development of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), together with requisite grammar, academic vocabulary, communication strategies, study skills, and critical thinking competencies required for successful transition into English-medium higher education. Specifically, it is intended to allow students consolidate their English language proficiency from B1 CEFR/Foundation-entry threshold toward B1 CEFR/HEI admission threshold academic readiness across all four skills; equip them with the academic English competencies required for successful participation in undergraduate study; prepare them to pass one of the Ministry-approved English language exit examinations at B1 HEI admission threshold; and foster independent learning strategies, critical thinking, digital literacy, and responsible use of digital technologies in an English-medium environment. The course includes 416 guided contact hours distributed across four courses of 104 hours each, delivered over two semesters of 13 teaching weeks. Importantly, detailed justification for the number of contact hours is offered in the documentation, with a provision for independent study of 8-10 additional hours per week. The four courses included in the program are as follows: Grammar & Communication and Reading & Writing Skills (Semester 1) and Academic English & Critical Thinking and Exam Preparation & language Practice (Semester 2). There are several things about the course that are commendable, such as the rationale for the adopted structure and sequencing, the focus on the use of new technologies and in particular artificial intelligence or the mapping of learning outcomes to CEFR B1 descriptors. The analysis of the detailed descriptions of the four courses included in the Foundation Course indicates that the program is fully consistent with current developments in society, successfully fostering, for example, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation. Based on the meticulous analysis of the contents of the four courses, methodology and assessment criteria, it can be concluded that the program will allow students to achieve the specified learning outcomes. The program is coherent and allows smooth student progression. It should be emphasized that the English Foundation Course will be subject to regular, thorough evaluation, monitoring and review. An Internal Quality Committee (IQC) for the Foundation Course has been established and comprises the Program Coordinator, as Chair, Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics, Head of the Department of Marketing and Management, and Quality Assurance Officer. The quality of the program will be monitored through ongoing oversight by the Program Coordinator, regular review of course content and assessment methods, student feedback and evaluation questionnaires, and review of student performance and progression data.

Overall, the Foundation Course in English offered by AUCY has all the hallmarks of a successful language program and can serve as a model for other institutions running similar programs. The only

area that needs to be given greater emphasis is the development of learner autonomy and appropriate use of language learning strategies in the four course the program comprises.

1.3. The information about the program will be made public once it has been accredited and has started running, as is the case with other programs of study on offer at the AUCY.

1.4. Information about effective management of the program is not yet collected because it is not running. However, careful analysis of the policies and procedures for quality assurance shows that such information will be regularly collected and analyzed by the institution, as is the case with the programs that are currently in progress.

### Strengths

- comprehensive, coherent and transparent policies and procedures for quality assurance;
- clear evidence concerning how these policies and procedures will be applied to the program;
- carefully thought-out design and structure of the program;
- transparent links between learning outcomes outlined for the Foundation Course and CEFR B1 descriptors;
- emphasis on the use of new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, throughout the program.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- the need for more explicit focus on the development of learner autonomy and adept use of language learning strategies in the courses comprising the program.

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

| Sub-area   |                                                  | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>   | Policy for quality assurance                     | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| <b>1.2</b> | Design, approval, on-going monitoring and review | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| <b>1.3</b> | Public information                               | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |



|     |                        |                  |
|-----|------------------------|------------------|
| 1.4 | Information management | <i>Compliant</i> |
|-----|------------------------|------------------|

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

### Sub-areas

**2.2 Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology**

**2.3 Practical training**

**2.4 Student assessment**

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

#### Standards

- *The process of teaching and learning supports students' individual and social development.*
- *The process of teaching and learning is flexible, considers different modes of delivery, where appropriate, uses a variety of pedagogical methods and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.*
- *Students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process.*
- *The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.*
- *Teaching methods, tools and material used in teaching are modern, effective, support the use of modern educational technologies and are regularly updated.*
- *Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship is promoted.*
- *The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.*
- *Appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints regarding the process of teaching and learning are set.*

### **2.2 Practical training**

#### Standards

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

## 2.3 Student assessment

### Standards

- *Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.*
- *Assessment is appropriate, transparent, objective and supports the development of the learner.*
- *The criteria for 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 learning process.*
- *Assessment, where possible, is carried out by more than one examiner.*
- *A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.*
- *Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.*
- *The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

- *How is it monitored that the teaching staff base their teaching and assessment methods on objectives and intended learning outcomes? Provide samples of examination papers (if available).*
- *How are students' different abilities, learning needs and learning opportunities taken into consideration when conducting educational activities?*
- *How is the development of students' general competencies (including digital skills) supported in educational activities?*
- *How is it ensured that innovative teaching methods, learning environments and learning aids that support learning are diverse and used in educational activities?*
- *Is the teaching staff using new technology in order to make the teaching process more effective?*
- *How is it ensured that theory and practice are interconnected in teaching and learning?*
- *How is practical training organised (finding practical training positions, guidelines for practical training, supervision, reporting, feedback, etc.)? What role does practical training have in achieving the objectives of the study programme? What is student feedback on the content and arrangement of practical training?*
- ***Are students actively involved in research? How is student involvement in research set up?***
- *How is supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, projects, theses, etc.) organised?*

- *Do students' assessments correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?*
- *How are the assessment methods chosen and to what extent do students get supportive feedback on their academic progress during their studies?*
- *How is the objectivity and relevance of student assessment ensured (assessment of the degree of achievement of the intended learning outcomes)?*

### Findings

Based on the submitted materials and the discussions during the online meeting sessions, it is clear that this programme fully supports the process of teaching and learning in a flexible and meaningful way. Communicative language teaching principles are employed with a task-based approach that is designed in a three-tiered system. It is praiseworthy that translanguaging practices are considered and that the role of students' first language is also built upon. Skills are taught in an integrated way, and progress through the two semesters is gradual and logical. Digital tools are used in a highly professional and educationally justified way to support students' autonomous learning, which is also coupled with the development of personal study plans. Teaching and learning practices are clearly student-centred, promoting active engagement, autonomy, and responsibility for learning. A varied and well-aligned pedagogical approach is applied, supported by the effective integration of modern digital tools in both classroom and independent study contexts. This results in students' readiness to continue their studies in an independent and self-confident way. Tutors are expected to adapt their instructional approach to various groups, creating context-sensitive teaching. Teaching is monitored through classroom visits and professional discussions. The programme provides targeted language support and differentiation, enabling students with diverse profiles to progress effectively within the CEFR framework. It was shown during the online meeting that differentiation is built into the design of the courses in a justified way. There is a strong emphasis on academic integrity, with explicit teaching of ethical academic practices and the responsible use of digital tools. In addition, the programme demonstrates coherent skills integration, context-sensitive teaching practices, and strategic awareness, supported by a detailed and multidimensional SWOT analysis. It was also discussed at length how feedback practices contribute to differentiated teaching that results in differentiated learning practices. Finally, it was reassuring to see that students' varied backgrounds and experiences are taken into account when planning teaching, with a strong emphasis on differentiation in both content and working modes, using pair and group work as well as collaborative learning practices.

Based on the submitted materials, assessment within the programme is implemented in a structured, consistent, and transparent manner in a highly professional way. Student progress is monitored throughout the programme, and continuous assessment processes are in place with appropriate scaffolding techniques. Students are given opportunities to practise self- and peer-assessment. Assessment methods are clearly defined and aligned with stated procedures, which ensures fair application across all students. The assessment framework is appropriate and supportive of learner development, allowing students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes through varied task types.

Assessment criteria and marking standards are communicated in advance, promoting transparency and clarity in expectations. Students receive regular and constructive feedback, which is directly linked to guidance on improving their learning process and examination performance. Quality assurance is strengthened through internal moderation, examiner collaboration where applicable, and alignment with external benchmarks, ensuring the reliability and validity of assessment outcomes. Finally, it is also clear that formal mechanisms for student appeals and the consideration of mitigating circumstances are in place, which further support fairness and quality in assessment. It is also reassuring to see that moderation and benchmarking are used and that the predictive validity of the assessment processes is considered. University-level mitigation processes are in place, and a formal procedure for student appeals is established.

### Strengths

- Clear student-centred learning design, promoting active participation, learner autonomy, and supported progression
- Varied, modern, and technology-enhanced teaching approaches, effectively aligned with learning outcomes and CEFR requirements
- Strong responsiveness to learner diversity, with differentiated instruction and structured support for mixed-ability cohorts

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The committee has suggested that explicit teaching of second language learning strategies could enhance the effectiveness of the program.
- It was also suggested the recent coursebooks focusing on English for Specific Purposes could be used in the program. The website called CAST could also be considered for teaching purposes.
- Not all tutors were aware of the university-level mitigation processes concerning assessment practices.

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

| Sub-area |                                                                           | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 2        | Process of teaching and learning and student-centred teaching methodology | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |



|     |                    |                  |
|-----|--------------------|------------------|
| 2.2 | Practical training | <b>N.A</b>       |
| 2.3 | Student assessment | <b>Compliant</b> |

### 3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

#### Sub-areas

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

#### 3.1 Teaching staff recruitment and development

##### Standards

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

#### 3.2 Teaching staff number and status

##### Standards

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

#### 3.3 Synergies of teaching and research

##### Standards

- *The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the HEI and with partners outside (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other HEIs in Cyprus or abroad).*
- *Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is encouraged.*
- *The teaching staff publications are within the discipline.*
- *Teaching staff studies and publications are closely related to the programme's courses.*
- *The allocation of teaching hours compared to the time for research activity is appropriate.*

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

**Dr. Carla Abi Hanna**, who is the programme Coordinator and English Language Instructor is employed full-time by the institution and holds a PhD in Language Sciences and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK). **Ms. Victoria Kalogerou** holds an MPhil in Applied Linguistics (Univ. Essex, UK) and has over 25 years of experience in English language teaching at university level in Cyprus. She has published research articles on teaching and learning English in professional contexts and online language learning and has presented her work at international conferences. She has completed several training courses on using digital technology in language learning and teaching. **Ms. Eleni Papachristoforou** has an MA in Education Management (Cyprus). She has over 25 years of English language teaching experience in a diverse educational context in Cyprus. **Ms. Chirine Aoun** holds an MA in Linguistics and a Teaching Diploma (Lebanese University). She has extensive professional experience in English language teaching, curriculum design, and quality assurance across higher education and vocational training contexts in Lebanon and Cyprus. **Mr. Stylianos Sphikas** completed an MA in English Literature (University of Leeds, UK) and has six

years of teaching experience in secondary and higher education contexts. Based on the above, 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 instructors have access to AUCY's continuing professional development provisions and receive formal written performance evaluations at the end of each semester. They also engage in professional development through formal classroom observation which is conducted by the programme coordinator.

The Programme Coordinator also holds a Training of Trainers (ToT) certification (Sciences International Board, Germany, 2025), which ensures that effective in-house teacher training sessions can be offered.

The criterion concerning synergies of teaching and research is not relevant for this type of programme, as research is not part of the job description/requirement for most staff members.

### Strengths

The teaching staff is very highly qualified and has extensive teaching experience. They are also very knowledgeable and skilled in using technology for language teaching. They also came across as passionate educators and devoted teachers in the accreditation visit. The broad and deep professional knowledge of the programme director and lead teacher was apparent in the thorough documentation and the presentation provided during the visit. The teaching staff are carefully allocated courses that align with their expertise. Hiring and promotion policies are detailed and transparent.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

Dr. Carla Abi Hanna should be encouraged to apply for the Senior Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy after she has run and co-ordinated the programme for a few years.

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

| Sub-area   |                                            | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3</b>   | Teaching staff recruitment and development | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| <b>3.2</b> | Teaching staff number and status           | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| <b>3.3</b> | Synergies of teaching and research         | <i>Not relevant</i>                                     |

#### 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

Admission requirements are externally regulated. The institution provided an adequate description of the admission requirements and procedures. Students are assessed regularly through written and oral tests and in class interactive activities and their progress is carefully reviewed. Student attendance and performance are also closely monitored. Students' admission is handled by the registry. School administrators and secretaries provide necessary administrative support and are accessible for students. The institution will issue a certificate of attendance and the criteria for obtaining the certificate are clear and reasonable.

##### Strengths

Each student is assigned a student advisor who monitors their academic performance and is available to discuss progression, challenges, appropriate support, and study planning. The university has comprehensive mechanisms and resources in place to facilitate the adjustment and the effective learning of international students. The university has a highly proactive approach to offering support and aims to identify and remedy issues with attendance and performance in a timely manner.

##### Areas of improvement and recommendations

None

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

| Sub-area |                                           | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 4        | Student admission, processes and criteria | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| 4.2      | Student progression                       | <i>Compliant</i>                                        |
| 4.3      | Student recognition                       | <i>Not applicable</i>                                   |
| 4.4      | Student certification                     | <i>Not applicable</i>                                   |

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

### Sub-areas

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

### 5.1 Teaching and Learning resources

#### Standards

- *Adequate and readily accessible teaching and learning resources (teaching and learning environments, materials, aids and equipment) are provided to students and support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose.*
- *Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources.*

### 5.2 Physical resources

#### Standards

- *Physical resources, i.e. premises, libraries, study facilities, IT infrastructure, are adequate to support the study programme.*
- *Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).*
- *All resources are fit for purpose and students are informed about the services available to them.*

### 5.3 Human support resources

#### Standards

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

## 5.4 Student support

### Standards

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

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

### Findings

During the online meeting and review of the provided documentation, the evaluation panel observed that the Higher Education Institution (HEI) maintains a generally adequate level of resources to support the delivery of the study programme. There is a variety of materials and tasks used in order to achieve the learning outcomes, and the institution provides access to multiple digital tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) which are useful for better understanding and support of the students. Student-centered learning seems to be taken into consideration when allocating, planning and providing learning resources since the programme is based on students' autonomous learning (both within the classroom setting and their exit examinations) and their learning needs and interests are supported and marked within the syllabus. Additionally, their mixed cultural backgrounds are taken into account and are used as part of teaching, something that was verified by the members of the teaching staff when asked.

The institution also provides all the necessary physical resources and equipment needed to support the study programme, such as well-equipped classrooms, a library with both physical and electronic resources and computer labs, always available for the students for a sufficient amount of time. Human support includes academic advisors and psychological counsellors who are informed about the needs of students coming from the MENA region and Eastern Europe, even though the latter part (psychological counsellors) was not fully mentioned and supported in the online meeting. Most importantly, there is a Student Advisor who guides students and is in constant contact with them to help them achieve their goals. Tuition fees are accessible and financial aid schemes are available in this programme of study. Students are informed about the services and human support provided to them. At the same time, the institution provides a medical room, a gym, a cafeteria and other amenities, something very important for the students' psychological and mental state. Students have immediate and easy access to all AUCY facilities.

In addition, students are fully supported and their perspectives are taken into account since the programme has a clear mechanism for collecting and utilizing student feedback since student surveys are conducted at the end of each semester, reviewed by the IQC and are incorporated into the annual review cycle, even though there is limited evidence of specific examples on how student feedback would affect the programme in the future in the application. The institution covers the needs of the student population since they are informed about their mixed abilities and cultural backgrounds and the teaching staff seems suitable to tackle any issues or difficulties arising from the differences between the students. Also, during the meeting, a member of the administrative staff confirmed that students with special educational needs or disabilities are adequately supported and are provided with full access to the university's facilities and support services, even though this was not adequately mentioned in the application document.

### Strengths

- Adequate learning resources and infrastructure to support the study programme.
- Wide variety of teaching materials and technology-based learning.
- Well-equipped classrooms, computer laboratories and library facilities.
- Availability of student amenities.
- Affordable tuition fees and availability of financial aid schemes.
- Easy and immediate access to university facilities and services.
- Commitment to inclusion, with support to international students' needs and full accessibility for students with disabilities.

### 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*

- Increase the number of English language learning and applied linguistics bibliography and materials in the library.
- Further document support services for students' wellbeing and educational needs given the background of students coming from the MENA region and Eastern Europe.

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

| Sub-area |                                 | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 5        | Teaching and Learning resources | <b>Compliant</b>                                        |
| 5.2      | Physical resources              | <b>Compliant</b>                                        |
| 5.3      | Human support resources         | <b>Compliant</b>                                        |
| 5.4      | Student support                 | <b>Compliant</b>                                        |

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

### Sub-areas

- 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements
- 6.2 Proposal and dissertation
- 6.3 Supervision and committees

### 6.1 Selection criteria and requirements

#### Standards

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

### 6.2 Proposal and dissertation

#### Standards

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

### 6.3 Supervision and committees

#### Standards

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

*You may also consider the following questions:*

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

### Findings

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

### Strengths

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

| Sub-area |                                     | <i>Non-compliant/<br/>Partially Compliant/Compliant</i> |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 6        | Selection criteria and requirements | Choose answer                                           |
| 6.2      | Proposal and dissertation           | Choose answer                                           |
| 6.3      | Supervision and committees          | Choose answer                                           |

#### C. Conclusions and final remarks

The institution is well equipped to provide this new foundation language development program in terms of infrastructure, human resources and mechanisms for quality assurance. The curriculum designed by the expert team demonstrates a carefully considered structure and clearly stated learning outcomes. Its strengths include the transparent alignment between the learning outcomes and the CEFR B1 descriptors, as well as a strong emphasis on the use of new technologies, including artificial intelligence tools, throughout the curriculum. The programme leader is highly qualified, and the teaching staff is strongly committed to enhancing students' language learning success and experience. The institution and teams' sensitivity to the diversity of learning needs, enthusiasm and commitment were also apparent during the virtual visit. Areas for improvement include a more explicit focus on developing learner autonomy and the effective use of language learning strategies across the programme and the courses offered. The committee recommends incorporating explicit instruction in second language learning strategies. It was also suggested that recent coursebooks in English for Specific Purposes be integrated into the curriculum, and that the CAST website be considered as an additional resource on the key principles of Universal Design.

#### D. Signatures of the EEC

| Name                   | Signature |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Prof. Judit Kormos     |           |
| Prof. Kata Wein Csizér |           |



Prof. Mirosław Pawlak

Papasprou Chrysostomos

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2026