

Doc. 300.2.1

# External Evaluation Report (Institutional)

Date: *Date*

- **Higher Education Institution:**  
Cosmos Open University
- **Town:** Nicosia
- **Institution Status:** New Instituion

**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 onsite visit included the introduction to a large host of individuals who demonstrated their strong support for this new proposed university. Over two days we also met with leaders of the proposed university and program leads, teaching staff, and professional support staff. Although our meetings clarified some gaps in the written material, substantively most of these gaps in our understanding of the institution, strengths and weakness remain. However, what became clear is a heartfelt enthusiasm for Cosmos and the two programs that we are evaluating. Also, the basic micro foundations for the weaknesses identified in the written submission became clearer. From our onsite visit it was evident that there was a willingness by most participants to modify areas of significant identified weaknesses so that the institution and the two proposed programmes meet the standards specified for accreditation. The visit also helped the panel to better understand the mission of the proposed university to fill important gaps in the Cypriot market.

## B. External Evaluation Committee (EEC)

Name	Position	University
<b>Morris Altman</b>	Member: Committee Chair & Dean and Chaired Professor	University of Dundee, School of Business
<b>Rob Koper</b>	Member: Professor & Dean of the Centre for Learning Sciences and Technologies	Open University, the Netherlands
<b>Iuliana Toma-Dasu</b>	Member: Professor & Head of the Medical Radiation Physics Division	Stockholm University
<b>Timo Goeschl</b>	Member: Professor & Director of the Research Center for Environmental Economics	Heidelberg University
<b>Kyriacos Andreou</b>	Student member	Open University of Cyprus
<b>Matthew Kitching</b>	Student Welfare Expert	Buckinghamshire New University and Lancaster University
<b>Michalis Trypiniotis</b>	Building infrastructure expert	Civil Engineer, Cyprus

### C. Building Facilities - Student Welfare Services - Infrastructure

- *Under plans and licenses, choose Yes or No depending on the existence of the given documents.*
- *Note whether the statements given under the other facilities, the student welfare services and the infrastructure are considered satisfactory/poor/unsatisfactory for the operation of the Institution.*
- *The EEC must justify the answers provided for the building facilities, the student welfare services and the infrastructure by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.*

## 1. Building facilities

### 1.1 Plans and licenses

Choose Yes or No depending on the existence of the following documents.

1. Building facilities			
1.1 Plans and licenses		Yes / No	
1.1.1	The following should be copies from the original building permit. On the copies, there should be a visible official stamp of approval from the respective authorities.		
	1.1.1.1	A topographical plan, which displays in a clear manner the extent of the development.	Yes
	1.1.1.2	A general site plan, which marks the building facilities, allocated parking spaces (for students, academic and teaching personnel, visitors and disabled individuals), sports premises and outdoor areas.	Yes
1.1.2	An operating license issued by the Local Authorities	Yes	
1.1.3	The following operating license certificates, duly completed:		
	1.1.3.1	Visual Inspection Form E.O.E. 102	Yes
	1.1.3.2	Visual Inspection for the Building's Seismic Sufficiency Form E.O.E.Σ.E.K 103	Yes
	1.1.3.3	Inspection Certificate Form 104	Yes
	1.1.3.4	Fire Safety Certificate, issued by the Fire Department	Yes
1.1.3.5	Certificate for Adequate Electrical and Mechanical Installations, issued by the Electromechanical Department	Yes	
Justify the answers provided for the building facilities by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.			
Click to add text			

## 1.2 Other Facilities

Choose Satisfactory or Poor or Unsatisfactory depending on the level of compliance of each statement.

1. Building Facilities		
1.2 Other Facilities		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
1.2.1	Number of teaching rooms and their respective areas, capacity and the percentage of daily occupancy for all units	Satisfactory*
1.2.2	Number of offices for teaching staff and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory*
1.2.3	Number of laboratories and their respective areas and capacity	---*
1.2.4	Number of rooms/offices for directors/administrators and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory*
1.2.5	Number of rooms/offices for administrative services and their respective areas and capacity	Satisfactory*
1.2.6	Number of parking spaces designated for students	---*
1.2.7	Number of parking spaces designated for teaching staff	---*
1.2.8	Number of parking spaces designated for people with disabilities	Satisfactory*

Justify the answers provided for the building facilities by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

\* Cosmos Open University building will not be used for teaching in person on site. According to the institutes academic program the lectures will be 100% online. Therefore, the building is classified as office spaces only and will be used for administrative purposes only.

[Click to add text](#)

## 2. Student Welfare Services

Choose Satisfactory or Poor or Unsatisfactory depending on the level of compliance of each statement.

2. Student Welfare Services		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
2.1	Special access for students with disabilities (PWD)	Satisfactory
2.2	Recreation areas	Satisfactory
2.3	Policy and statutes for academic student support	Poor
2.4	Policy and statutes for financial student support	Satisfactory
2.5	Counselling services	Satisfactory
2.6	Career office	Poor
2.7	Service linking the institution with business	Poor
2.8	Mobility office	Satisfactory
2.9	Student clubs/organisations/associations	Unsatisfactory
2.10	Other services	Poor

Justify the answers provided for the student welfare services by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

In summary, the institution has embryonic student welfare policies, structures and systems in place prior to receiving institutional accreditation from CYQAA and commencing student recruitment. Currently, policies are positioned at a high, and in some instances aspirational, level and lack operational detailed in the form of fully documented procedures. The EEC sees the refinement and development of this operative detail as essential so as to mitigate risk, ensure consistency (where this is desirable) and to provide a high-quality student experience.

The institution has recruited an experienced Vice President (Head of Administration Academic) to lead the student affairs function and a psychologist was also in place at the accreditation visit and the institution intends to appoint a Head of Student Services and Welfare. The Vice President set out a coherent strategic direction that seeks to support students throughout their 'learning journey'. However, this strategic approach was not formalised in an explicit strategy that guided the institution's approach and informed detailed action plans. The EEC received a 4-year staff forecast for student services that presented a modest growth in staff resource, including the recruitment of an additional Student Welfare Manager. However, the EEC concluded that this was insufficiently mapped to student number projections (over 1700 students by 2026) and failed to take account of the complexity of



provision and the strategic ambition of the institution. For example, distance learning programmes often suffer from high attrition rates and the need to actively stimulate belonging. Cohorts will also be international, with different cultural expectations, working from different time zones and seeking to enter a wide variety of employment markets. To service these needs the EEC determined that the institution will need additional, specialist resource in areas such as disability support, careers and language support.

**2.1** The institution has a Policy for People with Disabilities that provides appropriate examples of reasonable adjustments including providing materials in alternative typeface or offering alternative assessment methods. The policy states that students in need of additional support can contact the Student Affairs Office for an appointment. However, the institution does not currently have places to recruit a dedicated, specialist member of support staff to assist students with disability. The policy could also be improved by specifying the institution's approach to encouraging students to declare disabilities and any additional financial support available to students with disabilities. The campus has a lift in place although this is not a major consideration as all students will be studying by distance.

**2.2** There are no recreation areas on the University campus, however the EEC determined this was appropriate for a distance learning institution.

**2.3** As referenced above, the institution does not have a student welfare strategy or equivalent that the EEC considers would be useful for the institution during its initial phase of development in order to ensure that it is building high quality student services. Notwithstanding this, the University has a series of policies in place that cover appropriate and internationally equivalent aspects of academic and pastoral student support. These include but are not limited to plagiarism, personal problems management, plagiarism, equality and anti-discrimination and complaints process. Overall, these policies and the principles adopted within them give the EEC confidence in the University's general commitment to students and direction of travel.

However, as stated in the summary a number of policies are subject to duplication and/or lack key detail and, critically, operational procedures that need to be present in order to deliver fair and equitable services for students, which can be effectively monitored through a robust quality assurance system. For example:

#### **Policy for Plagiarism**

The current Policy for Plagiarism does not address other forms of academic misconduct in detail. Nor does it outline the institution's approach to identifying academic misconduct when it takes place i.e. while the policy clearly details the University's use of plagiarism it does not explain how this will be deployed. Aspects of the Policy for Plagiarism are also duplicated in the Internal Regulations (see Disciplinary Process section), which presents risks to version control and accessibility for students. The Disciplinary Process states that any plagiarism will be viewed as misconduct. International best practice would suggest a more nuanced approach where some instances of plagiarism (e.g. first offences of minor nature at Level 4) might be subject to a more developmental response. Such approaches should be reflected in policy with a view to consistency and fairness for all students.

#### **Equality & Anti-Discrimination Policy and Policy and Code of Practice for Combatting Harassment and Sexual Harassment at the Comoros University**

The University's Self Evaluation Report directed the EEC to comparable policies at the University of Cyprus. At the time of the visit the Cosmos Open University had not developed equivalent policies that were contextualised to their own institution, definitions and structures. The EEC considered that it wasn't reasonable to expect a Cosmos Open University student to try and interpret how another institution's policies would be applied in their own University.

Finally, in relation to academic student support, the University refers to a number of staff and roles that will hold responsibility for student academic support. These include the Student Advisor, Professor Councillor, Student Affairs Office and Student Welfare Manager. The EEC ascertained during the visit that Professor Councillor was equivalent to an academic adviser and that adjunct, as well as permanent faculty, would carry out this role. It was not entirely clear how the role of a Student Advisor differed to that of a Professor Councillor. The institution would benefit from clarifying the nomenclature of these various roles and clearly articulating the responsibilities of each unit and individual, including in a Student Handbook so as to make the information accessible for learners. The EEC were also concerned about the possible impact of adjunct faculty acting as Professor Councillors. The absence of detailed contracts, central expectations around support provision and the existing commitments of these faculty (as evidence through staff meetings) made it clear to the EEC that currently students' experience of such support would be highly variable and likely to have an impact on student satisfaction.

#### 2.4

The University's internal regulations include a section on The Financial Support of Students. This demonstrates the institution's commitment to supporting applicants and students with strong performance in the prior academic endeavours, as well as students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The financial presentation made clear that the institution has ample resource to offer such scholarships and fellowships. The University would now benefit from developing clear publicity information for prospective and current students that outlines the available funds, criteria, application and selection processes.

#### 2.5

The University has a Personal Problems Management Policy in place and sufficient staff resource in the form of a qualified psychologist. Support sessions will be delivered remotely using online meeting platforms. The University may benefit from considering how it will conduct effective referral (where necessary) when it has commenced recruitment to a highly international student body. In particular, where it currently does not have active partnerships or networks with specialist services (e.g. mental health crisis services) and students may require face-to-face assistance.

#### 2.6

The University's documentation, including the self-evaluation report and internal policies, refer to a Career Office. However, the proposed structure for administration services does not include an explicit unit. Therefore, it was not entirely clear to the EEC how this would be serviced although responsibilities Head of Student Services include careers. The Vice President and Head of Administration (Academic) informed the EEC that the careers service will assist students with part-time jobs and that adjunct faculty will be asked to support the Career Office by sharing key contacts from the industry networks. The University also has Career Office rules in place, which details further responsibilities including CV assistance, job search techniques and interview preparation. It may be beneficial for staff working in this area to hold a qualification in career development.

## 2.7

Presentations throughout the visit made it clear that interaction with business and industry will be an embedded feature of several curricula across the institution as programmes are accredited. As noted above in 2.6, it was also made clear that adjunct faculty will be asked to help establish functional networks that can assist the institution's approach to industrial engagement. However, at present there appears to be little in place with respect to systematic vehicles for managing these relationships and an insufficient comprehension of the complexity this presents when operating such a highly international approach to provision. The institution should consider how it can best position itself to address this challenge. For example, this could include an Employer Engagement Strategy, industry liaison panels, formal partnerships with industry representative bodies, internship programmes and modules etc..

## 2.8

The institution does not have a mobility office in place, however this does not pose a problem given the distance learning modality of programmes and the fact that students will not require visas, accommodation or similar services. However, given the focus on international recruitment the institution should develop support in the form of language provision for students who require additional English language support.

## 2.9

Student clubs and organisations will not operate in person, but the University has appropriate plans in place to facilitate online social activities including virtual networks, online coffee sessions and engagement in democratic processes and University committees through the establishment of a formal Students' Union.

## 2.10

### Alumni

The institution intends to establish an alumni network and the EEC consider that the early focus on this area will be beneficial to the new University during its formational years.

### Complaints

The University has a complaint procedure in place within the Students' Grievance Submission Rules but this would benefit from less ambiguity and greater specificity. For example, while students have to submit a complaint within a specified timeframe following an incident (30 days) final notification of the outcome to students is to be carried out within a 'reasonable time' depending on the urgency of the matter. In the interests of fairness and in order to conclude processes in a timely manner this timeframe should be explicit. The procedure also omits information on where complainants can access support (which could be the students' union when established), how the institution avoids any conflict of interest (for example where staff involved in the initial complaint are detached from review procedures) and any reference to grounds for appeal/review. The complaints process could be enhanced in line with international best practice by involving an external adjudicator following conclusion of the internal review.

### Comparability of admissions

During the visit the institution informed the EEC that in some instances academic prerequisites for their programmes (a high school diploma) could be the equivalent of seven A-levels (as is the case in Cyprus). However, this will not be the case in all target countries for recruitment and it was not evident that the institution currently has robust procedures in place to assess the comparability of

qualifications (for example using ENIC-NARIC networks). Failure to have such procedures in place poses pedagogical and support risks for the institution.

### Quality assurance of student welfare services

The EEC were unable to ascertain that, at the time of the visit, the institution had a coherent model for quality assuring its student welfare services. While the University provided a clear commitment to a data led approach it was not evident how this would be operationalised in practice. This includes:

- What range of data (qualitative and quantitative) will the University collect?
- Who will collect the data?
- How will the data be collected?
- How will analyse the data and in what form (e.g. individual service annual monitoring reports)?
- How will actions be determined, captured, actioned and monitored

### Strengths

- The strategic focus on the student journey to scaffold support services
- Adoption of strong and student-centred principles in student welfare policies
- The broad range of policies covering appropriate aspects of student welfare services
- Clear commitment to providing an expansive range of financial support to students
- Appointment of highly experienced senior staff from institutions with a strong track record of distance learning provision

### Areas for development/recommendations

#### 2.1

- Consider recruiting suitably qualified, specialist staff for supporting students with disabilities to ensure that key roles, such as the Head of Student Services, are not overburdened with responsibilities.
- Explicitly detail the process for identifying students with disabilities and financial support within the Policy for People with Disabilities

#### 2.3

- Develop a Student Welfare Strategy (or equivalent) and ensure this is linked to timebound and measurable action plans
- Review and revise the Policy for Plagiarism to address all forms of academic misconduct, including contract cheating and forms of misconduct that are especially challenging in a distance learning modality
- Develop detailed operational procedures (either within the Policy for Plagiarism or elsewhere) that set out the institution's practical approach to identify academic misconduct
- Reconsider whether all acts of plagiarism should be considered misconduct, irrespective of any mitigating factors
- Address repetition and duplication in policies and regulations (e.g. the Policy for Plagiarism and Internal Regulations) to minimise associated risks with version control and accessibility for students
- Ensure that Cosmos Open University has its own tailored and contextualised policies in place for all its provision, rather than referring to those of third-party institutions
- Review nomenclature relating to academic support roles
- Develop a student handbook that contains clear information on academic student support

- Ensure University expectations regarding baseline academic support are clearly detailed and supported by contractual arrangements with all faculty
- 2.4
- Develop clear publicity information for prospective and current students that outlines the available scholarship and fellowships funds, including the criteria, application and selection processes
- 2.5
- Establish a network of referral services and countries and regions where the University will be active in recruiting students
- 2.7
- Adopt a more systematic approach to employer engagement
- 2.8
- Introduce effective arrangements for English language support for international students.
- 2.10
- Revise the complaints procedure to clarify timeframes, support, arrangements for avoiding conflict of interest and establish clear grounds for appeal.
  - Consider the possibility of using an external adjudicator as part of the complaints process
  - Establish suitable procedures for assessing the comparability of admissions pre-requisites
  - Develop a detailed model for the quality assurance of student welfare services

## 2. Infrastructure

Choose Satisfactory or Poor or Unsatisfactory depending on the level of compliance of each statement.

3. Infrastructure		Satisfactory - Poor - Unsatisfactory
3.1	Library	Satisfactory
3.2	Computers available for use by the students	Poor
3.3	Technological support	Satisfactory
3.4	Technical support	Satisfactory

Justify the answers provided for the infrastructure services by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**The basics are satisfactory. More specifics are required on the infrastructure for distance learning. What hardware and software are required to developed and deliver online modules and interactive online sessions? Will these be provided? The answer appears to be yes. But the documentation is too vague. Still, overall satisfactory.**

## Additional remarks on infrastructure related to a distance learning institution—not compliant

Please note that the questions in this template are biased towards residential universities. Cosmos U. is a Distance Teaching University (DTU) and needs to meet additional and somewhat different requirements. In DTU's the e-learning infrastructure is what the 'student accessible buildings, classrooms, libraries' are in residential universities. It is critical that the e-learning infrastructure supports the necessary educational functionalities and is available to students and teachers at all times that they are expected to work or study. Given the international character of the university and the different time zones in which the students and teachers are active, this practically means that the university needs to secure a 24/7 availability of the infrastructure with very well planned and communicated maintenance intervals that do not disturb the educational processes.

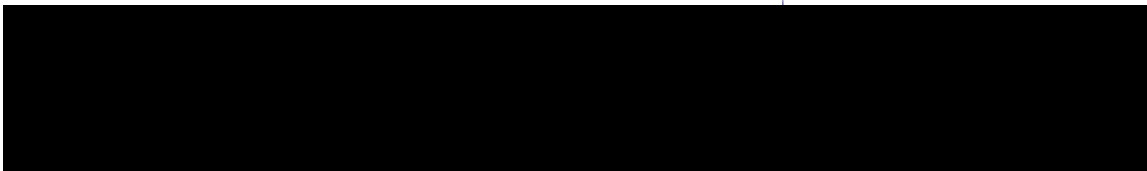
Cosmos is currently developing the e-learning infrastructure. The committee has seen its global plans and noticed the following with respect to this infrastructure:

- Currently 4 developers are working on the infrastructure which is cloud based. So, there are no physical computer servers maintained by Cosmos U.
- Moodle is the central entry point for the students to manage their courses and access all related facilities. This means that Moodle should be 27/7 available.
- Moodle is hosted in the cloud using Microsoft Azure. Network security is monitored by Azure. Application security is the responsibility for the Cosmos U.
- The aim is to have the infrastructure ready for launch in October 2023.

The committee heard that it will be hard to have the infrastructure ready and tested before the October launch date. This is on the critical path: when the infra is not ready and sufficiently tested, we **strongly advise** not to start with the programs.

The Head of E-learning was not sufficient aware of the cybersecurity issues that most universities struggle with in the world at the moment. Especially the hijacking of the universities infrastructure to get ransom in bitcoins is a popular (and often successful) attack at the moment. This website lists current attacks on universities: <https://konbriefing.com/en-topics/cyber-attacks-universities.html>. It would be **strongly advised** to hire a cybersecurity expert to look into possible issues and test whether everything is hack resistant (as far as possible). It would be a shame when the infrastructure of the university would be out of office for several weeks like happened with other universities around the world.

Furthermore, we did not see documents that connect the functional didactical requirements of the universities education system which should be fulfilled by the e-learning infrastructure. This could lead to a technology push instead of pull system. So, we **advise** that the university creates a concrete requirements analysis specifying the functionalities that are needed by teachers, students and supporting staff in the various educational processes, and then look how the technology can fulfil its needs.



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

- *The external evaluation report follows the structure of assessment areas and sub-areas.*
- *For each assessment area there are quality indicators (criteria) to be scored by the EEC on a scale from one (1) to five (5), based on the degree of compliance for the above-mentioned quality indicators (criteria). The scale used is explained below:*

1 or 2:	Non-compliant
3:	Partially compliant
4 or 5:	Compliant

- *The EEC must justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.*
- *It is pointed out that, in the case of indicators (criteria) that cannot be applied due to the status of the Department, N/A (= Not Applicable) should be noted and a detailed explanation should be provided on the Department's corresponding policy regarding the specific quality indicator.*
- *In addition, it is important to provide information regarding the compliance with the requirements. In particular, the following must be included:*

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - 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 followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.*

- **The report may also address other issues which the EEC finds relevant.**



## 1. Institution's Academic Profile and Orientation

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

### Sub-areas

**1.1 Mission and strategic planning**

**1.2 Connecting with society**

**1.3 Development processes**

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3: Partially compliant

4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
<b>1. Institution's academic profile and orientation</b>		
<b>1.1 Mission and strategic planning</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
1.1.1	The Institution has formally adopted a mission statement, which is available to the public and easily accessible.	4
1.1.2	The Institution has developed its strategic planning aiming at fulfilling its mission.	4
1.1.3	The Institution's strategic planning includes short, medium-term and long-term goals and objectives, which are periodically revised and adapted.	4
1.1.4	The offered programmes of study align with the aims and objectives of the Institution's development.	4
1.1.5	The academic community is involved in shaping and monitoring the implementation of the Institution's development strategies.	4
1.1.6	In the Institution's development strategy, interested parties such as academics, students, graduates and other professional and scientific associations participate in the Institution's development strategy.	2
1.1.7	The mechanism for collecting and analysing data and indicators needed to effectively design the Institution's academic development is adequate and effective.	3
Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.		

Thus far no information is public. There is no website from what we can see. This must be in place. Cosmos makes clear that all pertinent info will be public, but this has to be more concretely articulated. More specificity is required with regards to point 1.1.7. Too much emphasis on this being a Green university. This venerable objective is part and parcel of all programmes from what we can see. How will students be oriented and educated with regards to this objective? Will all students have to take a credit or non-credit course? What is the plan here?

There is an issue with the mission statement. Cosmos is not an open university. It is more of a distance learning institution. An open university is one where no pre-requisites are required. In the programmes being assessed pre-requisites are required similar to what one finds in a 'regular' university. More info on the advisory board is required.

## 1.2 Connecting with society

1 - 5

1.2.1	The Institution has effective mechanisms to assess the needs and demands of society and takes them into account in its various activities.	3
1.2.2	The Institution provides sufficient information to the public about its activities and offered programmes of study.	4
1.2.3	The Institution ensures that its operation and activities have a positive impact on society.	3
1.2.4	The Institution has an effective communication mechanism with its graduates.	3

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

The main problem here is the vagueness of the documentation and the fact that not much clarity was added during the onsite meeting. How will Cosmos assure that it will have a positive impact in society (currently vague and fluffy)? How will it take into consideration the demand of society? What mechanisms? Which society? Cyprus? International? How will this be done? How are the advisory board members chosen? Criteria? Environmental issues are touched on, but not substantiated. What are the educational plans across the entire student population in this domain, for example?

## 1.3 Development processes

1 - 5

1.3.1	Effective procedures and measures are in place to attract and select teaching staff to ensure that they possess the formal and substantive skills to teach research and effectively carry out their work.	4
1.3.2	The Institution has a two-year growth budget that is consistent with its strategic planning.	3
1.3.3	Planning academic staff recruitment and their professional development is in line with the Institution's academic development plan.	4
1.3.4	The Institution applies an effective strategy of attracting students/ high-level students from Cyprus.	2
1.3.5	The Institution applies an effective strategy to attract high-level students from abroad.	2
1.3.6	The funding processes for the operation of the Institution and the continuous improvement of the quality of its programmes of study are adequate and transparent.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

[Click to add text](#)

**To attract teaching staff, more details are required on where adds will be placed and other means of attracted faculty. Vague of which students will be attracted.**

**On 1.3.1 On pay scale, where is this info from? Also, stipulations for research by position, where is this derived from. Expectations too high for adjunct. Part time staff typically don't have the time to research. Research is typically the domain of full time staff. The % might make it difficult to attract the desired staff with regards to teaching, dominated by adjunct academics.**

Additionally, write:

- Expected number of Cypriot and international students
- Countries of origin of international students and number from each country

**Very vague. Basis for estimates on p. 70?**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

The information provided is typically too vague. Not being accredited is no excuse for being specific with regards to processes and rules and objectives. This vagueness results in lower scores in certain categories. The information in hand does suggest compliance on average, just above the bar.

### Strengths

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

More resources will be devoted, in theory, to research, compared to the average university.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

As per the points made above more detail is required with especially with regards 1.3.4 and 1.3.5. Also more detail on how to attract excellent full time and part staff (for example means and places for advertising, pay at different levels, overall treatment of adjuncts to attract them to Cosmos as opposed to other universities. Note that these are quite different types of academics and different mechanisms will have to be implemented to attract these academics.

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

Sub-Area	<i>Non-compliant / Partially Compliant / Compliant</i>
1.1 Mission and strategic planning	Partially Compliant
1.2 Connecting with society	Partially Compliant
1.3 Development processes	Compliant

## 2. Quality Assurance

(ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8)

### Sub-areas

**2.1 System and Quality Assurance Strategy**

**2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study**

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

1 or 2: Non-compliant

3: Partially compliant

4 or 5: Compliant

Quality Indicators/Criteria		
<b>2. Quality Assurance</b>		
<b>2.1 System and Quality Assurance Strategy</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
2.1.1	The Institution has a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of its strategic management.	4
2.1.2	Internal stakeholders develop and implement a policy for quality assurance through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	3
2.1.3	The Institution's policy for quality assurance supports guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against students or staff.	4
2.1.4	The quality assurance system adequately covers all the functions and sectors of the Institution's activities:	
	2.1.4.1 The teaching and learning	4
	2.1.4.2 Research	1
	2.1.4.3 The connection with society	3
	2.1.4.4 Management and support services	3

2.1.5	The quality assurance system promotes a culture of quality.	3
2.1.6	The Institution consistently applies pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	2
2.1.7	Institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, cooperation with other institutions and quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre.	2
2.1.8	Graduates receive documentation explaining the qualification gained.	5

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**As per above section, there too much that is vague in the report making it difficult to evaluate the different criteria. Particularly weak are standards for academic research QA.**

**On, "The Institution consistently applies pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification." Very little on how this info is made publicly available, life-cycle related issues.**

**2.1.7 Not discussed...easy to do.**

**Connection with society could be further elaborated upon with more details of what Cosmos would do if accredited (planning for the future).**

## 2. Quality assurance

<b>2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
2.2.1	The responsibility for decision-making and monitoring the implementation of the programmes of study offered by the Institution lies with the teaching staff.	4
2.2.2	The system and criteria for assessing students' performance in the subjects of the programmes of studies offered by the Institution are clear, sufficient and known to the students.	2
2.2.3	The quality control system refers to specific indicators and is effective.	3
2.2.4	The results from student assessments are used to improve the programmes of study.	2

2.2.5	The policy dealing with plagiarism committed by students as well as mechanisms for identifying and preventing it are effective.		2
2.2.6	The institutionalised procedures for examining students' objections/ disagreements on issues of student evaluation or academic ethics are effective.		3
2.2.7	The Institution provides information about its activities, including the programmes of study it offers and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to the students as well as graduate employment information.		2
2.2.8	The Institution ensures that effective methodology is applied in the learning process.		2
2.2.9	The Institution systematically collects data in relation to the academic performance of students, implements procedures for evaluating such data and has a relevant policy in place.		2
2.2.10	The Institution ensures adequate and appropriate learning resources in line with European and international standards and / or international practices, particularly:		
	2.2.10.1	Building facilities	N/A
	2.2.10.2	Library	4
	2.2.10.3	Rooms for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons	2
	2.2.10.4	Technological infrastructure	3
	2.2.10.5	Support structures for students with special needs and learning difficulties	2
	2.2.10.6	Academic Support	3
	2.2.10.7	Student Welfare Services	3

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**Policy on plagiarism is very vague and fluffy. This is a serious challenge for distance learning and there should be specific policies to deal with this. Otherwise, the whole enterprise can sink. 2.2.9 More detail on how data are collected analysed. 2.2.3 is important and therefore more detail is required. More info on the provision of students with special needs and learning difficulties in the online learning space. There should**

**also be more information on the methodology of learning. There should be details on the online version of blended and how it will be operationalized. Since we are evaluating a programme that requires lab space, there very useful info on how this will be actioned and then the QA process that will ensure that students will be treated equitably across on labs and that course objectives and rubrics are clearly specified.**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

There is enough information to identify compliance. But there is also significant vagueness on key points such as academic dishonesty, addressing special needs, lab space and QA therein. The blended teaching methodology applying to a distance learning university is not adequate. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 appear to be particularly strong.

### Strengths

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

Academic support, especially for research is strong. Student welfare support is reasonably good. The library facilities appear to have the makings of a strong facility if Cosmos procedures are implemented.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

Policy on plagiarism is very vague and fluffy. This is a serious challenge for distance learning and there should be specific policies to deal with this. Otherwise, the whole enterprise can sink. Turn it in is one platform that can assist, but one needs upgraded platforms to deal with robotic essay writing. One requires other interventions to deal with purchased essays such interviewing random students, having students submit an outline first with references, having students do a short presentation on their paper. Questions need to be designed minimize cheating on exams as well.

2.2.9 More detail on how data are collected analysed. 2.2.3 is important and therefore more detail is required. This easy to do, just provide more detail.

More info on the provision of students with special needs and learning difficulties in the online learning space. Modified exams, more time for exams, access for special software depending on needs? How about access to labs when required?

There should also be more information on the methodology of learning. There should be details on the online version of blended and how it will be operationalized. Since we are evaluating a



programme that requires lab space, there very useful info on how this will be actioned and then the QA process that will ensure that students will be treated equitably across on labs and that course objectives and rubrics are clearly specified.

There are different approaches to blended and relatedly to QA in the distance learning space. Cosmos needs to figure what it wants to do given its mission and strategy. This has not been adequately done. Not difficult. But it is critical if this university if to offer a quality product and a high level of excellence in terms of learning outcomes and the student experience.

Also, when asked to teachers whether they have had guidelines from Cosmos U. about the arrangement of the assessments within their courses, the answer was 'No'. We have inspected the study guides provides and noticed that for open marked assignments there was no information available for students (and probably also for teachers) what the performance criteria are and how the grading process takes place. Rubrics for instance are absent. This is not in line with good practice and with the (very to the point) statements about this in the institutional report. We strongly advise the university to provide concrete guidelines to the teachers how to design formative and summative assessments and include the performance criteria for the assessments that are also made available to students.

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

Sub-Area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
2.1 System and quality assurance strategy	Partially Compliant
2.2 Ensuring quality for the programmes of study	Partially Compliant

### 3. Administration (ESG 1.1)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant  
3: Partially compliant  
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
<b>3. Administration</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
3.1	The administrative structure is in line with the legislation in force and the Institution's declared mission.	3
3.2	The members of the teaching and administrative staff and the students participate, at a satisfactory degree and on the basis of based on specified procedures, in the management of the Institution.	2
3.3	Adequate allocation of competences and responsibilities is ensured so that in academic matters, decisions are made by academics and the Institution's Council competently exercises legal control over such decisions.	4
3.4	The Institution applies effective procedures to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.	4
3.5	The Boards of Departments and Schools, as well as the institutionalised committees of the Institution, operate systematically and exercise fully the responsibilities provided by legislation and / or the constitution and / or the internal regulations of the Institution.	4
3.6	The Council, the Senate as well as the administrative and academic committees, operate systematically and autonomously and exercise the full powers provided for by the statute and / or the constitution of the Institution without the intervention or involvement of a body or person outside the law provisions.	4
3.6	The manner in which the Council, the Senate and/or and the administrative and academic committees operate and the procedures for disseminating and implementing their decisions are clearly formulated and implemented precisely and effectively.	4

3.7	The Institution applies procedures for the prevention and disciplinary control of academic misconduct of students, academic and administrative staff, including plagiarism.	2
3.8	The administrative structure is in line with the legislation in force and the Institution's declared mission.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**The documentation here is sufficient to determine that relatively high scores should be assigned, with two exceptions. Procedures and protocols are weak or vague.**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

The documentation here is sufficient to determine that relatively high scores should be assigned. This was confirmed in the site visit although we were distracted by not so relevant information on the supporter of Cosmos and future plans.

### Strengths

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

What is outline and discussed in the report provides a picture with what one finds in other universities in this space. Nothing stands out as particularly significant or innovative.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

One area that requires clarification is the role of the adjuncts. Will they contribute to administration/governance of the university. This point is important in university that relies on adjuncts for most of their course and programme delivery. They need to feel part of the Cosmos community to optimize their contribution and minimize turnover of adjunct staff. Otherwise quality will deteriorate and there will be multiple points of failure.

**Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:**

Assessment Area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
3. Administration	Compliant

## 4. Learning and Teaching

(ESG 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.9)

### Sub-Areas

- 4.1 Planning the programmes of study
- 4.2 Organisation of teaching

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant
- 3: Partially compliant
- 4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
<b>4. Learning and Teaching</b>		
<b>4.1 Planning the programmes of study</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
4.1.1	The Institution provides an effective system for designing, approving, monitoring and periodically reviewing programmes of study.	4
4.1.2	Students and other stakeholders, including employers, are actively involved on the programmes' review and development.	2
4.1.3	The programmes of study are in compliance with the ESG and the existing legislation and meet the professional qualifications requirements in the professional courses, where applicable.	2
4.1.4	The Institution ensures that its programmes of study integrate effectively theory and practice.	3
4.1.5	The assessment and evaluation procedures and content are in compliance with the level of the programme of study (in reference to EQF).	3

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**Students and other stakeholders, including employers, are actively involved on the programmes' review and development.—NOT CLEAR**

**4.1.2 IT IS NOT EVIDENT THAT THIS IS THE CASE.**

**4.1.3 Probably, but the narrative is much too vague.**

4.2 Organisation of teaching		1 - 5
4.2.1	The Institution establishes student admission criteria for each programme, which are adhered to consistently.	4
4.2.2	Recognition of prior studies and credit transfer is regulated by procedures and regulations that are in line with European standards and/or international practices.	3
4.2.3	The number of students in the teaching rooms is suitable for theoretical, practical and laboratory lessons.	1
4.2.4	The teaching staff of the Institution have regular and effective communication with their students.	2
4.2.5	The teaching staff of the Institution provides timely and effective feedback to their students.	2

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**4.2.3 There is no evidence that this is case. Nothing concrete and this is a serious problem for any proposed programme that requires lab work. 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 Information is very vague. Should provide concrete procedures to given us confidence in what Cosmos is doing.**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

In this space Cosmos is okay (compliant) on average. But material provide and the info in the onsite visit and the responses to questions were too vague. A clear weakness relates to student input and feedback and lab space.

### Strengths

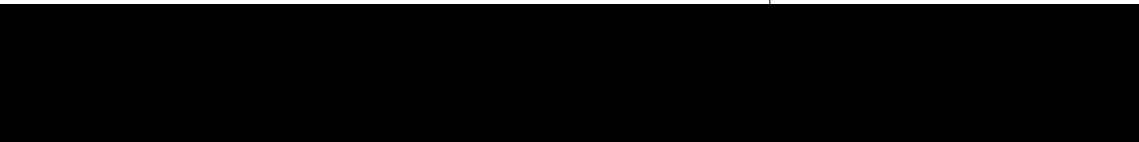
*A list of strengths, e.g., examples of good practices, achievements, innovative solutions etc.*

There is more of an emphasis than in other universities on the relationship between theory and practice. But the narrative is quite again (once again).

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

Make it clear how Cosmos will incorporate student input and feedback.



On lab space. Concrete example of probable facilities and location, student access and QA.

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

Sub-area	<i>Non-compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
4.1 Planning the programmes of study	Compliant
4.2 Organisation of teaching	Partially Compliant

## 5. Teaching Staff (ESG 1.5)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant  
3: Partially compliant  
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality Indicators/Criteria		
<b>5. Teaching Staff</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
5.1	The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programmes of study.	3
5.2	The teaching staff of the Institution have the relevant formal and substantive qualifications for teaching the individual subjects as described in the relevant legislation.	4
5.3	The Visiting Professors' subject areas adequately support the Institution's programmes of study.	3
5.4	The special teaching staff and special scientists have the required qualifications, sufficient professional experience and expertise to teach a limited number of programmes of study.	3
5.5	The ratio of special teaching staff to the total number of teaching staff is satisfactory.	1
5.6	The ratio of the number of subjects of the programme of study taught by teaching staff working fulltime and exclusively to the number of subjects taught by part-time teaching staff ensures the quality of the programme of study.	1
5.7	The ratio of the number of students to the total number of teaching staff is sufficient to support and ensure the quality of the Programme of Study.	4
5.8	The number of teaching staff - full-time and exclusive work - and the subject area of the staff sufficiently support the programmes of study.	3



5.9	The visiting Professors' subject areas adequately support the Institution's programmes of study.	4
<p>Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.</p> <p><a href="#">Click to add text</a></p> <p>Also, write the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work</li> <li>- Number of special teaching staff working full-time and having exclusive work</li> <li>- Number of visiting Professors</li> <li>- Number of special scientists on lease services</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Click to add text</a></p>		

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Department based on evidence from the Department's application and the site - visit.*

Information provided suggests that overall teaching staff will be adequate. But it is not clear that enough fulltime staff relative to adjuncts are sufficient given the administrative role that's expected and the research expected for full time staff and for the university as a whole. This endangers the quality of education as well as the research orientation of Cosmos' mission and vision. There do appear to be gaps in teaching qualifications of some of the adjuncts that should be addressed (medical physics).

### Strengths

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

There nothing concrete that stands out from the documentation.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

There is not enough fulltime staff relative to adjuncts are sufficient given the administrative role that's expected, and the research expected for full time staff and for the university as a whole. This endangers the quality of education as well as the research orientation of Cosmos' mission and vision.

There does appear to be gaps in teaching qualifications of some of the adjuncts that should be addressed (medical physics).

Also, there is no gap analysis to identify any gaps in teaching expertise. This is a serious problem, especially given the number of adjuncts and the very small number of fulltime faculty.

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
5. Teaching staff	Partially Compliant

## 6. Research

(ESG 1.1, 1.5, 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant  
3: Partially compliant  
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		
<b>6. Research</b>		<b>1 - 5</b>
6.1	The Institution has a research policy formulated in line with its mission.	3
6.2	The Institution consistently applies internal regulations and procedures of research activity, which promote the set out research policy and ensure compliance with the regulations of research projects financing programmes.	4
6.3	The Institution provides adequate facilities and equipment to cover the staff and students' research activities.	3
6.4	Through its policy and practices, the Institution encourages research collaboration within and outside the Institution, as well as participation in collaborative research funding programmes.	4
6.5	The Institution uses a policy for the protection and exploitation of intellectual property, which is applied consistently.	4
6.6	The results of the teaching staff research activity are published to a satisfactory extent in international journals which work with critics, international conferences, conference proceedings, publications, etc. The Institution also uses an open access policy for publications, which is consistent with the corresponding national and European policy.	3
6.7	The Institution ensures that research results are integrated into teaching and, to the extent applicable, promotes and implements a policy of transferring know-how to society and the production sector.	2
6.8	The Institution provides mechanisms which ensure compliance with international rules of research ethics, both in relation to research activity and the rights of researchers.	3

6.9	The external, non-governmental, funding of research activities of academic staff is similar to other Institutions in Cyprus and abroad.	3
6.10	The policy, indirect or direct of internal funding of the research activities of the academic staff is satisfactory, based on European and international practices.	4
6.11	The programmes of study implement the Institution's recorded research policy.	2

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**The evidence suggests compliance. But it is not clear how research will be integrated into teaching or that teaching will be research-led. This is an important gap given the importance of research to Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

The evidence suggests compliance. But it is not clear how research will be integrated into teaching or that teaching will be research-led. This is an important gap given the importance of research to Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy.

Overall, the research strategy appears to be reasonable. But it is not clear how it will be implemented given its low full time to part time faculty ratio. No substantive discussion on this point and challenge.

### Strengths

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

Provision of resources for research, encouragement of interdisciplinarity, encouragement of collaboration with external academics.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

6.7 & 6.11.

It is not clear how research will be integrated into teaching or that teaching will be research-led. This is an important gap given the importance of research to Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy.

Cosmos should specify the means by which Cosmos faculty research and other research will be integrated into teaching and how this will be monitored.

It is not clear how Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy with regards to research will be implemented given its low full time to part time faculty ratio. No substantive discussion on this point and challenge. More full staff should be hired given the university's research strategy. Also, more time should be allocated to research for full time staff given all other responsibilities of these academics. There need not be a research requirement from adjunct staff unless some are hired to mentor and lead on research.

**Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:**

<b>Assessment Area</b>	<b><i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i></b>
6. Research	Compliant

## 7. Resources (ESG 1.6)

Mark from 1 to 5 the degree of compliance for each quality indicator/criterion

- 1 or 2: Non-compliant  
3: Partially compliant  
4 or 5: Compliant

Quality indicators/criteria		1 - 5
<b>7. Resources</b>		
7.1	The institution has sufficient financial resources to support its functions, managed by the Council/Senate.	4
7.2	The Institution follows sound and efficient management of the available financial resources in order to develop academically and research wise.	3
7.3	The Institution's profits and donations are used for its development and for the benefit of the university community.	3
7.4	The Institution's budget is appropriate for its mission and adequate for the implementation of strategic planning.	3
7.5	The Institution carries out an assessment of the risks and sustainability of the programmes of study and adequately provides feedback on their operation.	2
7.6	The Institution's external audit and the transparent management of its finances are ensured.	4
7.7	The fitness-for-purpose of support facilities and services is periodically reviewed.	4

Justify the numerical scores provided for the quality indicators (criteria) by specifying (if any) the deficiencies.

**The information in hand suggests compliance. It is not clear that all costs of running the university is adequately covered, especially that which related to operating a distance learning university that aspires to a blended learning approach. More details are required on how course viability is determined and the conditions under which a course or programme will be deleted. It should also be clear if there will be any cross subsidization across programmes. Will any lab resources require significant expenditure (what would be the estimated size). How many students to make a course financially viable. It should be clear how much funds will be available by investors after**

**the first two years. Will the university then have to pull its own weight financially? Clarify.**

### Findings

*A short description of the situation in the Institution based on evidence from the Institution's application and the site - visit.*

Cosmos appears to be financially compliant. But more information is required on the extent of financial viability after the two years of significant subsidies lapses. Much emphasis was placed on the investors; not enough on revenue generated through operation of the university and related costs, both fixed and variable. Basically, more information is required on revenue and costs on annualized bases and what are the benchmark of course and programme viability.

### Strengths

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

There is strong investor-based funding for two years, which provides a strong starting point for this university.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

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

More information is required on the extent of financial viability after the two years of significant subsidies lapses.

Much emphasis was placed on the investors; not enough on revenue generated through operation of the university and related costs, both fixed and variable. Basically, more information is required on revenue and costs on annualized bases and what are the benchmark of course and programme viability.

This is easily done. One has to cost faculty, overhead costs, and revenue based on market demand. One has to stipulate the time line for a module to prove itself in terms of financial viability. The committee is concerned that not all costs to operate a distant learning university with a blending learning orientation has been properly costed. Solution: review the financials provided and update the information if required. This is critically important to guide the university into financially sustainable future.

No documentation of the possible further financial contributions of investors. Hence, this can't serve as a basis to evaluate the long run viability of Cosmos were it to achieve its mission and vision.

Please select what is appropriate for the following assessment area:

Assessment Area	<i>Non-Compliant/ Partially Compliant/Compliant</i>
7. Resources	Compliant



## E. Conclusions and Final Remarks

*Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the Institution under review may be achieved.*

Much enthusiasm demonstrated for this initiative. And the mission statement suggests a university that can fill market gaps and not compete with existing distance learning programmes already in place in Cyprus and in the larger region, such as Greece and Serbia. There are significant opportunities presented here. But there were significant gaps in the submission which were not adequately addressed during the onsite visit. The fact that Cosmos is not accredited yet does not explain the information gaps. The critical gaps could have been addressed by providing details on how Cosmos intends to be compliant. The submission was vague and often insufficiently concrete. At this point we would agree to a partially compliant institution category for Cosmos—a step in the right direction.

But we do not believe that the institution is ready to launch for October 2023. The teaching and learning infrastructure won't be ready from what we can see. There are other concerns that must be addressed, we believe, as well.

On the mission, Cosmos is more of a distance learning/e-learning institution, not an open university where no pre-requisites are required for entry. This needs clarification.

With regards to human welfare services: Consider recruiting suitably qualified, specialist staff for supporting students with disabilities and detail the process for identifying students with disabilities and financial support within the Policy for People with Disabilities; Develop a Student Welfare Strategy (or equivalent) and ensure this is linked to timebound and measurable action plans; develop a detailed plan to deal with student academic misconduct of which plagiarism is a component of; develop a student handbook that contains clear information on academic student support; support for students need to be clearly detailed and easily accessible to students; details policy for international recruitment and for English language support and the timing thereof; establish clear criteria to avoid conflict of interest on appeals and consider using an external adjudicator as part of the complaints process; develop a detailed model for the quality assurance of student welfare services.

With regards to Cosmos being a distance learning institution we were told that the critical e-learning Cloud based infrastructure will not be ready and tested before the October 2023 launch date. If the the infra is not ready and sufficiently tested, we strongly advise not to start with the programs until the infrastructure is ready to be operationalized. Cybersecurity issues need be better recognized given its reality in the university system. It would be strongly advised to hire a cybersecurity expert to look into possible issues and test whether everything is hack resistant (as far as possible). We also did not see documents that connect the functional didactical requirements of the universities education system which should be fulfilled by the e-learning infrastructure. This could lead to a technology push instead of pull system.

So, we advise that the university creates a concrete requirements analysis specifying the functionalities that are needed by teachers, students and supporting staff in the various educational processes, and then look how the technology can fulfil its needs. It is important to have a handbook detailing for faculty, professional support staff and partners, all critical aspects of teaching, learning and research and relatedly QA.

There is no information available for students (and probably also for teachers) what the performance criteria are and how the grading process takes place. Rubrics for instance are absent. This is not in line with good practice and with the (very to the point) statements about this in the institutional report. We strongly advise the university to provide concrete guidelines to the teachers how to design formative and summative assessments and include the performance criteria for the assessments that are also made available to students.

More detail on how to attract excellent full time and part staff (for example means and places for advertising, pay at different levels, overall treatment of adjuncts to attract them to Cosmos as opposed to other universities). Note that these are quite different types of academics and different mechanisms will have to be implemented to attract these academics.

Policy on plagiarism is very vague and fluffy. This is a serious challenge for distance learning and there should be specific policies to deal with this. Turn-It-In is one platform that can assist, but one needs upgraded platforms to deal with robotic essay writing. One requires other interventions to deal with purchased essays such interviewing random students, having students submit an outline first with references, having students do a short presentation on their paper. Questions need to be designed minimize cheating on exams as well.

More info on the provision of students with special needs and learning difficulties in the online learning space. Modified exams, more time for exams, access for special software depending on needs? How about access to labs when required?

There should also be more information on the methodology of learning. There should be details on the online version of blended and how it will be operationalized. Since we are evaluating a programme that requires lab space, there should more useful and carefully crafted info on how this will be actioned and then on the QA process that will ensure that students will be treated equitably across on labs and that course objectives and rubrics are clearly specified.

There are different approaches to blended learning and relatedly to QA in the distance learning space. Cosmos needs to figure what it wants to do given its mission and strategy. This has not been adequately done. Not difficult to do. This is critical if this university if to offer a quality product and a high level of excellence in terms of learning outcomes and the student experience.

Another area that requires clarification is the role of the adjuncts. Also, will they contribute to administration/governance of the university? This point is important in university that relies on adjuncts for most of their course and programme delivery. They need to feel part of the Cosmos community to optimize their contribution and minimize turnover of adjunct staff. Otherwise quality will deteriorate and there will be multiple points of failure.

The University should be clear how Cosmos will incorporate student input and feedback.

On lab space. Concrete example of probable facilities and location, student access and QA. Critically important for programme. Currently, everything is vague, nothing is written down.

There is not enough fulltime staff relative to adjuncts are sufficient given the administrative role that's expected, and the research expected for full time staff and for the university as a whole. This endangers the quality of education as well as the research orientation of Cosmos' mission and vision.

There does appear to be gaps in teaching qualifications of some of the adjuncts that should be addressed (medical physics).

Also, there is no gap analysis to identify any gaps in teaching expertise. This is a serious problem, especially given the number of adjuncts and the very small number of fulltime faculty.

It is not clear how research will be integrated into teaching or that teaching will be research-led. This is an important gap given the importance of research to Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy. Cosmos should specify the means by which Cosmos faculty research and other research will be integrated into teaching and how this will be monitored.

It is not clear how Cosmos' mission, vision, and strategy with regards to research will be implemented given its low full time to part time faculty ratio. No substantive discussion on this point and challenge. More full staff should be hired given the university's research strategy. Also, more time should be allocated to research for full time staff given all other responsibilities of these academics. There need not be a research requirement from adjunct staff unless some are hired to mentor and lead on research. A website should be developed ASAP for Cosmos university. It would have been useful if something was prepared prior to the site visit.

On the finances:

More information is required on the extent of financial viability after the two years of significant subsidies lapses. Much emphasis was placed on the investors; not enough on revenue generated through the operation of the university and related costs, both fixed and variable. Basically, more information is required on revenue and costs on annualized bases and the benchmark of course and programme viability. The committee is concerned that not all costs to operate a distant learning university with a blending learning orientation has been properly costed. Solution: review the financials provided and update the information if required. This is critically important to guide the university into financially sustainable future. No documentation of the possible further financial contributions of investors. Hence, this can't serve as a basis to evaluate the long run viability of Cosmos were it to achieve its mission and vision.

## F. Signatures of the EEC

<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Morris Altman	
Rob Koper	
Iuliana Toma-Dasu	
Timo Goeschl	
Kyriacos Andreou	
Matthew Kitching	
Michalis Trypiniotis	

Date: March 4, 2024

