

***EU-CERT:
European Certificates and Accreditation for European Projects***

**Project Results 1 - Qualitative Research**

**(I) Desktop research in each partner country***March 2022*

*STANDO CYPRUS*

**Acronym:** EU-CERT

**Reference number:** 2021-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000033541

**Project duration:** 01.02.2022 – 31.05.2024 **(28 month)**

**Proj project partners:** University of Paderborn (P0), Coordinator

 Ingenious Knowledge GmbH (P1)

RUTIS-Associação Rede de Universidades da Terceira Idade (P2)

TIR Consulting Group j.d.o.o., Croatia (P3)

Esquare, France (P4)

STANDO LTD Cyprus (P5)

**(I) Project Result 1 – (I.I) Desktop research in each partner country**

**Task:** Deep research on existing certificate and quality assurance structures in the partner countries of EU-CERT.

| 1. **What are the common existing certificates in your country?**

The Higher Education System in Cyprus is divided into three major categories of institutions: (a) State university (ies); (b) state extra-university tertiary education institutions; and (c) private extra-university tertiary education institutions. More specifically: 1. The University of Cyprus was founded in 1989 as an autonomous state university with state funding, with Greek and Turkish as the languages of instruction. The University's primary goal is to advance knowledge through teaching and research for the benefit of Cyprus's social and economic development. The University of Cyprus is exempt from the accreditation process. A Technical University and an Open University were also established in recent years and accreditation systems were applied. The following are the State Extra-University Tertiary Education Institutions:i. The Higher Technical Institute was founded in 1968, with English as the primary language of instruction. It provides a wide range of technical educational programs that lead to the award of a Higher Technical Diploma. ii. In 1964, the School of Nursing opened its doors, offering a 39-month general nursing and psychiatric program in English. iii. The Higher Hotel Institute was founded in 1965 and offers three-year hospitality education programs. iv. In 1951, the Forestry College was founded, offering 6-month and 2-year educational programs in general forestry practice. v. The Mediterranean Institute of Management was founded in 1976 and offers an 11-month most-graduate management educational program. None of the public tertiary education institutions are required to be accredited.Private Extra-University Tertiary Education Institutions provide tertiary education to over 50% of all education students in Cyprus, with over 15% of them being international students from over 45 countries, laying the groundwork for Cyprus to become an international tertiary education centre. There are approximately eighteen private tertiary institutions that offer accredited 1-year, 2-year, 3-year, and 4-year educational programs in Business, Economics, Accounting and Finance, Computer and Engineering Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Nursery education, and a variety of vocational areas. These institutions which are mentioned above contribute to a certificate, diploma, higher diploma, Bachelor's degree, or Master's degree. Cyprus College, established in 1961, was the first private higher education institution in Cyprus. Private tertiary education institutions in Cyprus are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture, and they also go through an accreditation process overseen by the Republic of Cyprus's government. The Ministry of Education and Culture is currently developing criteria for the transformation of selected private tertiary education institutions into private universities. Based on what has been found thus far, it's clear that accreditation in Cyprus only applies to private tertiary education institutions. The State University and The State Tertiary Education institutions are not required to be accredited, and no such accreditation process is available for these institutions. Apparently, it is assumed that the state status of these institutions automatically indicates the presence of the expected quality, as well as automatic recognition, without the need for an independent external evaluation process. This practice is clearly dubious and contentious. This practice is carried out by a group of faculty members and academic administrators from other peer institutions; their goal is to determine the quality of the institution under evaluation, or of one or more educational programs, depending on whether accreditation is institutional or educational program-based. This is primarily accomplished by investigating a wide range of educational process inputs and outputs, as well as the educational activities involved in the teaching/learning process. The institution under evaluation undertakes a significant portion of this evaluation through a self-evaluation process, which is presented in the form of a Self-Study document. The Self-Study document is actually treated as the primary source of information and data by the accreditation evaluators in relation to the already established accreditation standards and criteria. The accreditation process is carried out without suspicion or the intent to punish an institution. On the contrary, the accreditation process is viewed as an exercise in which an institution, particularly those tasked with preparing the Self-Study document, identifies strengths and weaknesses and suggests ways to remedy the weaknesses and improve further. It is important to note that accreditation is not a process for categorising educational institutions or programs as excellent, average, or poor. Accreditation is the process of ensuring that the accredited institution or program meets the minimum requirements set by the accreditation standards and criteria, indicating an acceptable level of quality. On the other hand, an institution's reputation is built and earned over the course of several years of performance and contribution to society. The Cyprus Accreditation System as previously stated, accreditation in Cyprus only refers to private tertiary education institutions. The accreditation system is governed by the provisions of the tertiary education law passed by the House of Representatives in 1996, with amendments in 1997. This law addresses both the registration of tertiary education institutions and educational programs, as well as the accreditation of registered educational programs offered by registered tertiary education institutions. This accreditation system is designed to accredit educational programs rather than *institutions*, though as we will see later, the accreditation standards, criteria, and regulations are the same as those used for institutional accreditation. As a result, both accredited and non-accredited registered educational programs can be found at a registered institution of tertiary education. In terms of the history of accreditation in Cyprus, the first attempt to accredit educational programs at private tertiary education institutions was made in 1993. However, due to serious legal complications and problems, that attempt failed after the Supreme Court ruled that the accreditation procedures that were followed were illegal and that a new one should take place as soon as a new law and accreditation regulations were in place. As previously stated, the new law went into effect in 1996. The Accreditation Council is the body responsible for implementing the accreditation process and making the final decision on accreditation of an educational program at a private tertiary education institution. The Accreditation Council is appointed for a 5-year term by the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Culture, and members of the Council may be re-appointed for another 5-year term. The Accreditation Council appoints the accreditation Visiting Teams, reviews their final recommendations, and decides whether to accredit, deny accreditation, or postpone the decision on accreditation of an educational program for a specified period of time to allow the institution to improve in a number of specified areas. The Certification Procedure that very private tertiary education institution is registered with the Ministry of Education is eligible to apply for accreditation of a registered education program, provided that there is a complete curriculum for the entire program and that there are students at least in the first year of study in the program at the time of the initial application. The institution bears all costs associated with completing the accreditation process. First Application: The initial application includes details such as the program's objectives, curriculum, and course content, degrees to which the program leads, and so on, and is submitted to the Director General of the Ministry of Education."Self-Study" After the initial application has been approved, the accreditation candidate for the specific education program institution prepares a Self-Study with the participation of its entire teaching and administrative personnel. The Self-Study follows the accreditation standards and criteria, which are divided into six major categories:i. Institutional Goals and Mission ii. Academic Programs iii. Teaching Personnel iv. Supporting Services, Buildings, and Facilities v. Organization and Administration vi. Financial Resources Furthermore, the Self-Study is expected to identify strengths and weaknesses in these areas, as well as to propose corrective measures in the case of weaknesses.On-site Visit Final Report by the Visiting Team, after the involved institution submits the Self-Study, the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture submits the initial application and the Self-Study to the Chairperson of the Accreditation Council, and the Accreditation Council appoints a Visiting Team for the on-site visit.Members of the Visiting Team are faculty and administration from Cyprus's state universities and tertiary institutions, as well as from accredited higher education institutions abroad. During the on-site visit, the Visiting Team reviews the Self-Study and other involved documents made available at the institution, as well as meets with faculty and administration members, students, and other institutional constituencies. After the on-site visit, the Visiting Team creates a report that is sent to the institution for feedback. The Visiting Team then submits its final report to the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, who forwards it to the Accreditation Council's Chairperson.Decision of the Accreditation Council The Accreditation Council makes a decision, which is forwarded to the Minister of Education and Culture for confirmation and approval. The final decision can be either: (i). acceptance of the application for accreditation and accreditation of the educational program, or (ii). Rejection of the application for accreditation of the educational program, or (iii). decision postponement for a specified period of time, during which the institution will remedy minor weaknesses or deficiencies. The Accreditation Council then makes a positive or negative decision. Accreditation is granted for four years, after which re-accreditation is required using the same process as for accreditation. Re-accreditation is granted for a period of ten years. If the application is rejected, the involved institution may reapply for accreditation of the educational program after one year. Currently, approximately 18 private tertiary education institutions offer over a hundred accredited educational programs, including Bachelor's and Master's degree programs. The undergraduate and postgraduate programs at Larnaca College are fully accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CYQAA), the Republic of Cyprus's accrediting authority. Program evaluation and accreditation in higher education are responsibilities of CYQAA.CYQAA ensures the quality of higher education in the Republic of Cyprus and supports the continuous improvement and enhancement of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their programs of study through procedures prescribed by legislation. CYQAA was established by law as an independent and autonomous authority in Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus's competent authorities, as well as professional licensing bodies, institutions, employers, and stakeholders, recognize it as the only national quality assurance agency for higher education. The law protects the Agency's autonomy and independence in its operations, such as external evaluation processes, methodologies, expert selection, and decision-making within its competencies. Higher education institutions, ministries, and stakeholders have no influence on CYQAA's decisions or evaluation results. The Agency is funded by the state budget, and the law allows institutions to pay fees to conduct evaluations.According to the law, the agency has expanded its competencies, including the following:* Evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions, departments, and programs.
* Quality assurance in higher education using European Standards.
* Cross-border forms of education offered by local institutions in member states or third countries are evaluated and accredited.
* Evaluation of the conditions for cross-border education from foreign institutions in Cyprus.
* Evaluation of higher education institutions' inter-institutional cooperation.
* The dissemination of information about quality assurance in higher education.

CYQAA is responsible for ensuring the quality of higher education in Cyprus and assisting higher education institutions in their continuous development and improvement within the framework of the ESG through the procedures provided by relevant legislation.CYQAA is the competent authority in charge of:* Institutional assessment - accreditation
* Accreditation for Departmental Evaluation
* Accreditation for program evaluation
* Accreditation of joint program evaluations
* Evaluation entails the accreditation of cross-border education provided by local institutions in member countries or third-party countries.
* Evaluation of the conditions in Cyprus for the provision of cross-border education from foreign institutions

The Quality Assurance and Certification Agency for Higher Education accredited Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (PSIVET) to public schools of higher vocational education and training in April 2017. The accreditation of PSIVET's higher education programs is regarded as an important development because it contributes significantly to the goal of further strengthening vocational education and training in Cyprus. Since 2012, the successful operation of PSIVET, a project co-financed by the European Social Fund, has contributed to the reduction and containment of unemployment as well as the reduction of skills mismatch. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the employability rate of PSIVET graduates in some programs exceeds 85%, while employment rates for other young graduates with strong academic credentials remain lower. PSIVET, a public school of higher vocational education and training, provides two-year accredited programs (NQF level 5B, ISCED level 5) that can be recognized by universities for graduates who wish to pursue university studies in a relevant field. Furthermore, the modernization of PSIVET opens up new avenues for academic collaboration with other higher education institutions in Cyprus and abroad such as bakery and confectionery, purchasing and supply management - shipping, computer and communication network, electrical and industrial refrigeration installations, organic vegetable crops, dairy science and technology - cheese making, and CNC technology - woodworking industry are the accredited two-year programs offered during the academic year 2017-18. The DHTE (Department of Higher and Tertiary Education) of Cyprus's Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) places a premium on quality assurance in the higher education sector. The Cypriot government has established a quality assurance agency known as the "Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (CYAQAAE).**Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency for Education (CYAQAAE)**The CYAQAAE is a competent agency in charge of ensuring the quality of higher education in Cyprus. This authority is in charge of both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms in Cyprus's higher education institutions. This agency is in charge of the accreditation and evaluation of public and private higher education institutions and universities. The Cyprus Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) has created an integrated ICT system with the goal of significantly improving its operations and services by increasing efficiency and effectiveness while decreasing bureaucracy and operational/administrative costs.The new system includes several subsystems, including electronic archiving, an accounting system, a human resource system, an internal portal, and a digital platform known as 'Hermes' (E), which, when fully implemented, will cover all operational needs and services provided by the HRDA using modern information communication technologies (ICT).The system significantly improves the organization's use of new information technologies while also contributing to the promotion of ICT and digital skills among HRDA staff and partners.The 'Hermes' digital portal provides easy access to all HRDA schemes and systems, with simple, user-friendly procedures that guide the user through the registration process, application submission, processing, and progress monitoring, including subsidy payment.At this point, the 'Hermes' digital portal allows external users to register as an entity (physical person, legal entity, consortium, or government body) under the specific status of each user (employer, trainer of vocational training, vocational training facility, vocational training centre and centre for assessment of vocational qualifications).Until recently, the implementation of frameworks and mechanisms for transparency of qualifications and systems for the recognition of competences and qualifications in Cyprus was relatively limited. Cyprus, on the other hand, is committed to implementing the necessary EU tools. A government priority is the creation of a NQF to promote the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications obtained in Cyprus. The Council of Ministers established a high-level national committee comprised of the Directors-General of the MoEC, the MLSI, and the HRDA to facilitate the process. The national committee formed a working group in February 2009 to study examples of good practices in other European countries before preparing an interim report on the state of development of a NQF in Cyprus. The report was completed in March 2012 and served as the foundation for additional consultation with stakeholders and other interested parties. The CPC, an MLSI institution, has been designated as the Cyprus National Europass Centre (NEC), and is thus responsible for the coordination, management, and promotion of all activities related to Europass documents, as well as the provision of information about the documents and collaboration with other organizations in the field of mobility and qualification transparency.The Cyprus NEC, in collaboration with the Cyprus Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes, encourages all organizations participating in mobility programs to issue the Europass mobility document, and 221 documents were issued in 2011. Around 80% of higher education institutes automatically issue the Europass diploma supplement to their graduates, with 3 903 Europass diploma supplements issued in 2011. Furthermore, the majority of 2011 technical school graduates and CPC accelerated training program graduates (1 431) received Europass certificate supplements. The Cyprus NEC hosted 66 workshops in 2011, with 773 participants. Participants in the workshops created their own Europass CVs and were advised on how to write a cover letter and perform well in an interview. |
| --- |
| **References:** Accreditation in Cyprus Higher Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from<https://docplayer.net/amp/7415248-Accreditation-in-cyprus-higher-education.html>CEDEFOD. (2012). Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4118_en.pdf>Cyprus: a new digital portal for the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/cyprus-new-digital-portal-human-resource-development-authority-cyprus>Educational Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Cyprus. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cypruseducation.info/Education-System/accreditation-and-quality-assurance.html>ENQA. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.enqa.eu/membership-database/cyqaa-cyprus-agency-of-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-in-higher-education-2/>Larnaca College. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.larnacacollege.ac.cy/about-larnaca-college-universities-in-cyprus/accreditation/>Refer Net. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.hrdauth.org.cy/wps/portal/hrda/refernet/activities/cyprus\_refernet\_activities/short\_news/content/cyprus%20accreditation%20and%20upgrading%20of%20the%20post-secondary%20institutes%20of%20vocational%20education%20and%20training%20(22017)-en/!ut/p/z1/tZNLj5swFIX\_Cl1EalVZNsa8lnlMh1AlGZSZJniDjGMmniFAgELz7-sk08cmsIhgAbJ9\_PlwfC-kcAtpxhr5ymqZZyxV45Baked5Y89doSVy5yYKVutvDnmc-f4cw81FgG48YwRp9\_4fMJzAsDgGX1EL\_Q61gZ-Msx35djzSMaQ8z2rxq4bbfbljUSkSUWaijloRX1ayOhLpCP2Z\_0C7T\_qDN0V4iZbBDAXPk0fszxz8fX0HeoQYr2UjaymqEeKnovxZ\_dv0\_1q9FwcVLI-YivZUySpipRqmour-84ltDm-v08L1qqd\_L4rqPfLgEiguF9PFK6QFq\_dAZkkOt03OP2pLq95lmlZaK8S7Jhrlu9Jkpl0dap8JRrr1BYhMlRjts0b74usULFaoW3Auvaugo9DXymqousG-adTS4aaRooUvWV4eVHetz9SCyx0M7VgnhCQ2YFw4gNiuDhzi7ADe8dgWwsXc5tBDfSfYd57QjV-QYfHmoPgHPCxeHxZvDJv9sJWj-uMm3hLYIK7FANGRenELA0e3TGA4Dku4gYTgSR\_eGhZvDooPyLD4e8MpDi-ZmTaHDaCxmTonA8n5Gwn9pm2fk8M0dno\_4affCd98bg!!/dz/d5/L0lHSkovd0RNQVBrQUVnQSEhLzROVkUvZW4!/](https://www.hrdauth.org.cy/wps/portal/hrda/refernet/activities/cyprus_refernet_activities/short_news/content/cyprus%20accreditation%20and%20upgrading%20of%20the%20post-secondary%20institutes%20of%20vocational%20education%20and%20training%20%2822017%29-en/%21ut/p/z1/tZNLj5swFIX_Cl1EalVZNsa8lnlMh1AlGZSZJniDjGMmniFAgELz7-sk08cmsIhgAbJ9_PlwfC-kcAtpxhr5ymqZZyxV45Baked5Y89doSVy5yYKVutvDnmc-f4cw81FgG48YwRp9_4fMJzAsDgGX1EL_Q61gZ-Msx35djzSMaQ8z2rxq4bbfbljUSkSUWaijloRX1ayOhLpCP2Z_0C7T_qDN0V4iZbBDAXPk0fszxz8fX0HeoQYr2UjaymqEeKnovxZ_dv0_1q9FwcVLI-YivZUySpipRqmour-84ltDm-v08L1qqd_L4rqPfLgEiguF9PFK6QFq_dAZkkOt03OP2pLq95lmlZaK8S7Jhrlu9Jkpl0dap8JRrr1BYhMlRjts0b74usULFaoW3Auvaugo9DXymqousG-adTS4aaRooUvWV4eVHetz9SCyx0M7VgnhCQ2YFw4gNiuDhzi7ADe8dgWwsXc5tBDfSfYd57QjV-QYfHmoPgHPCxeHxZvDJv9sJWj-uMm3hLYIK7FANGRenELA0e3TGA4Dku4gYTgSR_eGhZvDooPyLD4e8MpDi-ZmTaHDaCxmTonA8n5Gwn9pm2fk8M0dno_4affCd98bg%21%21/dz/d5/L0lHSkovd0RNQVBrQUVnQSEhLzROVkUvZW4%21/)The Education System of Cyprus. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.ac.ac.cy/images/media/assetfile/The%20Educational%20System%20of%20Cyprus0001.pdf> |

| **2. How is the quality assurance structure of the certificates in your countries?****The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance:** The Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) is the competent independent authority in charge of safeguarding standards and assisting, through the procedures provided by relevant legislation and the principles underlying the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (CYQAA, 2015), in the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programs of study in order to comply with the ESG and the European Higher Education Area. It also aims to promote quality culture in Cyprus's higher education institutions (CYQAA, 2015). The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus appointed the members of the Council of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education on the basis of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment (CYQAA, 2015) and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Law of 2015" in a decision dated 5 November 2015 (CYQAA, 2015).The legislation establishes a framework for quality assurance in higher education in Cyprus, within which higher education institutions will be encouraged to improve quality and develop an internal quality culture (CYQAA, 2015).The Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) is in charge of ensuring the quality of higher education in Cyprus (CYQAA, 2015), as well as supporting the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions (HEIs) and their programs of study through the procedures prescribed by relevant legislation (CYQAA, 2015).According to the law, the agency has expanded its competencies, which include the following (CYQAA, 2015):CYQAA and HEIs in Cyprus share the Bologna Process vision for the creation of the European Higher Education Area and have recognized that by engaging in quality assurance and accreditation processes (CYQAA, 2015), particularly through external evaluation processes, they will be able to showcase the quality of education provided while also increasing transparency, contributing to confidence-building and better recognition of their program's academic qualifications (CYQAA, 2015).It has become clear that accreditation benefits students, HEIs, employers, and society in general by ensuring that graduates have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are reflected in the external evaluation criteria (CYQAA, 2015).The agency's vision is to work with its stakeholders to establish Cyprus as a district center of high quality higher education, in accordance with the standards and guidelines established by the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) (CYQAA, 2015).Its vision prioritizes the development of a quality culture in higher education, which leads to self-regulatory policies based on shared values, common beliefs, high expectations, and commitments to quality among all higher education institutions (CYQAA, 2015).The Cyprus Agency intends to actively participate in the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA) think tanks (CYQAA, 2015), as well as to join the European Network of Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) (CYQAA, 2015).The CYQAA strives to continuously promote values that support authority and trust (CYQAA, 2015):1. Independence and integrity: The CYQAA acts impartially and in accordance with Cyprus Law and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), implementing the ESG through common evaluation criteria and equitable procedures throughout Cyprus Higher Education (CYQAA, 2015).
2. Transparency: The CYQAA defends and makes public its policies, guidelines, evaluation criteria, expert reports, and decisions (CYQAA, 2015).
3. Collaboration and Trust: The CYQAA has established a series of regular meetings with HEI representatives to listen to their questions and concerns and to provide guidance for ESG compliance (CYQAA, 2015).
4. Professionalism: The CYQAA aims to continuously build and develop the competence and skills of its staff, as well as to promote professional procedures and communication channels (CYQAA, 2015).

CYQAA is dedicated to ensuring that both the Agency and Cyprus's Higher Education Institutions (HEI) fully comply with European Standards and Guidelines, as well as to promoting competitive, high-quality higher education in the country (CYQAA, 2015).Long-term goals and achievements include promoting higher education in Cyprus as a high-quality competitive European-oriented higher education capable of attracting high-quality students from three continents (CYQAA, 2015).The mid-term goals and achievements refer to the promotion of a culture of systematic, qualitative, and trustworthy self-assessment, which can lead to the HEI's self-improvement. A thematic analysis of the evaluation reports is also included, as is the publication of findings and trends (CYQAA, 2015).***The following are the short-term objectives (CYQAA, 2015):***1. Complete compliance with ESG based on review and ENQA recommendations.
2. Re-evaluation of institutions, programs, and departments.
3. Assessment of Medical Schools.
4. Negotiation of the agency's legislative and regulatory changes with stakeholders.
5. External evaluation and reporting forms and procedures are being reviewed.
6. Thematic analysis entails publishing the resulting findings and trends.
7. Values that promote quality assurance and self-improvement are promoted.

***Structure of the Agency (CYQAA, 2015):*** ***Complaints’ Policy (CYQAA, 2015):*** Individuals or organizations with substantiated concerns about an accredited institution's/ compliance programs with the Agency's external evaluation criteria, as well as the ESG and/or WFME standards, may bring those to the attention of CYQAA (CYQAA, 2015).Regarding external accreditation, the following procedures will be implemented (CYQAA, 2015):1. The CYQAA Council will decide whether a complaint is credible. A complaint will be considered only if it is credible, substantiated, and supported by relevant evidence, references, examples, and so on. Complaints may only be filed in relation to an accredited institution's/department's/compliance programme with the Agency's external evaluation criteria and/or the ESG and/or the WFME standards, or the integrity of the external evaluation process upon which CYQAA granted accreditation to the said institution/department/programme. Concerns about national legislation, European Union law, or other applicable rules should be directed to the appropriate courts or authorities.
2. If the complaint is not substantiated, the CYQAA will take no action and will notify the complainant.
3. If the complaint is substantiated, CYQAA will notify the higher education institution of the complaint and request clarifications or additional information.
4. If the complaint is substantiated but pertains to a single instance and has no significant impact on the institution's/departments/compliance programs with the aforementioned standards, the CYQAA Council shall issue a formal warning to the institution. The warning has no bearing on the institution's/department's/accreditation program's status. On the entry of the institution/department/program on the Agency's website, a formal warning statement is published.
5. If the complaint is substantiated and raises serious concerns that the accredited institution/department/programme no longer meets the criteria upon which accreditation was granted, the CYQAA Council shall conduct an audit to determine whether the Accreditation criteria are still being met, in accordance with article 17(3)(g) of the legislation.
6. If the audit procedure substantiates the complaint and raises serious concerns that the accredited institution/department/program no longer meets the criteria for accreditation, the CYQAA Council may decide to:

or rescind the Accreditation decision and begin an external evaluation of the institution/department/program.Before a final decision is made in scenarios (5) and (6), the higher education institution is invited to make representation. The final decision is then communicated to the institution and published.***Quality Policy Statement (CYQAA, 2015):*** CYQAA aspires to establish Cyprus as a high-quality international center for higher education through collaboration with higher education institutions, local and European organizations, and the development of a quality culture. It protects every student's right to study in programs that meet European quality standards and promotes institutional synergies through its activities. It promotes new university education models based on transnational joint programs that increase academics' and students' experience and expertise in innovative approaches, research, teaching, and practical training.The CYQAA formally affirms its commitment to quality, recognizing that high professional standards and integrity in the Agency's work are required, and that quality assurance in the performance of its activities is critical to the credibility of its actions and the trust of its stakeholders, which include higher education institutions, students, political authorities, and society at large.Furthermore, CYQAA formally commits to putting in place all necessary safeguards and mechanisms so that:All persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically; they lead to continuous improvement within the agency; they enable the agency to guard against intolerance of any kind or discrimination; and they ensure appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of the Republic of Cyprus.***The following are the fundamental elements of CYQAA's quality policy (CYQAA, 2015):*** * A clear definition of its mission and objectives; compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and relevant national legislation;
* Quality control over the evaluation of programs, departments, and institutions of higher learning;
* Transparency in all of its operations;
* Establishment of accountability mechanisms; Adoption of an Ethics Code for all Agency personnel;
* Development of a quality culture among its members and collaborators, both internal and external;
* Establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and continuous improvement of its activities;
* The Agency's periodic external evaluation; CYQAA's collaboration with ENQA, EQAR, and other European and international higher education organizations.

To ensure that its quality policy is followed, CYQAA implements the following internal quality assurance mechanisms *(CYQAA, 2015)*:* Activity to organize (external evaluations) on a six-month basis, systematic progress monitoring, internal quality assurance decision making via personnel and council meetings, task and objective achievement appraisal feedback;
* Formal and informal hearings of higher education institutions and their representatives on the development of legislation, criteria, procedures, and instruments for external evaluation and accreditation processes;
* Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), a total management tool used in Cyprus and Europe's civil service;
* Adoption of the *"Code of Conduct and Ethics of Civil Servants"* for Agency employees;
* The code of conduct and ethics of civil servants focuses on the basic standards and rules that govern officers' behaviour when they come into direct, personal, or telephone contact with citizens, all while adhering to the general obligations of decorum, professionalism, and honesty;
* Respect for legality, obligation to impartiality, objective judgment, credibility, accountability, and transparency, duty of equal treatment of citizens, and good administration are the ethical standards that govern officials' actions when dealing with citizens' affairs;
* Monitoring, review, and regular updating of the mechanisms and procedures for evaluation and accreditation;
* Monthly meetings of the Agency's Council - The Council thoroughly examines comments, analyses, and suggestions and, when appropriate, incorporates them into the decision-making process;
* Feedback on the Agency's organization, tools, criteria, performance, and evaluation and accreditation procedures is collected and analysed from stakeholders such as higher education institutions, members of external evaluation committees, student associations, faculty associations, professional associations, and the ministry of education;
* Guidance and training for members of external evaluation committees, as well as specialized training for Agency personnel;
* Creating and updating an expert registry with experienced experts from all disciplines from across Europe;
* Systematic examination of ENQA and other organizations' publications and reports with the goal of implementing best practices;
* Seminars for higher education institutions aimed at updating and guiding them on the Agency's policies and external evaluation procedures;
* Forms, questionnaires, and documents, among other things, are being developed and updated on a regular basis to promote transparency and equal treatment of higher education institutions;
* Monitoring and evaluation of the Agency's procedures and activities by the Agency's Council and the competent assigned officer;
* Bottom-up procedures are used to record and present the Agency's activities, as well as to distribute day-to-day tasks to members of the personnel.

The CYQAA Council pledges to ensure the implementation of this quality policy and its periodic updating, taking into account the evolution of higher education matters, the Agency's and society's needs, and, most importantly, by implementing innovative practices that unify, through quality, the European Area for Higher Education.The Agency's current quality policy has been communicated to all internal and external partners, and it is available on the Agency's website.**References**: The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, (2015). <https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/>  |
| --- |

**References:**

Döring, N.; Bortz, J. (2016): Forschungsmethoden und Evaluation in den Sozial- und Humanwissenschaften, 5. Auflage, Springer Verlag.

Kelle, U. (2017): Die Integration qualitativer und quantitativer Forschung – theoretische Grundlagen von „Mixed Methods“, In: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Springer Fachmedien GmbH.

Kuckartz, U. (2014): Mixed Methods. Methodologie, Forschungsdesigns und Analyseverfahren. Wiesbaden: Springer VS für Sozialwissenschaften.