EFQM Good Practice Competition 2015
Achieving Sustainable Excellence

Registration form

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The registration form and submission report have to be returned together with the video to Vinciane Beauduin at EFQM (Vinciane.beauduin@efqm.org) by 15 May 2014 at the latest.

Should you have any queries, feel free to contact Vinciane Beauduin via email at Vinciane.beauduin@efqm.org, or by phone on +32 2 775 3510.

Good Practice - Submission Report

Good Practice Title	

Organisation overview

The University of Nicosia is an independent, co-educational, equal opportunity tertiary education institution, combining the best elements in western education, quality standards and an international philosophy. Located in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, an island which lies at the cross-roads of three continents, the University has quickly become a global education centre. International in philosophy, the University hosts students from all over the world, in a multicultural learning environment, promoting friendship, cooperation and understanding.

The University of Nicosia's roots date back to 1980 and its predecessor institution, Intercollege. Starting out small, in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, Intercollege initially prepared students to successfully pass external exams of professional education bodies, while soon after it began offering its own programmes of study. In a matter of a few years, the college had greatly expanded its operations, adding two campuses in the other two major cities, developing into "the largest and most reputable college in Cyprus" (according to repeated opinion surveys by independent research companies).

The University of Nicosia emerged in 2007, following changes in the relevant local legislation and a comprehensive accreditation process. Through its four schools, the University offers a diverse range of academic programmes of study, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Bachelor,

Master and PhD degrees). Intercollege remains an associate institution, complementing the University's study offerings through its vocational and shorter duration programmes.

Today, the University of Nicosia is the leading independent university in Cyprus; the result of solid and systematic work by all, administration and faculty, as well as, the total contribution of the institution to tertiary education, not only in Cyprus but also in the region. It is the culmination of an ongoing journey, which began over 30 years ago, and has established the University as a leading tertiary education provider in Cyprus – in line with the enduring motto of the institution: "Excellence in Education".

All University of Nicosia Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Degrees are accredited by the Republic of Cyprus, following an independent evaluation by the Evaluation Committee for Private Universities (ECPU). This confirms the status and standard of the University's degrees within the country and abroad, and is indicative of the quality and standards maintained by the university. The University's Doctoral, Master and Bachelor Degrees are fully recognized and structured within the framework of the Bologna Accord. The University of Nicosia is a member of the European Universities Association, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), Erasmus, and is one of a few universities in the European Union that has received both the Diploma Supplement Label and the ECTS Label.

- ■ **Vision :** The University of Nicosia aspires to be a leading contributor to excellence in education and research.

- ■ **Mission:** To help students become educated individuals, achieve their academic and professional goals and assume responsible roles in a changing world of European cooperation and global interdependence; to promote research and the generation of knowledge; to be of service to society through the dissemination and application of knowledge, as well as through innovative partnerships with business and civic society institutions.

The University pursues excellence in education through high teaching standards, in a continually improving academic environment. Besides classroom instruction, the University offers students opportunities to become involved in a whole range of activities including student clubs, sports, public lectures and seminars.

As there is growing evidence that appropriate use of technology may improve learning, the University of Nicosia aims to use the most up-to-date technologies and state-of-the-art learning design theory. An integral part of our approach to the learning design of our e-learning courses is the institutional commitment to help our students develop higher-order skills of critical analysis, reflection, and problem-solving. We also emphasise supporting learners in building knowledge collaboratively and engaging in social learning. We firmly believe that effective use of technology will also help the increasing number of life-long learners gain access to formal qualifications thus equipping learners as workers and citizens in an information society. Furthermore, our University places great importance on developing its provision of assistive technologies for people with disabilities.

The University of Nicosia's approach to e-learning draws on the detailed recommendations made in (1) the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) revised approach to e-learning strategy for enhancing learning and teaching through the use of technology and (2) the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education 2010 Amplified Version Strategy for flexible and distributed learning.

The University of Nicosia has defined its strategy which describes how the University will realise its vision. It refers to the set of initiatives and activities, guided by the organisation's vision and values, which aim to provide the organisation with competitive advantage. For the strategy to be focused, it needs to prioritize its aims, to determine the main "strategic pillars" or "key priorities", on which growth will depend. For each such "pillar", the required "strategic objectives" have been specified.

The eight (8) strategic pillars of the University of Nicosia have been specified: (1) High Quality Teaching and Learning , (2) Promoting Research, Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Scholarship, (3) International Outlook, (4) Inclusive Access & Participation, (5) Service to Society, (6) Efficiency and Effectiveness, (7) Culture of Collegiality, (8) Financial Strength.

Awards and Recognitions

Along the way, the institution has distinguished itself on multiple fronts – earning prestigious awards, such as the United Nations *"Global 500" Award*, for its contribution in the protection and improvement of the environment; and establishing the first *UNESCO Chair* in Cyprus, for the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. More recently, the institution has been honoured by the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB) with two entrepreneurial *Excellence Awards*, including the Excellence Award in Educational Services; while it has also been awarded with the Committed to Excellence in Europe award (EFQM) in 2006 and a *Gold Medal in Business Ethics Excellence* by the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN) in 2011 and 2014, in recognition of its sound corporate governance and corporate social responsibility. In 2012, the University of Nicosia received *the Investors in People* (IiP) certificate, which was renewed in 2015. In 2014, the University of Nicosia received the *Recognised for Excellence 5 Stars Award* by EFQM.

The University has also been recognized by the European Commission, being awarded with an Erasmus University Charter, while it is one of the very few universities in Europe that hold both the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement (DS) Labels. Moreover, the University of Nicosia is the only non-state university in Cyprus that is a member of the European University Association (EUA).

Desired Results

■ **Summarise the key objective(s) of the approach you have adopted**

■ **What has been improved in detail?**

The University in attempt to live up to its Institutional Values of "Promoting and ensuring demographic governance and management of the university" and "Promoting tolerance, diversity and multi-cultural awareness" has included in its strategic pillars "Culture of collegiality" and "Inclusive access and participation."

Having recognised the disparity between men and women in the higher academic ranks, priority was given to the objectives of

- Equal opportunities
- Equal treatment
- Diversity
- Higher satisfaction of employees

In order to achieve the above objectives and *eliminate discrimination in respect to employment and occupation*, the hiring system and the promotions /academic career path were revamped and clearly defined and well communicated procedures were adopted.

Utilizing the electronic recruitment system, new positions are posted on the university website, employment applications are submitted and evaluated electronically by matching the required criteria to the candidates' qualifications. A committee is set up to evaluate the candidates on specific criteria, with each committee member having to justify his/her position on each candidate. Once the committee recommends a candidate with clear justifications of its decision, the university can proceed with the hiring of the candidate.

Upon hiring, academics are advised of the promotions / academic career path "ranking" process. In this the criteria are clearly defined and anyone who believes they meet them can apply for promotion to a higher rank. The criteria clarify the minimum length of time in each level, research output and performance evaluation required for eligibility for each rank. A committee of internal and external experts in the specific field of the candidate for promotion is then set up to evaluate eligibility for that rank. The committee consists of faculty members of higher rank than the one for which the application has been made. Anyone who meets the criteria is promoted.

Approach

- **Describe the current approach within your organisation**

- **Describe which elements have been implemented**

- **Describe how this approach is linked to your overall strategy**

The University of Nicosia has created a modern and integrated Human Resources Management System, which is utilised to support the sound management and development of University employees. The system, based on internationally accepted principles of human resources management, aims to fully realize the potential of University staff, in conjunction with achieving the greatest possible workplace/professional satisfaction.

The University has developed a Code of Conduct and Values that applies to both administrative and academic personnel that aims to cultivate a spirit of team work and collaboration. The Statement of Values is as follows: *To foster within the University community the values of personal and academic integrity; the liberty to question and to pursue knowledge; of respect for the laws of the Republic of Cyprus, the European Union and the University; democratic governance and management of the institution; respect for persons; professionalism and diligence; ethical behaviour; civic responsibility; multi-cultural awareness; tolerance; sustainability of resources; entrepreneurship and innovation; personalised attention and student focus.*

The hiring and promotion systems reflect the value of democratic governance as the all decisions are taken by relevant committees preferably through consensus or by majority voting if consensus is not achieved.

Successful development decisions, combined with the recruitment of talented and qualified personnel, have resulted in the University of Nicosia to be regarded as one of the most important, dynamic and stable employers in the Cypriot labour market. The University strives to ensure and promote a corporate philosophy that provide its employees with a friendly and safe work environment that values meritocracy and supports equal opportunity, lifelong education and which is inclusive and free of discrimination.

Today, the University of Nicosia employs 336 permanent employees consisting of 193 faculty members and 143 administrative staff.

Fast Facts:

- The majority of administrative staff is female; by the end of 2013, 69.8% of administrative staff employed was female.
- In 2014, the average age of employees at the University of Nicosia is 42.43 years, with 64.2% of employees being under the age of 45.
- Approximately, 74% of employees are Cypriot, while 26% hail from other countries.
- Currently, 69% of academic staff has a doctorate degree, while the remaining 31% have a postgraduate degree. Several faculty members with postgraduate degrees have received support from the University and are in the process of pursuing their doctorate degree.

Deployment

- **Describe how this approach was implemented within your organisation**

- **What were the major challenges you had to overcome?**

Prior to implementation, the University asked for the input of all stakeholders, as it does for all major decisions. Once the processes were designed, they were submitted to the University Senate and Council for their approval. Once approved by both bodies, they were communicated to all. The requirements for all academic ranks were also communicated to all faculty members and are included in the Faculty Manual and explained in the Faculty Orientation program.

The major challenge, especially initially, was finding external experts who were willing to come and participate in the ranking committees as, in most cases, they had to come from abroad. The university provides all the appropriate resources to identify and bring to Cyprus if necessary the external experts needed for the ranking committees. Several applications are submitted every year from faculty members who wish to apply for a higher rank. The University of Nicosia has not set a limit on the number of academics on each level and therefore all colleagues have the opportunity to be promoted in higher ranks provided they

Distribution of Staff by Citizenship
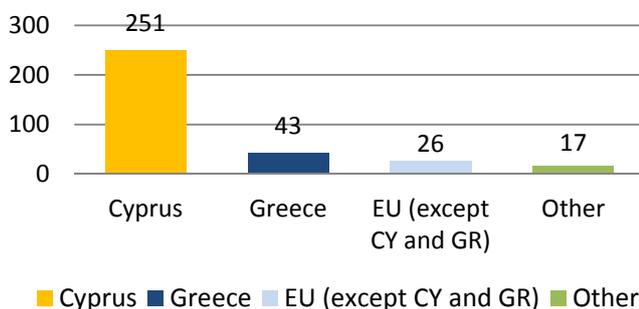
Distribution of Employees by age group
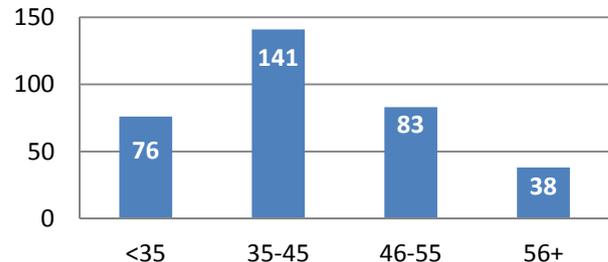
meet the relevant requirements.

Assessment

■ **Please describe what benefits have been achieved**

The abovementioned approaches enabled the organization to achieve better people results.

In 2014, the University of Nicosia managed to receive the *Recognized for Excellence 5 Stars Award* by EFQM and became the only academic institution in Cyprus and Greece to receive such high score in the EFQM assessment.

Previously, in 2012, the University of Nicosia was certified by the world famous model "*Investors in People*" (IIP), the only recognized and integrated standard for the management and development of human resources. IIP certifies organizations that recognize the catalyst role played by their human resource towards improving their competitiveness. Created in 1990 in the UK, the standard has been adopted by more than 70,000 companies and organizations in 50 countries around the world. In Cyprus, the University of Nicosia was the ninth organization to receive this distinction. In 2015 the certification was successfully renewed.

Earlier in 2015, the University of Nicosia was one of only nine organizations in Cyprus to be awarded with a Best Practice Award by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance concerning the equal treatment of men and women at the workplace.

The effective implementation of the hiring and promotion systems enabled the University of Nicosia to create an equal opportunities and equal treatment work environment regardless of gender, nationality, age. In addition, diversity among employees was achieved and the satisfaction levels of faculty and staff, as measured in the annual employee opinion survey, indicate a positive trend.

Refinement

■ **What are the lessons learned?**

■ **Summarise the planned next steps if applicable**

Having gone through the whole process, having involved all the stakeholders from the initial stages, keeping them involved and well informed throughout made resistance to the change minimal. On the contrary, the faculty supported the effort and felt committed in ensuring the systems work well. This taught us to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders before implementing any major change.

The resulting diversity has provided the University a more dynamic environment where different perspectives are accepted and new ideas can flourish. More original ideas were submitted since the changes took effect. A fine example, the Distance Learning Programmes which started as an idea of colleagues from three different nationalities and completely different backgrounds discussing how the University can achieve its third **Strategic Pillar – International Outlook**. Today, the Distance Learning Unit is a major source of revenue for the University.

Our next steps are to streamline the hiring system and promotions/ career path for the administrative staff. Some steps have already been implemented in this direction with performance appraisals being conducted for each administrative employee and working towards fine tuning the hiring procedures.