

Report on the outcome of the accreditation procedure for the master degree program "Executive Public Administration" to be offered by the Central European University Private University in Vienna

1 Subject of the application

The Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) conducted an accreditation procedure for the accreditation of the master degree programme "Executive Public Administration" to be offered in Vienna by the Central European University Private University (CEU PU) in accordance with § 24 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) BGBl I Nr. 74/2011 as amended in conjunction with § 2 Private Universities Act (PUG) BGBl. I Nr. 74/2011 as amended and § 17 Decree on Accreditation of Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO) as amended. In accordance with § 21 HS-QSG, AQ Austria publishes the following report on the outcome of the accreditation procedure:

2 Procedural steps

The accreditation procedure comprised the following procedural steps:

Verfahrensschritt	Zeitpunkt
Application filed	19.10.2021
Request for amendment of application by Secretariat	02.03.2022
Amended application received	15.03.2022
Confirmation on the closure of the application review	18.03.2022
Decision on the expert panel and the further procedure	02.03.2022
Information on expert panel to CEU PU	03.03.2022
Online preparatory conference with expert panel	11.03.2022

Preparatory meeting with expert panel prior to site-visit	26.04.2022
Site-visit	27.04.2022
Additional application materials submitted after site-visit	10.06.2022
Additional application materials submitted after site-visit	25.06.2022
Expert report completed	11.07.2022
Expert report submitted to CEU PU for comment	11.07.2022
Statement of costs submitted to CEU PU	02.08.2022
CEU PU comment on expert report	20.07.2022
CEU PU comment on expert report to experts	21.07.2022
CEU PU's statement on statement of costs	02.08.2022

3 Accreditation decision

On September 7th 2020 the Board of AQ Austria decided to grant accreditation to the above mentioned degree programme to be offered in Vienna by Central European University Private University, according to § 24 section 4 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) in conjunction with § 2 Private Universities Act (PUG) in conjunction with § 9 section 1 Decree on Accreditation of Private Universities 2019 (PU-AkkVO), due to fulfilment of the criteria according to § 17 PU-AkkVO.

The Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research approved the decision on December 14th 2022.

4 Annexes

- Final expert report from 11/07/2022
- Comment on the expert report by Central European University Private University from 20/07/2022

Expert report on the accreditation procedure for the master degree programme 'Executive Public Administration' to be offered in Vienna by the Central European University Private University

According to § 7 of the Accreditation Decree of Private Higher Education 2019 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021)

Vienna, 11.07.2022

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1 Short information on the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Central European University Private University
Site	Vienna
Legal form	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
Initial accreditation	04.07.2021
Number of students	1.484 (as of autumn 2021)
Information on the application for accreditation	
Name of the degree programme	Executive Public Administration
Study format	Master degree programme
ECTS-credit points	100
Length	2-4 academic years
Enrolment per year and cohort	max. 50
Degree award	Master of Public Administration
Study-format	Part-time
Language	English
Site	Vienna
Tuition fees	€ 20.000,- first cohort, afterwards € 25.000,-
Application filed on	19.10.2021

Central European Private University (CEU PU) applied for accreditation on 19.10.2021. In its decision on 23.03.2022, the Board of AQ Austria appointed the following experts for the review of the accreditation application:

Name	Function & institution	Field of competence
Prof. Dr. Marleen Brans	KU Leuven	Scientific qualification in public administration
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sanja Korać	Universität für Verwaltungs-wissenschaften Speyer	Scientific qualification in public administration
BMaD DI Claudia Crawford	Multilateraler Dialog der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Wien	Professional qualification in public administration
Univ.-Ass. Julia Trautendorfer, MSc	JKU Linz	Student expert in public administration

On 27.04.2022, the experts and representatives of the AQ Austria conducted a site visit at CEU PU campus in Vienna, at which the degree programme "Executive Public Administration" is to be offered.

2. Review and assessment based on the assessment criteria of the Accreditation Decree of Private Higher Education 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021) of the CEU PU master degree programme in "Executive Public Administration"

2.1 Assessment criteria § 17 (1) 1 to 2: Development and quality assurance of the degree programme

Development and quality assurance of the degree programme

1. The degree programme was developed using a predefined procedure for the systematic development and establishment of degree programmes and involving the relevant stakeholders.

The MPA in Executive Public Administration (Executive MPA) aims to empower graduates to address the challenges faced by today's public policy-makers. Its target groups will be civil servants switching or upgrading their careers, international civil servants, diplomats, health and education professionals, business 'migrants', people working in and with governments and municipalities, and those working in or aiming to work with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The need to offer such a degree programme is justified by CEU in the rapidly changing conditions in our societies and countries to which the public policy-makers must react. The description of the programme profile states that today's policy-makers operate in a fluid environment where transformations are taking place at an unprecedented scale and speed. Policy-makers work in a divided world where even the most solid of democracies may become fragile, and many of the established institutions and patterns of authority have been destabilised and challenged. CEU Executive MPA wants to take a fresh, problem-focused approach. Its goal is to produce graduates who have the skills and knowledge to make change happen.

The programme was developed and approved internally at Central European University Private University (CEU PU) in accordance with the CEU PU Degree Programs Policy made available to the experts. The newly proposed degree programme was first presented to the Academic Forum and then to the Senate, which then approved the programme proposal. In keeping with the internal procedures, the Senate Committee for Curriculum and Academic Quality Assurance (SeCur) discussed the proposal and formulated its recommendation, which was next, together with the degree programme proposal, submitted to the Senate for approval.

The Executive MPA was developed by specialists in Higher Education of the Department of Public Policy (DPP). The draft programme was reviewed by all resident DPP faculty who had the opportunity to comment and contribute. It was approved at a departmental faculty meeting before being presented to the CEU Academic Forum and subsequently to the Senate.

The internal procedure for new programmes is clear and solid and has been followed for this new Executive MPA programme. All internal responsible representatives were involved. During the site visit, the involvement of experts and stakeholders outside CEU as well as students in the development of the programme was discussed. Although there was

apparently no explicit opportunity for participation in the process of programme development for this specific programme, both the cooperation partners present and the students expressed satisfaction with their degree of involvement in the content development of the study programmes.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Development and quality assurance of the degree programme

2. Following its accreditation, the degree programme is incorporated into the private university college's quality management system. Using an established process for quality assurance and enhancement and involving the relevant stakeholders, the private university college ensures ongoing compliance with the accreditation criteria.

CEU has committed itself to excellence and the highest quality in its research, education and outreach activities. Therefore, CEU has established an Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance (IAQA) system. This contains the principles as well as the structures and processes that the CEU has given itself for ensuring quality. They are very clearly defined and applied to all areas and all levels of the university. The IAQA system is linked to the CEU PU's degree programme policy, which states that every programme shall be subject to quality assurance.

Each CEU teaching programme (degree and non-degree) incorporates appropriate planning, assessment and review elements compatible with all CEU Policies and the requirements of accrediting bodies.

Each degree-granting CEU programme should have programme specifications prepared in accordance with CEU requirements defining the goals, the learning outcomes and other key aspects of the programme as well as the syllabi of individual courses. The programme specifications undergo a continuous assessment of their quality, especially in terms of achieving the learning outcomes, overseen by the unit's or programme's curriculum committee, as well as an annual review process. External reviewers (from both within and outside of CEU) can be invited to participate in annual programme reviews.

The departments have to assess the study performance in their annual report, faculty members have to submit activity reports and students are encouraged to provide anonymous as well as open feedback in different ways.

In addition to the quality safeguards of the teaching programmes, CEU PU's Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance Policy has introduced policies which also ensure the quality of the academic activities of departments and their programmes. They have to be reviewed at least once in five years but the review intervals can be shorter if the departments consider this necessary (e.g., if parts of the curriculum are new or if there are problems). Such reviews evaluate the achievements in relation to the mission of the department and CEU PU. The curriculum takes into account the general quality of teaching and the career prospects of graduates.

The applied quality assurance policy is very detailed and has already been proven successful for other programmes. In the discussions during the site visit, the representatives of the university were able to convincingly demonstrate that great importance is attached to the evaluation processes and that quality is continuously being improved. The representatives of the cooperation partners and the students also emphasized that they are continuously asked for feedback.

Especially the student feedback plays a major role in the CEU's quality assurance: students are required to evaluate courses prior to receiving their grade (on an anonymous base) meaning that course evaluations are basically mandatory. This policy allows CEU to gain a comprehensive and thorough overview of the students' learning process and their opinion about course structure, teaching and examination methods. The discussion with the students substantiated the impression that CEU takes the students' feedback seriously and incorporates their suggestions for improvements.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

2.2 Assessment criteria § 17 (2) 1 to 9: Degree programme and degree programme management

Taking into account a heterogeneous student body, the following criteria shall apply. In the case of degree programmes with special profile elements, the descriptions shall furthermore address the characteristics defining the profile. Special profile elements are, for example, compulsory vocational practice, organisational forms which are offered alongside professional activity, distance-learning degree programmes, joint degree programmes or jointly offered degree programmes etc.

Degree programme and degree programme management

1. *The degree programme is oriented towards the profile and the strategic objectives of the private university college.*

By offering a study programme for mid-career professionals with a broad option of electives and foundational courses, which aim at upgrading and deepening students' prior experience and knowledge, the Executive MPA fits into the CEU's general study orientation and contributes to further progressing the strategic objectives of the university.

According to the remarks in the programme proposal and information in the submitted annexes, the programme was developed in line with the CEU PU Degree Programs policy as well as reviewed internally by all resident faculty of the Department of Public Policy. According to its profile, CEU understands itself as a university where staff and students form a diverse community and engage in interdisciplinary teaching and learning as well as in examining open society subjects. The aspect of interdisciplinarity and diverse communities is mirrored in (1) the educational and professional background of the teaching staff in the proposed programme (Executive MPA), even though the programme is anchored in the Department of Public Policy and naturally shows some leniency towards political science/public policy; and (2) in the backgrounds of students, who are expected to come from governmental entities, international organizations, health and education sectors, organizations partnering with governments and municipalities, and civil society organizations. The aspect of open society subjects is somewhat explicitly mirrored in the programme's courses (e.g. Human Rights, Inclusivity; Greening Public Policy), and seems to be rather implicitly woven into the topics and cases delivered by the teaching staff in class.

The strategic objective of offering further education in the frame of an Executive MPA programme for executive-level and already work-experienced students complements the range of the CEU's study programmes. The Executive MPA fits into the CEU's overall mission of educating future policy-makers and experts in public administration.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Degree programme and degree programme management
<p>2. <i>The profile and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. have been clearly defined;</i> <i>b. comprise discipline-specific-scientific and/or scientific-artistic as well as personal and social skills;</i> <i>c. comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities and</i> <i>d. comply with the respective qualification level of the National Qualifications Framework.</i>

The profile of the programme centres around the didactic approach (dynamic, problem-focused) and the aim of the programme to empower graduates to address the challenges faced by today's public policy-makers. The target group (potential participants) is highly diverse (people from the civil service, international organizations, civil society organizations, businesses). The profile description, however, lacks a clear reference to the expectation that participants should have extensive knowledge of public administration (through their education or their professional experience) - which the experts deem essential for the profile of the programme to fit its name (Executive Master of Public Administration). The site visit revealed that the programme coordinator did not make this explicit in the programme proposal and that, during the application phase, potential participants will be provided more information about what knowledge base is expected from them. In more detail, an introductory package, which includes relevant subjects and trainings in order to build up the required knowledge base, is provided to the students after admission. Especially during a diagnostic pre-assignment phase, the students receive feedback and reviews on potential lack of knowledge or skills in order to be able to tackle these specific individual needs.

As outlined in the application documents, the CEU Executive MPA will follow a problem-facing, practice-oriented approach. Compared to other leading university's Executive MPA programmes, CEU's focus is on extending and refining the students' already established expertise and on building on and tying in with their own experiences in order to provide meaningful learning outcomes for executive-level students. The intended learning outcomes have been clearly defined in the application documents and in the syllabus of each course.

However, while an advanced understanding of the complexities of public administration is mentioned as one of these learning outcomes, the courses included in the programme are not explicitly designed to cover this aspect. This may be due to the aim of the programme to attract candidates who already have a certain level of knowledge in public administration. The pre-existing level of knowledge in different fields, among others, basics of public administration, will be identified via a diagnostic pre-assessment that shall be undertaken by accepted candidates. An insufficient level of knowledge in public administration (which may apply to candidates who come from non-traditional public administration backgrounds and career paths) however does not appear to be tackled in a focused manner: there exist no specific pre-programme modules or introductory short courses in public administration. In contrast, if the diagnostic pre-programme assessment reveals that candidates have

challenges in the fields of economics, the policy process, writing and research, and/or quantitative methods, specific pre-programme modules or introductory short courses in those fields are provided to accepted candidates prior to the start of the programme. Challenges in understanding the basics of public administration seem to be covered only in the introductory short course (3-6 hours) 'Introduction to the Policy Process', which - considering the focus mirrored in the course title and the duration - may be ill-suited to convey the basics in the field of public administration. Further, the supplementary documents provided by CEU that outline the diagnostic pre-assessment and the introductory package show pre-programme modules or introductory short courses in qualitative methods, which however are not assessed in the diagnostic pre-assessment. Thus, an assessment of knowledge and skills in this field seems to be the candidates' own responsibility.

The profile and learning outcomes described in the application documents as well as during the site visit comprise discipline-specific scientific skills (e.g. strategic management, crisis management, facilitating change, statistical literacy) as well as personal and social skills (e.g. leadership, collaboration, negotiation, lobbying, team management, communication), and the latter also comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities. CEU's focus is on equipping future change-makers with applied skills and an interdisciplinary knowledge base so that they are enabled to handle the type of assignments and challenges they have to face in their professional lives. The principal learning outcomes are listed in the application documents and were further elaborated on during the site visit. Particularly the practice-based learning approach was frequently highlighted and much focus was put on explaining the final ("capstone") project students have to work on in order to receive their degree.

The programme is defined to correspond to the National Qualification Framework level VII (7). The descriptions in the application documents, as well as the information gathered during the site visit corroborate this classification given that (1) participants, will gain highly specialized knowledge centred on the latest theory, (2) that the programme aims to develop the participants' ability to tackle critical problems and successfully implement change, and (3) the principal learning goals of the programme are to develop a set of skills (see above) that will equip them to assume responsibility and leadership, and lead and craft complex solutions.

The profile and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme fulfil the criteria to a satisfactory degree. Restrictions with regard to a clear definition of learning outcomes are laid out in the experts' recommendation. In sum, however, the experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The experts recommend introducing the structure and content of the introductory package and the possibility of pre-assessments to the applicants in an early application phase or even prior to application so that students understand what is expected from them.

In light of the inconsistencies in the programme's learning outcomes on public administration (i.e. advanced understanding of the complexities of public administration) and the topics covered in the pre-programme modules and introductory short courses, the experts recommend offering one or two specific public administration courses that may build on or lend from introductory courses in the MPA programme, to specifically cater to the needs of candidates with non-traditional public administration backgrounds.

Further, it is recommended to assess not only the quantitative methods skills, but also qualitative methods skills in the pre-programme assessment.

Degree programme and degree programme management

3. The name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile and intended learning outcomes.

The programme carries the name "Executive Master in Public Administration". Public administration is a discipline that finds itself at the crossroads between political science, law, economics and public policy. The CEU Executive MPA programme shows a strong policy focus, both in procedural (policy-making) and substantive (type of policy problems addressed) terms. It is not a mainstream MPA programme focusing on Public Sector Personnel Management, Public Finance and Budgeting, Administrative Law, or Citizens-Administration relations. Moreover, some core PA-focused subjects are hosted in electives, particularly in the 'From Business to Public Leadership' module. During the site visit, it was clarified that in some of these elective courses such issues as public sector reform and public sector regulation are dealt with from an interdisciplinary perspective, which complies with internationally recognized standards of Public Administration teaching.

Even if the name, learning outcomes, and curriculum structure reveal the policy-oriented focus of the CEU PU Executive MPA programme, the disciplinary foundations of the latter are more implicit than explicit. They are not very transparent, nor clearly communicated. The programme's choice is legitimate but merits a stronger explication of the nature of its policy orientation to teaching public administration, as opposed to offering a mainstream public administration programme. This would help clarify the trade-offs the programme has made between focusing on major policy challenges to public administration at the expense of discussing some classic features of Public Administration such as politico-administrative relations, ministerial responsibility, or public sector fragmentation.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The experts advise to make more explicit and communicate more clearly the (inter)disciplinary foundations of the policy orientation of their type of executive public administration programme.

Degree programme and degree programme management

4. The degree programme

- a. complies with the scientific and/or scientific-artistic and didactic requirements of the respective subject or subjects;*
- b. comprises defined core subject areas which represent the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competencies to be acquired;*
- c. ensures by its content and structure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;*
- d. comprises modules and/or courses with learning and teaching as well as examination methods suitable for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and build on the overall concept of the degree programme;*
- e. takes into account the integration of research and teaching and/or research and the appreciation of*

the arts and

f. encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process

The Executive MPA programme complies with the standards of a policy oriented Public Administration programme. It aims to equip graduates to become future change-makers responding to major challenges to governing and public administration. It does so by providing students with knowledge and skills to critically understand and respond to these major challenges as well as to the constraints to effective change in government and organizational contexts.

The programme has defined core subject areas and competencies to be acquired. These are presented by the principal learning goals of the programme. The programme seeks to:

- Develop advanced professional management and leadership capacities to effect positive change in public and non-profit organisations.
- Develop an advanced understanding of the complexities of public administration, and of how issues become problematized and politicized in divergent local, national, and global settings.
- Develop hard and soft skills and practical skills such as data and statistical literacy, leadership, negation, legal skills, advocacy skills, team management and communication.

To ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes, the programme's content is organised into a set of 5 mandatory/core modules on the one hand and 3 specialization modules on the other.

The core modules are mandatory for all students. Equalling 60 ECTS, the mandatory modules comprise:

- *Persuasive Policy-Making*: After having completed this interdisciplinary module, graduates are knowledgeable of and competent in building and managing sustainable coalitions for pursuing policy goals, building and sustaining networks, and managing organizational constraints. The modules introduce concepts that are further developed in the specialization modules 'Reforming public sector organisations'.
- *Digitalisation and Public Policy*: After having completed this module, students will know tools for handling social media and artificial intelligence, for digital policy-making, e-government and, thus, remote policy-making and management. They will have developed skills for dealing with data adaptation and adoption and will understand the legal and ethical implementation of data usage for policy-making.
- *Knowledge Management and Innovation*: After having completed this module, students will understand the processes and tools of knowledge/evidence production and use. They will develop skills for knowledge translation, making available knowledge useful for actors in public and non-governmental organisations.
- *Organisational Effectiveness and Leadership*: After having completed this module, students will know about ways to achieve organizational effectiveness and will be acquainted with skills for the use of effective recruitment, staff and team management, fundraising, crisis management, and budgeting.

- *Inclusive and Socially Responsible Policy-Making:* After having completed this module, students will understand groups' disenfranchisement in policy-making. They will also learn how to make policies in a gender-balanced and inclusive way by having focused on such issues as socio-economic marginalization, human rights, gender balance, disadvantaged communities.

Under these modules are grouped 16 courses that are well-chosen to reach the learning outcomes. The mandatory courses range from 3 to 5 per module, with an ECTS variation between 2 and 6 ECTS.

The specialization modules are up to 20 ECTS mandatory for students wishing to graduate with a specialization in one of three modules:

- *Smart policy-making:* After having completed this module, students have developed hard skills in quantitative methods, working with big data and statistics. They will develop expertise in data-driven policy-making as well as know about and use AI in policy-making.
- *Reforming public sector organisations:* After having completed this module, students are knowledgeable about reform in specific sectors. Education, healthcare, environment, and security are the substantive reform areas addressed.
- *From Business to Public Leadership:* After having completed this module, which is designed for executives who seek to transition from business to public policy and administration, students will understand different logics and organizational behaviours in both the public and private sectors, and public sector challenges of legal obligations and accountability.

Under the specialisation modules are grouped 14 courses, from 3 to 6 per module, each equalling between 2 and 6 ECTS.

An important component of the curriculum is the Capstone Project Module, equalling 20 ECTS. It is a six-month-long consultancy assignment. The student(s)-candidate(s), advised by faculty, deliver(s) work for a genuine client. They provide this work in groups or alone. Students find a client organization and are supervised by a faculty member. During the site visit, capstone project hosts revealed how they offer to students a meaningful and challenging assignment. Future Executive MPA students may also choose their capstone project from within their own organisations, rather than through external partner institutions of the department. Overall, the main intention of the capstone project is to have a real impact for the client and to build on and enhance the specific expertise the students already have acquired during their prior work experiences. The entire project management is explicitly coordinated by a CEU professor who also acts as contact person for the students, meaning that high-quality supervision during the project time is ensured. Besides, CEU supports students in finding capstone projects by relying on an extensive network of organizations and cooperation partners. During the site visit, this was substantiated by two Vienna-based project partners being present and explaining their organizations' goals and strategies and how students are involved in their specific projects. The students' valuable input to these projects and the value-added for the cooperation partners was emphasized by the partners and strong intentions of further continuing and fostering these cooperations were pronounced. In terms of finalizing the project, grading and giving feedback on students' performance throughout the project time, the supervisor and project manager are available for individual feedback, which the experts learned during the site visit.

The organisation of learning activities is modular. Core modules are taught in 8 intensive days; specialisation modules in 5 such days. The module structure is organised in a pre-week, classroom time, and post-module.

- Pre-week: during this week students learn the theoretical basis for courses via pre-recorded video lectures, commentaries, and reading syntheses.
- Classroom time: during classroom time on campus and in person, students apply the acquired theories to specific issues and problems. They do so via seminars, case studies, simulation and hands-on training. During this period, students also network with governmental and non-governmental partners of CEU PU.
- Post-module: between each module, students work on written assignments.

There is a good mix of learning activities, adapted to the problem-based learning philosophy of the programme. The written assignments include academic papers, policy briefs, advocacy papers and policy papers. During the site visit, the experts learned that instructions for these different kinds of written assignments are available on the online learning platform Moodle. They were subsequently provided with extra documentation of these assignments, and found the instructions to be comprehensive and clear.

The evaluation methods are diverse, again in keeping with the problem-based teaching approach of the Executive MPA. The expert panel was concerned about the relatively high percentage of written papers (about 60 per cent of the evaluation activities), as they had expected more weight on such evaluation modes as presentations and videos. They learned during the site visit that the relatively high percentage of written papers in the overall evaluation is due to the regulation of having the majority of assignments available for external examiners, which naturally constrains the opportunities to test students' competencies by evaluations other than written assignments.

The experts expressed concerns about the integration of state-of-the-art research findings in courses taught by part-time lecturers/practitioners. Interviews during the site visit revealed that the programme coordinator self-identified as CEU responsible for assuring that course content was based on the latest research.

Core subjects in the programme are taught by permanent faculty. More than 50% of courses taken by any student are taught by permanent faculty in accordance with PrivH-AkkVO 2021. The permanent faculty teaching in the programme is engaged in research on the subject on which they teach. This strengthens the research base of teaching. Part-time lecturers, visiting lecturers, and pracademics strengthen links with the profession, which in an executive master programme is an asset.

The students are much involved in the learning process. This is in line with the Executive MPA's overall goal of fostering soft skills and building on prior experience. Drawing from the explanations of the students present at the site visit, the experts conclude that students are much encouraged to actively discuss relevant course topics in class, develop critical opinions and bring in their own expert knowledge in group activities. Overall, the teaching and examination methods are strongly problem-oriented and require out-of-the-box analytical thinking.

The programme complies with the academic and didactic requirements of a public policy-oriented executive public administration programme. The core subject areas are clearly defined and the syllabi demonstrate what is expected in terms of the acquisition of competencies. The achievement of intended learning outcomes is facilitated by a clear

structure and content of the programme. The learning methods are varied and adapted to the programme's learning outcomes. While the experts consider the weight of written work as relatively heavy, considering the competencies that need acquiring, they also appreciate that external examination rules constrain expanding alternative evaluation methods. The research profiles of the faculty involved in teaching sufficiently support the research base of the courses. However, the interviewed students failed to see the direct connection between faculty research and faculty teaching. The Executive MPA courses ensure the active involvement of students in class and in their learning process. As outlined in the syllabi and the application documents, much in-class time is dedicated to group activities, in-class workshops and an overall usage of the in-class time for "learning, not lecturing". Furthermore, substituting a master thesis with the applied capstone project is very much in line with the practice-oriented focus of the Executive MPA and serves as hands-on preparation for potential future challenges and tasks in students' further careers.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The experts recommend developing a standardized process for assuring that course content is rooted in state-of-the-art research, e.g. establishing a monitoring tool that identifies the percentage of academic literature used in courses that has been published in the last 5 years, or is more than 5 years old. Pro-active information of part-time lecturers/practitioners on new academic literature in particular fields/on specific topics either by the programme coordinator or the library staff is advised.

Degree programme and degree programme management

5. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is applied correctly to the degree programme. The workload related to the individual modules and/or courses, expressed in ECTS credits, makes it possible that the intended learning outcomes are achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. In the case of degree programmes for working professionals, the professional activity is taken into account.

The application documents and site visit conversations support the finding that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved within the stipulated maximum duration of studies of four years. The ECTS system is correctly applied throughout the 100 ECTS programme, as the students' overall workload is considered. The modular programme structure in pre-week online preparation time, classroom time in 5 (elective modules) and 8 full days (core modules), and post-module time, envisages a significant number of hours of independent student work that along with the contact hours contribute to achieving the intended learning outcomes. The programme finally includes a 20 ECTS capstone project, which is completed by independent student work under supervision by faculty. Judging from the reading lists and specification of class requirements, workloads are on the higher end, while still falling in line with the specification of ECTS. Some readings lists, however, appear rather lengthy, in need of prioritization in function of student workload, as well as for good balance between different module components.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Degree programme and degree programme management

6. The Diploma Supplement is specific to the respective degree programme and suitable to support international mobility of students as well as graduates and facilitates academic and professional recognition of the acquired qualifications.

A sample Diploma Supplement of the CEU PU Executive Master of Public Administration degree programme has been issued and complies with the requirements laid down in the University and Higher Education Statistics and Education Documentation Decree. The Diploma supplement is suitable to support student mobility and facilitates the recognition of acquired qualifications.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Degree programme and degree programme management

7. The requirements for admission to the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined and*
- b. contribute to the achievement of the qualification objectives*

The requirements for admission to the CEU programmes are clearly outlined in the application documents and the annexes. They will, furthermore, be published on the CEU's website. In addition to a minimum level of English proficiency, applicants for the Executive MPA must have an undergraduate degree and a minimum of 5 years of work experience in a relevant field. Work experience furthermore needs to show leadership potential and a certain career progress. In the diploma supplement, the exact access requirements are listed.

Considering the fact that all undergraduate degrees can be suitable for applying to the Executive MPA it might be the case that not all students have the same level of skills and knowledge. In order to ensure that students are levelled up in case the cohorts are not heterogeneous regarding their expertise, which can be expected given the broad range of accepted entry degrees and work fields, CEU performs a pre-programme assessment and offers a comprehensive introductory programme including pre-course assessments and preparatory classes. In an additional note, CEU presented their entire action plan on how to achieve an equal level of expertise and knowledge among the very diverse student body. These levelling-up assessments are not graded, but reviewed by the DPP and in a next step discussed together with the student in order to find suitable measures on how to tackle the specific need. Furthermore, additional material can be accessed and requested via the CEU's Moodle online platform. The "pre-week" which takes place the week before each in-class module should prepare students for the course content and ensure that all students are on the same theoretical level in order to be able to contribute to the in-class activities. This pre-week consists of online material for self-studying and reading materials. To sum up, it is clear to the experts that CEU puts a lot of effort into ensuring a homogenous knowledge base among the students so that they can execute work assignments and participate in discussions at an equal and high enough level.

The admission requirements are similar to requirements of other Executive Programmes and are considered as contributing to the achievement of the Executive MPA's intended qualification objectives. The list of all necessary documents for the application process is provided in the CEU's proposal and also clearly mentioned in the diploma supplement, meaning that the admission requirements are defined and described in detail.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: Telling from the diploma supplement and the proposal the experts understand that merely having achieved an undergraduate degree (and having met all the above outlined additional criteria, of course) is enough for successful application. However, at some points, CEU mentions the need for a "good" first degree. The experts recommend to clearly define what a "good first degree" actually consists of, as the term could be somewhat misleading, particularly in external communication to students for guaranteeing transparency and for ensuring that students can assess their realistic chances of selection prior to making the effort of applying. Publishing the note on the possibilities of using introductory packages and pre-classes on the website or in the information folder in order to provide more information to the students is another recommendation by the experts. Moreover, the experts consider the level of required English proficiency as quite low compared to international standards.

Degree programme and degree programme management

- 8. *The admission procedure to the degree programme*
 - a. *has been clearly defined;*
 - b. *is transparent for all involved and*
 - c. *ensures a fair selection of the applicants.*

The admission procedure for the Executive MPA is clearly described in the application documents and their annexes. The first stage includes the initial evaluation of all application materials, rejecting those applications not complying with formal requirements. Application files of eligible candidates are forwarded to the selection committees of the Executive MPA (the Executive MPA director and two other DPP academic staff appointed by the head of department) who evaluate applications on the basis of past academic performance, strength of recommendations (2 reference letters, one professional, one professional or academic are required), work experience and a cover letter / personal statement. The selection committees of the academic programmes rank candidates based on the application materials. According to the CEU's application documents, the admission process shall be executed by using a grading scale or point system and the admission process as well as the final decision on admission/rejection shall be documented (e.g. minutes). Overall, the admission procedure ensures a fair selection of candidates.

The admission procedure thus follows a clearly defined process based on a quantitative ranking with an underlying point system. The students present at the site visit explained their application procedures and outlined the CEU's clear information provision on the website and the very easy application process. However, despite being fair and comprehensible, the process lacks some transparency. Students could not tell why they had been selected in the end. Even though there is a strict admission policy, ranking students according to an

underlying point system in order to ensure fair admissions, the process may not be very transparent for the students.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The experts recommend to the CEU to improve the transparency of the entire admission procedure.

Degree programme and degree programme management

9. The procedures for the recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired competencies in terms of crediting towards examinations or parts of the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined*
- b. and are transparent for all involved.*

Transfer of academic credits is the transfer of credits earned at a recognized university or institution of higher education to CEU. CEU visiting and non-degree students who are later accepted to a CEU degree programme can also transfer credits earned at CEU during their non-degree studies to their degree programme. The recognition of competencies acquired outside the university and the entire credit transfer process are very clearly defined in the CEU's application proposal (in the annex). Specific distinctions in recognition are made for all degree levels, for explicit bachelor degree levels, master and doctoral level as well as non-degree credits. The application procedure for transferring academic credits is very detailed and comprehensible as well as transparent for all involved (the documents are also available online on the CEU's website). Credit transfer cooperation agreements with partner institutions are listed on the CEU's website as well. According to the programme proposal, all transfer of credit requests that are not regulated in special cooperation agreements are subject to the approval of the Provost (in case of masters and doctoral programmes) or the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (in case of bachelor's programmes) upon a recommendation by the head of the relevant department, school, or programme.

The recognition of credits earned at other universities or through non-degree programmes and courses is very clearly and sufficiently explained. The experts value the CEU's detailed list of transfer possibilities and transfer criteria, which not only contribute to facilitated and more comprehensible transfer processes for students, but might as well encourage students to actually take part in study exchanges or non-degree activities seeking further education.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

2.3 Assessment criteria § 17 (3) 1 to 2: Research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts

Research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts

1. Subject-specific research or development activities, respectively, in compliance with the scientific standards of the respective subject or the respective subjects have been planned for the degree programme.

As evidenced by information on individual faculty research provided in the accreditation document, and by a supplementary note provided by the Department of Public Policy, the Executive MPA programme is supported by research on issues of social justice, and open society across disciplines including economics, law, social science, politics and public policy. There are several overarching research agendas that are linked to the specializations offered within the Department's academic programs:

- Democracy and Rule of Law
- Development
- Policy and Governance (Global/European Public Policy)
- Social Justice and Human Rights
- Quantitative Policy Analysis
- Higher Education Policy

Each of these agendas is supported by faculty members with substantive track records of research on these topics and who provide foundational courses for these areas. The department is moreover involved in several research projects that feed into the core modules and specializations of the Executive MPA programme. Examples include:

- GLOBALED: relevant to the core module on Knowledge Management and Innovation, and to the education component of the Reforming Public Sector Organizations specialization.
- BRRIDGE : students will learn from the experience of the living lab in the project, as well from potentially contributing to the project in the context of their capstone projects.
- The GLOBAL CORRUPTION OBSERVATORY will feed into the Smart Policy Making specialization.

Of further importance is the input by the Shattuck Centre for Human Rights: this centre will contribute to hosting, mentoring, and co-supervising students in their applied pedagogical projects.

Individual faculty research, overarching research agendas, involvement in research projects of fundamental and applied nature, as well as the collaboration with research centres contribute to the development of a research base relevant to the Executive MPA.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Research and development and/or advancement and appreciation of the arts

2. The permanent research and teaching staff assigned to the degree programme is involved in these research and development activities.

Contributing to the CEU PU's aim of being a globally competitive research institution, the Department of Public Policy comprises faculty who are actively engaged in research activities. The proposal provides sufficient evidence of the academic research themes pursued by their resident staff members. These themes include subjects relevant to the degree programme: EU governance and anti-corruption, lobbying and special interest politics, the impact of austerity on political polarization, labour market policies and reforms, politics of violence against women, quantitative studies of the effect of social policy, higher education policy, the independence and resilience of national human rights institutions, cyber security and digital censorship, adaptation and development aid. Several of the permanent staff have been involved in internationally competitive research, funded amongst others by Horizon. The proposal lists the research interests of individual permanent faculty. The relevance of the subjects to the programme degree content is not explicitly mentioned, except as regards to the connection of research by one faculty member to the modules: *Persuasive Policy-making* and *Inclusive and Socially Responsible Policy-making*.

In the conversation with students, it transpired that they are not much aware of the research activities of their teachers. They did not seem to know about specific research areas of faculty, and, in general, of the kind of research conducted at CEU. Whether this lack of awareness is due to the lack of an overarching research concept or to failing communication on the parts of senders and receivers is not clear. At any rate, the integration of research into teaching seems implicit rather than explicit.

The faculty members' research is relevant for supporting the research base of the degree programme. The Department of Public Policy clearly comprises excellent and well-reputed resident faculty, whose accomplishments in terms of publications, research grants, and prizes are well evidenced in the proposal and annexes. The time they can devote to research is protected by staff regulations.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**

Recommendation: It is advised to make the research embedding of course contents more visible, and to develop a clear communication strategy around the research activities of staff involved in the programme aimed at candidates. This would not only assist in conveying a clearer research plan or research framework guiding the programme, but also assist in conveying a potential competitive advantage over other EMPA programmes.

2.4 Assessment criterion § 17 (4) 1 to 7: Staff

Staff
<p>1. At all sites at which studies are offered in accordance with the development plan</p> <p>a. sufficient scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively, has been planned for the degree programme,</p> <p>b. the staff members are subject-specifically as well as didactically qualified according to the requirements of the respective post.</p> <p>The private university college makes sure that at least 50 per cent of the volume of teaching is covered by permanent scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively. Permanent teaching and</p>

research staff means employees working at least 50 per cent of their working hours (usually at least 20 hours per week) in permanent employment at the private university college.

The programme proposal and additional documents provide a comprehensive overview of permanent and adjunct faculty, including the total teaching load in ECTS, as well as the respective volume in the proposed programme for permanent faculty. According to the programme proposal, more than 60 % of the teaching volume is covered by permanent faculty members. Interviews with selected faculty members (who at the same time assume also specific roles in the programme's coordination) during the site visit corroborated the impression that the staff is subject-specifically as well as didactically qualified to provide high-quality teaching in the proposed programme.

According to the programme proposal, the ratio of students and permanent faculty members is 6,2. Compared to other universities, this ratio is highly favourable. While not all permanent faculty members have a research/academia background, the mix of staff with research/academia and professional background appears particularly suitable for the proposed executive programme.

An assessment of the faculty CVs submitted as a supplement to the programme proposal reveals that staff members have both the educational and professional background required to provide high-quality teaching and student supervision in the programme. The better part of the permanent, as well as the adjunct teaching staff, have extensive publication records, have won grants, prizes, and/or show other accomplishments. Due to the staff's experience and continuity in teaching, the aspect of didactic qualification can be considered fulfilled.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

2. *The subject-specific core competencies representing the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competencies to be acquired are covered by*

- a. permanent professors corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent as well as*
- b. other permanent scientific and/or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent.*

See § 17 para. 4 subpara. 3

By way of derogation from § 17 para.4 subpara.2, the following criterion shall apply to private universities:

Staff

3. *The subject-specific core competencies representing the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competencies to be acquired are covered by*

- a. permanent professors corresponding to at least two full-time equivalents as well as*

b. other permanent scientific or scientific-artistic teaching or research staff, respectively, corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent.

The private university college or private university shall attach CVs for existing permanently employed teaching and research staff employed to the application for programme accreditation. Furthermore, proof of this staff's extent of employment and their teaching load shall be provided.

For permanent teaching and research staff still to be recruited, the application for programme accreditation shall be supplemented by job descriptions, stating, at least the respective post, the envisaged extent of employment, the teaching load as well as a date for the appointment.

The programme proposal comprises an overview of the courses offered in the programme, including a clear indication of the individual staff teaching each course offered.

According to CEU, the default teaching load for full-time equivalent permanent faculty staff is 24 ECTS - per academic year. This teaching load is overall comparable to other universities in Europe. The programme proposal provides a clear indication of the teaching load of permanent staff in the Executive MPA programme over a two-year period, according to the programme's usual duration. Information on the teaching load of adjunct staff is not provided in an explicit manner, but can be discerned when matching the course taught by the individual adjunct staff with the indication of ECTS awarded for each course that is provided in another section of the programme proposal.

All permanent faculty members are professors, although the respective type varies from assistant professor to associate professor, associate professor of practice, to (full) professor. The permanent faculty members with a position of at least associate professor show a teaching load of 55 ECTS, which accounts for 2.29 full-time equivalents (FTE). The permanent faculty members with a position of assistant professor show a teaching load of 45 ECTS, which accounts for 1.88 FTE. This fulfils the minimum FTE according to the criterion.

No staff is to be recruited, which is consistent with the information provided on the courses included in the programme and the information on the staff that teaches these courses. All courses are covered either by permanent faculty or by adjunct faculty that is explicitly identified, and CVs are provided for all of the individuals.

It is worth noting that the process for recruiting new faculty members is outlined in the Academic Staff Handbook as well as in the programme proposal. According to these documents, new faculty members are recruited and hired through a standard CEU procedure: new faculty members receive an offer containing a detailed description of their courses and the remuneration. The outline of the programme and the usual class requirements, as well as the syllabus, are discussed in detail with the new faculty member.

CVs, employment contracts, and teaching load are provided for all permanent faculty.

All courses included in the programme are covered by current permanent or part-time faculty. No permanent teaching and research staff is still to be recruited, which is why the mentioned criterion does not apply.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

4. The composition of the adjunct and permanent teaching and research staff shall ensure a student-teacher

ratio appropriate to the profile of the degree programme.

CEU PU has, in its Academic Staff Handbook, detailed the requirements, rights and duties of its teaching and research staff. It breaks down the work shares for teaching, research and administration so that there is a verifiable basis for the assessment of permanent and adjunct teachers. In the programme proposal, the ratio of students to permanent staff, calculated on the basis of the FTE of the faculty in the department, is given as 6.2, which is considered good.

Permanent Lecturer refers to lecturers with a permanent contract with the university and a standard teaching load of 24 ECTS for courses. Even if there are individual exceptions, permanent faculty members work over 50% of their paid time at the university and are therefore classified as permanent/resident teaching staff. Core subjects in the programme are taught by permanent faculty. More than 50% of courses taken by any student are taught by permanent faculty.

The planned composition of the visiting and permanent teaching and research staff described above should ensure a student-teacher ratio appropriate to the profile of the study programme. The conversation with the student representatives confirmed the impression that the students have easy access to their teachers and that they are satisfied with the mentoring ratio.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The students reported that an originally designated course was not offered because the corresponding teacher was absent. A replacement could not be guaranteed. This is a major shortcoming that should be avoided in the future.

Staff

5. Adequate measures are planned for the integration of adjunct teachers into the organization of teaching and into programme organization for the degree programme.

The structures of CEU and positions of the staff as well as the tasks of the teachers and researchers, the expected performance, the assessment and evaluation are explained in detail in the Academic Staff Handbook of CEU. The regulations listed relate to permanent, full-time and part-time employees as well as visiting staff.

In principle, the regulations also apply to visiting faculty members, whereby special circumstances are taken into account. While visiting faculty members are primarily involved in teaching, they may also be involved in supervisory and various administrative duties. Basically, however, it is made clear that the workload of the visiting faculty members at the university is too different to allow meaningful generalizations, so that these workloads are defined in the individual contracts. The onboarding of visiting scientific staff, as outlined in The Academic Staff Handbook, includes that each visiting professor is assigned a mentor by the Head of Department, who will assist him/her throughout his teaching activity at the university.

The detailed regulations are transparent and give the impression that great importance is attached to highly qualified personnel. For visiting teachers, there is not only room for

participation, but CEU shows awareness of the added value of expert knowledge outside the university, and the effort to make this useful for the students becomes clear. The procedures listed for hiring non-university staff show that the university has an interest in attracting and retaining external staff.

CEU is generally very keen to achieve a gender balance among teachers. Especially with the visiting teachers, it is usually possible to recruit women. However, the aspect of gender balance does not seem to have been taken into account in the design of the specific degree programme, especially in the case of part-time lecturers. Of the eight part-time lecturers, seven are men. But, even among full-time faculty, only a third are women, five out of fifteen.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: It is advised that departmental recruitment strategies be developed to eliminate the gender imbalance in the existing programme staffing for the Executive MPA.

Staff
<i>6. The private university college shall allow for an appropriate balance of the teaching, research, and administrative activities of the permanent scientific or scientific-artistic staff to ensure adequate participation in teaching but also leaving sufficient time for research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts.</i>

The general duties of Academic Staff are laid down in the Staff Handbook. Their normal workload is 40 hours per week, while the FTE teaching load is 12 US/24 ECTS course credits. All resident faculty are expected to teach, research, and contribute to administration at the following percentage-wise conventions: teaching (30-50%), research (30 to 50%), administration (20 to 40%).

The teaching load is laid down in individual contracts. It is possible that teaching loads are reduced for assistant and associate professors in their first two years of employment, and University Professors' have an exceptional teaching load of 8 teaching credits. All faculty engage in teaching throughout different cycles. All are expected to teach undergraduate courses. Some faculty may take on a more substantive share of teaching in undergraduate programmes, but never in excess of half their total workload. With certain administrative duties, a temporary reduction of teaching duties may be decided.

Supervision is included in the teaching percentages. During the site visit, it was discussed whether the supervision of capstone projects of the envisaged 50 students was not going to bring the division of academic duties out of balance, but in the conversations with teaching staff and programme management, it was ascertained that the duties would be divided equitably and according to the rules.

There is a sabbatical leave policy in place for resident faculty. To create temporary greater space for research, faculty are eligible to apply for sabbatical leave after three years of service.

The regulation of workload balanced between teaching, research and administration is transparent and equitable.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Staff

7. Sufficient non-academic staff has been planned for the degree programme.

In the programme proposal, six staff positions are provided as non-academic staff at the departmental level to support the degree programme: one Departmental Coordinator for the MPA in Executive Public Administration, one Skills and Applied Learning Coordinator, one Departmental Coordinator, one Project and Programme Coordinator, one Academic Curriculum Coordinator and one Departmental Coordinator for finance, contracts, grants. The tasks of these staff positions are also detailed in the programme proposal with the staff working under the supervision of the Programme Director and Applied Policy Project Director.

At the institutional level, the degree programme will be significantly supported by the following institutional administrative units: CEU Executive Education Hub, the Admissions Office, the Student Records Office, the Student Centre, the Career Services Office and the Alumni Relations Office. The names of the administrative units are self-explanatory, but the respective tasks are also explained in the proposal.

The planned resources are also available to the other programmes of CEU and have proven their worth. Due to the consistent self-evaluation, functional structures have been established over the past years, which have contributed to CEU having a good reputation and being very attractive for students. The planned non-academic staff at both department and administrative level is considered good.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

2.5 Assessment criterion § 17 (5): Funding

Funding

The degree programme's funding

- a. is secured for a period of six years and*
- b. makes it possible that students complete their degree programme even in the event of its discontinuation.*

The financial plan for the degree programme comprises a realistic and plausible balance of all expected revenues and expenses in connection with the planned degree programme. Financing commitments of all funding bodies listed in the financial plan shall be attached to the application.

The financial projections in the programme proposal only covered a period of three years. After the site visit, the expert panel requested a revised financial plan covering more than 3 years, given that in a less optimistic scenario than the one outlined initially, the Executive MPA programme would break even only after a period of 3 years. CEU delivered a more detailed financial plan that covers a period of 6 years, and includes financial projections in an optimistic, realistic, and pessimistic scenario. Here, the projection also takes into account those students that finish the programme in a period of 4 years, instead of the ordinary time of 2 years.

In an optimistic scenario, the programme would break even in year 4, in a realistic one in year 6, and in a pessimistic one, the programme would not cover the expenses in year 6, but probably in the following year. Additional information in the financial plan states that expenses (costs) in all scenarios could be saved by re-allocating existing faculty to the Executive MPA programme. This would save more than € 100,000 per year, and thus would account for an earlier break-even point.

Generally, based on the details of the overall funding of the university that has been described in detail during the site visit, it appears to be justified to regard the funding of the programme as secured for a period of at least 6 years, which would secure that even in a pessimistic scenario of participants and tuition fees, the programme could be sustained. The most substantial contribution to the programme's funding is the endowment fund, which is the primary financial source of the university's teaching activities. The university has access to a substantial endowment fund as well as the Open Society Foundation, which have pledged to provide € 550 million in twelve instalments as part of a non-revocable grant by its funders, which provides evidence for a sustainable funding for the university as a whole. The explicit support for the proposed programme by the university leadership expressed during the on-site visit convincingly signals the willingness to provide sufficient funding for the proposed programme, even if the latter cannot sustain itself through student/participant fees in the initial years.

It needs to be highlighted that the programme proposal is somewhat unclear about the tuition fees - while € 20,000 full tuition fees (target of € 10,000 taking into account tuition waivers granted to participants) are mentioned as annual programme tuition fees in the programme proposal, this figure is rather the tuition fee for the full programme (i.e. stretching over 2 or 4 years, respectively). This becomes clear only when referring to the financial plan that outlines a target of € 10,000 / 2 for those candidates finishing the programme within 2 years, and of € 10,000 / 4 for those candidates finishing the programme within 4 years.

Interestingly, the financial plan foresees the same amount (€ 60,000) of expenses for promotion in all scenarios across all 6 projected years. Intuitively, higher expenses would be expected before the first year of the programme (to attract candidates). These expenses would then need to be distributed and added to the promotion costs of the following years (once the programme has started). It may well be that this scenario is accounted for in the evenly projected expenses for promotion over the years (e.g. promotion before year 1: 60,000, year 1: 50,000 + 10,000 from before year 1, year 2: 50,000 + 10,000 from before year 1, ...). However, no information on this can be found in the financial plan.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

Recommendation: The experts advise that CEU be more clear about the tuition fee. As of now, the program proposal mentions € 20,000 as an annual fee at one instance, and without a time reference at another instance. The information on tuition available on CEU's website indicates: 'Program fee for 2022 entry to the DPP EMPA is 20,000 EUR.' Thus, € 20,000 are to be understood for the whole duration of the programme, and not as an annual fee. For reasons of clarification, the experts advise a footnote to the information on CEU's website which indicates e.g. 'for the minimum duration of the programme (two years), the fees are € 10,000 annually'.

If a pessimistic scenario requires re-allocating existing faculty to the EMPA programme (instead of paying part-time faculty) to save costs, CEU needs to make sure that a minimum of 2 FTE professors teach in the courses (core competencies) of the programme, to meet the criterion in § 17 (4) 3.

For internal controlling and monitoring purposes, the experts advise that the project coordinator and CFO purposefully and transparently account for promotion expenses that are probably incurred before the first year of the programme (to attract candidates) and to distribute these expenses evenly across the following years (once the programme has started).

2.6 Assessment criteria § 17 (6): Infrastructure

Infrastructure

Quantitatively and qualitatively adequate facilities and equipment are provided for the degree programme at all sites at which teaching will be offered. In the case that external resources are required for the degree programme, their right of disposal has been secured and the key points thereof shall be described in the application for programme accreditation.

CEU PU has rented a modern building located in Quellenstraße 51 in Vienna-Favoriten. The building contains a sufficient number of classrooms, which are equipped to the highest standard, so that teaching is possible using the most modern working methods. The classrooms are available in a variety of sizes in order to easily and efficiently match the different course sizes of the university. Two of the classrooms are Harvard-style tiered rooms with even more advanced technology than the rest of the classrooms. For larger events and public lectures, there is an Auditorium with 200 seats. Besides the classrooms, there are 3 computer labs on the campus. Further, a sufficient number of desktop computers are available in the library for students to use. In addition to the available rooms in the building, the university has also purchased considerable processor time from the Vienna Scientific Cluster, which will be used for both research and teaching purposes. The provided infrastructure includes multifunction printers for printing, copying and scanning documents. The library also offers further support options, providing a media production facility coupled with inclusive education programming for filmmaking, a so-called 'Media Lab' and a 'Sound Lab and Studio'.

The teaching and learning conditions of the premises and facilities are impressive. Even if the building, which originally functioned as a bank, looks a bit sterile and office block-like, a great deal of effort has been made to develop spaces that enable lively student life.

The representatives of the university assured that after the lease expires in August 2025, university operations will be secured even in the event that a possible move cannot be completed in the planned time. However, how this will be secured was not further elaborated.

The experts consider the criterion to be fulfilled.

2.7 Assessment criterion § 17 (7): Co-operations

Co-operation

Co-operation projects with other higher education institutions and, if applicable, partnerships with institutions outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad that match the degree programme's profile are provided for. The mobility of students and staff is being promoted.

Neither the programme proposal nor the supplemental documents specify any cooperation projects or institutional partnerships. However, the site visit revealed a strong network with think tanks, professional bodies, and civil society organizations within Austria as well as internationally. Furthermore, the university's website contains lists of many cooperation projects and institutions, e.g. the ERASMUS mundus programme providing student fellowships, cooperation agreements with several universities in Hungary, partnerships with universities and organizations across Europe for exchanges and joint work (list includes institutions from Romania, Germany, Norway, Italy and Spain, global partnerships with institutions from Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, USA, China, Russia, Canada and Japan and other countries. During the site visit, the programme management also expressed its high expectations from the CIVICA partnership with Bocconi, Hertie, Science Po Paris.

Cooperation with external partners is also important for the implementation of the students' capstone projects, which make up a crucial part of the study programme. The Capstone projects are also an important and profile-specific form of cooperation with the industry. This cooperation gives the students a realistic environment for their project work. During the site visit, two project partners underscored the fact that involving the students in their specific projects offers added value for the goals and strategies of their organisations and companies.

Mobility of students, at CEU in general, is promoted. In theory, the established mobility programmes for students are open to students/participants of the proposed executive programme as well. However, the proposal does not provide any specific paths for this particular student group (that participates in the programme while ideally being fully employed at a government, non-profit, or business organization). The site visit provided only some considerations of the particular needs of this student group when embarking on international mobility. The interviewed student representatives mentioned several partnering institutions that acknowledge modules of CEU and vice-versa, but the particular design of student mobility for the proposed programme remains mainly implicit. The programme management was not aware of Erasmus+ opportunities, but was willing to explore these further for the Executive MPA group of students.

CEU PU and its Department of Public Policy collaborates with a great number of professional, academic, and civil society organisations. International mobility is innate to CEU PU, as well as to the Executive MPA programme, given the international recruitment of students and teachers alike. Continued mobility once on the programme is less developed.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled**.

3 Summary and final evaluation

(1) Development and quality assurance

The Executive Master in Public Administration (Executive MPA) programme was developed by domain-specific Higher Education experts of the Department of Public Policy (DPP) and approved internally at Central European University Private University (CEU PU). The draft programme was reviewed by all resident DPP faculty who had the opportunity to comment and contribute. It was approved at a departmental faculty meeting before being presented to the CEU Academic Forum and subsequently to the Senate. The internal procedure for new programmes is clear and solid and has been followed for this new Executive MPA programme.

Study performance is assessed in an annual report. Faculty members have to submit activity reports and students are encouraged to provide anonymous as well as open feedback in different ways. The programme implements CEU PU's Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance Policy. The measures for ensuring the quality of the academic activities of departments and their programmes are very detailed and they have already been proven successful for other CEU PU programmes. During the site visit, the representatives of the university were able to convincingly demonstrate that great importance is attached to the evaluation processes and that quality is continuously being improved. While the experts consider that relevant stakeholders are informally involved in the quality management process, they recommend the programme to organize in a more systematic way inputs from external stakeholders and collaboration partners.

(2) Degree programme and degree programme management

The programme carries the name 'Executive Master in Public Administration'. It is a policy oriented Public Administration programme, targeting students with prior professional experience. In line with the standards of a policy oriented executive Public Administration master programme, it is designed to equip graduates to become future change-makers responding to major challenges in governance and public administration. It shows a strong policy focus, both in procedural (policy-making) and substantive (type of policy problems addressed) terms, and less on classical public administration. Even if the programme is not a mainstream MPA programme - focusing on public sector human resources management, public finance and budgeting, administrative law or citizen-government relations, on the basis of all information, especially on what was provided during the site visit, the experts confirm that the Executive MPA meets internationally recognized public administration requirements and standards. The specific profile of the programme is sufficiently translated in clear learning outcomes, the achievement of which is facilitated by the programme structure, curriculum, teaching, and evaluation methods. Combining academic knowledge with work based work-based skills in conflict management, advocacy, and data analysis, the programme nurtures a generation of leaders who have the appropriate knowledge and skills to critically understand and respond to major challenges as well as to navigate the constraints to effective change in government and organizational contexts. The modular curriculum as well as teaching methods and formal graduation requirements ensure that students can achieve the intended learning outcomes within the stipulated duration of study. To graduate from the Executive MPA, students have to complete mandatory and specialisation modules and the capstone project,

earn 100 ECTS in a maximum of 4 academic years and maintain a GPA of at least 2.66. Grading is comprehensible and transparent for students. The syllabi are very detailed and include all necessary information regarding learning outcomes, grading and minimum passing requirements. There is a good mix of learning activities, adapted to the problem-based learning philosophy of the programme, strongly encouraging the active involvement of students. The written assignments include academic papers, policy briefs, advocacy papers and policy papers. Examination rules are clearly defined and transparently communicated. A sample diploma supplement that meets the requirements is provided.

The admission procedure follows a clearly defined process based on a quantitative ranking with an underlying point system. The admission criteria are clearly defined in the diploma supplement. The programme targets a highly diverse student body. This is both ambitious and valuable, as this guarantees the exchange of ideas from different perspectives. Sufficient expertise and methods are in place to "level up" the student cohort, so that despite different backgrounds they all achieve the same knowledge base prior to starting the programme. An introductory programme consisting of pre-assessments, individual feedback and online training is available to accommodate students' individual needs.

The transfer of academic credits earned at a recognized university or institution of higher education to CEU, and of those earned at CEU is governed by a detailed and comprehensible procedure.

(3) Research and development

Individual faculty research, overarching research agendas, involvement in research projects of fundamental and applied nature, as well as the collaboration with research centres contribute to the development of a research base relevant to the Executive MPA. The development of research activities directly feed into the content of several module components, and collaborations with research centres and partners provide hosting and mentoring opportunities for the applied research components of students' work.

The Department of Public Policy clearly comprises excellent and well-reputed faculty, who are accomplished in terms of publications, research grants, and prizes. The time faculty can devote to research is well regulated and protected.

(4) Staff

The educational and professional background of the teaching staff is characterized by high quality and shows a high degree of interdisciplinarity and diversity. With more than 60% of the teaching volume covered by full-time teachers and a ratio of students to full-time teachers of 6.2, key staff indicators in the programme can be considered very favorable. The planned composition of the visiting and permanent teaching and research staff described above will ensure an even more favorable student-teacher ratio, which is appropriate considering the profile of the study programme. Internal regulations ensure that adjunct teachers are well involved in the implementation of the programme. The process for recruiting new faculty members as outlined in the Academic Staff Handbook follows a standard CEU procedure. The detailed regulations are transparent and give the impression that great importance is attached to highly qualified personnel. The overall teaching load is comparable to other universities in Europe. All courses are covered either by permanent faculty or by adjunct faculty that is explicitly identified, and CVs are provided for all of the individuals. The normal workload of Academic Staff is 40 hours per week, while the FTE teaching load is 12 US/24 ECTS course

credits. All resident faculty are expected to teach, conduct research, and contribute to administration at the following percentage-wise conventions: teaching (30-50%), research (30 to 50%), administration (20 to 40%). Supervision is included in the teaching percentages. The regulation of workload balanced between teaching, research and administration is transparent and equitable. The planned non-academic staff at both department and administrative level is considered good.

(5) Funding

The detailed financial plan for the programme covers a period of 6 years. It includes financial projections in an optimistic, realistic, and pessimistic scenario, and also includes an estimation of the financial effects in case a number of students finish the programme in a period of 4 years, instead of the ordinary time of 2 years. In a pessimistic scenario, the programme would not break even in year 6. However, based on the details of the overall funding of the university, it appears to be justified to regard the funding of the programme as secured for a period of at least 6 years. This would secure the continuity of the programme, and thus, provide assurance to enrolled participants even in this pessimistic scenario. Expenses (costs) in all scenarios could be saved by re-allocating existing faculty to the Executive MPA programme, which would result in the programme reaching an earlier break-even point.

(6) Infrastructure

CEU PU rents a modern building located in the Quellenstraße 51 in Vienna-Favoriten, which serves as temporary location. The teaching and learning conditions of the premises and facilities are very impressive and include all necessary rooms, technologies and labs in order to ensure high-quality teaching and research. The library contains extensive print and electronic collections complemented by a wide selection of databases and licenses for numerous electronic journals. This infrastructure facilitates students' and staff's research and learning.

(7) Co-operation

CEU PU is an international university with an international student body, international staff, and international curriculum. International mobility is innate to the DPP's programmes, as students and staff are internationally mobile to begin with. In addition, the DPP engages with global initiatives and has built strategic partnerships. The site visit revealed strong networks with think tanks, professional bodies, and civil society organizations within Austria as well as internationally. Furthermore, the university's website lists many cooperation projects and institutions providing student fellowships, cooperation agreements, partnerships with universities and organizations across Europe for exchanges and joint work. Mobility between academia and practice is highly valued in the Executive MPA programme through the Capstone Project's engagement with real life clients.

The experts **recommend** to the Board of AQ Austria the accreditation of the degree programme "Executive Public Administration" of the Central European University Private University.

Pro Memoria - **Recommendations:** The experts recommend:

- to introduce the structure and content of the introductory package and the possibility of pre-assessments to the applicants in an early application phase or even prior to application so that students understand what is expected from them.
- to offer one or two specific public administration courses that may build on or lend from introductory courses in the MPA programme, to specifically cater to the needs of candidates with non-traditional public administration backgrounds.
- to assess not only the quantitative methods skills at pre-entry, but also qualitative methods skills in the pre-programme assessment.
- to make more explicit and communicate more clearly the (inter)disciplinary foundations of the policy orientation of their type of executive public administration programme.
- to develop a standardized process for assuring that course content is rooted in state-of-the-art research, e.g. establishing a monitoring tool that identifies the percentage of academic literature used in courses that has been published in the last 5 years, or is more than 5 years old.
- to proactively provide information to part-time lecturers/practitioners on new academic literature in particular fields/on specific topics either by the programme coordinator or the library staff is advised.
- to clearly define what a "good first degree" actually consists of.
- to publish information on the website/information folder on possibilities of using introductory packages and pre-classes.
- to consider raising the level of English proficiency for entry into the programme.
- to improve the transparency of the entire admission procedure.
- to make the research embedding of course contents more visible.
- to develop a clear communication strategy around the research activities of staff involved in the programme aimed at candidates.
- to avoid the non-replacement of announced courses.
- to develop departmental recruitment strategies that eliminate the gender imbalance in the existing programme staffing for the Executive MPA.
- be more clear about the tuition fee and explicitly refer to 'programme fees for the whole duration of the programme' (i.e. minimum 2 years, maximum 4 years), and 'annual fees' (e.g. programme fee € 20,000, annual fee € 10,000 over 2 years).
- to make sure that a minimum of 2 FTE professors teach in the courses (core competencies) of the programme in case of re-allocation of faculty to materialize cost savings in a pessimistic scenario of participant numbers and fees.
- to purposefully and transparently account for promotion expenses that are probably incurred before the first year of the programme (to attract candidates) and to distribute these expenses evenly across the following years (once the programme has started).

4 Documents reviewed

- Application of the Central European Private University from 19.10.2022 in the version of 15.03.2022 for the accreditation of the master degree programme "Executive Public Administration", to be offered in Vienna
- Submission of further information from 10.06.2022 following the site visit:
 - a sample of the introductory package the department uses in order to level up the Executive Master in Public Administration groups at the beginning
 - an alternative financial plan taking into account possible leaves of absence (e.g. after the first year etc.) or alternative scenarios
 - the report of the last external evaluation of the department
 - instructions for the following types of written assignments: policy brief, policy paper, and advocacy brief.
- Submission of a note on Executive MPA- related research from 25.06.2022

The Board of AQ Austria
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Vienna, July 19, 2022

on behalf of CEU GmbH and
Central European University Private University
Postal Address: 1100 Vienna, Quellenstraße 51-55.

Dear Members of the Board,

I hereby confirm that we have received and fully accept the Expert Panel Review Report regarding the MPA in Executive Public Administration. We are pleased to learn that the Report confirms the academic excellence of the program and that it fulfills all the criteria for accreditation.

We fully accept all the recommendations made in the Report and will work with the Department of Public Policy on their implementation. For detailed responses to the recommendations, please refer to the Appendix of this letter.

We would like to thank the Expert Panel members for their expertise and insights, as well as for the productive and collegial discussions during the site visit. We are grateful to the Expert Panel members for their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm with which they approached the task.

We await the decision of the Board with anticipation and are looking forward to launching the program.

Sincerely,



President and Rector

CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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**CEU Department of Public Policy Responses to Recommendations contained in the
Expert Report on the Accreditation of the Department of Public Policy's Executive
Masters in Public Administration**

July 2022

CEU, and in particular the Department of Public Policy (DPP), would like to sincerely thank the expert reviewers for their considerable time and effort in assessing the proposal for the MPA in Executive Public Administration (EMPA). It welcomes the overall recommendation to AQ Austria to accredit the program, and the detailed and helpful recommendations contained in the review. The present document provides the University's responses to the specific recommendations.

- 1. Recommendation: to introduce the structure and content of the introductory package and the possibility of pre-assessments to the applicants in an early application phase or even pre-application so that students understand what is expected from them.**

DPP will (1) clarify on the EMPA webpage that there is an introductory package, and what it consists of and, (2) provide the package to all candidates with their offer materials.

- 2. Recommendation: to offer one or two specific public administration courses that may build on or lend from introductory courses in the MPA program, to specifically cater to the needs of candidates with non-traditional public administration backgrounds.**

DPP will offer 1-2 Public Administration courses to cater to the needs of such students. DPP also aims to hire a new faculty member with specific expertise in public administration in the coming academic year. This individual will teach on the EMPA and specifically have a research focus on core aspects of public administration.

- 3. Recommendation: to assess not only the quantitative methods skills at pre-entry, but also qualitative methods skills in the pre-program assessment.**

DPP will add a qualitative methods skills assessment at pre-entry to the pre-program assessment. This will be done in cooperation with the EMPA Director, professor responsible for teaching qualitative methods, and other relevant colleagues.

- 4. Recommendation: to make more explicit and communicate more clearly the (Inter) disciplinary foundations of the policy orientation of their type of executive public administration program.**

DPP is currently revising the EMPA promotional materials, and will add more explicit explanation of the interdisciplinary foundations of the policy orientation of our EMPA program to those materials (brochure, flyers) as well as the webpage.

5. Recommendation: to develop a standardized process for assuring that course content is rooted in state-of-the-art research, e.g., establishing a monitoring tool that identifies the percentage of academic literature used in courses that has been published in the last 5 years, or is more than 5 years old.

DPP's Curriculum Committee is currently reviewing all course content across the Department's offerings. This recommendation will feed into that process and will also be applied to a review of the course content for the EMPA modules.

6. Recommendation: to proactively provide information to part-time lecturers/practitioners a new academic literature in particular fields/on specific topics either by the program coordinator or the library staff is advised.

The three DPP regular seminar series to which visiting professors and professionals are also invited ensure that fresh research is circulated and shared. The Department advertises recent research by DPP faculty through internal and external DPP channels (website, social media, email with titles, abstracts, links to the published/presented research).

7. Recommendation: to clearly define what a “good first degree” actually consists of.

A good first degree is one that is in the top 25% of those awarded by the institution. DPP will ensure this is clarified in the admissions criteria.

8. Recommendation: to publish information on the website/information folder on possibilities of using introductory packages and pre-classes.

Please refer to the response to point 1, above.

9. Recommendation: to consider raising the level of English proficiency for entry to the program.

DPP will consider this recommendation with CEU central administration, who presently sets the standard. CEU sets a standardized language entry requirement for all masters' programs, which has been proven as the appropriate one for our students over many years. More details on the specifications can be found here: <https://www.ceu.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/checklist#step-5>

10. Recommendation: to improve the transparency of the entire admission procedure.

DPP will publish additional details of the admissions process on the EMPA webpage. We will also liaise with colleagues in CEU admissions to ensure that our process is in line with CEU best practice, and that details are available to all applicants. DPP would further note that there are currently discussions underway about the admissions process at the CEU level and the procedures will be updated to further increase the transparency of the process

11. Recommendation: to make the research embedding of course contents more visible.

DPP will ensure the syllabi and course contents emphasize the research on which it is based. This will be done during the review and finalization of curricula in the 2022/23 academic year.

12. Recommendation: to develop a clear communication strategy around the research activities of staff involved in the program aimed at candidates.

DPP will publish the relevant research of EMPA faculty as part of the EMPA webpage and reference it in the materials. It will be particularly highlighted in the EMPA brochure currently being finalized.

13. Recommendation: to avoid the non-replacement of announced courses.

DPP is committed to ensuring that all EMPA courses run as advertised. However, due to the specialized nature of the courses – which build on the research and expertise of the delivering faculty - there may be rare instances where a course cannot run. In this instance, an as similar as possible replacement course will be offered.

14. Recommendation: to develop departmental recruitment strategies that eliminate the gender imbalance in the existing program staffing for the Executive MPA.

CEU has adopted a policy on recruitment strategy to promote gender balance. This CEU strategy is fully embraced by the department. More details can be found here:
<https://www.ceu.edu/equal-opportunity/recruitment>

15. Recommendation: to be more clear about the tuition fee and explicitly refer to ‘programme fees for the whole duration of the programme’ (i.e. minimum 2 years, maximum 4 years), and ‘annual fees’ (e.g. programme fee of €20,000, annual fee €10,000 over 2 years).

DPP will put up detailed information about the fee structure on the EMPA webpage.

16. Recommendation: to make sure that a minimum of 2 FTE professors teach in the courses (core competencies) of the programme in case of re-allocation of faculty to materialize cost savings in a pessimistic scenario of participant numbers and fees.

DPP will ensure that there are a minimum of 2 FTE professors teaching core competencies on the EMPA in this eventuality.

17. Recommendation: to purposefully and transparently account for promotion expenses that are probably incurred before the first year of the programme (to attract candidates) and to distribute these expenses evenly across the following years (once the programme has started).

DPP can commit to making sure the financial planning will be done accordingly in the future.