

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: 09 February 2023

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:**
University of Nicosia

- **Town:** Nicosia

- **Programme of study**
Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Εγκληματολογία (3 έως 8 Έτη, 180 ECTS, Διδακτορικό)

In English:

Criminology (3 to 8 Years, 180 ECTS, PhD)

- **Language(s) of instruction:** Greek
- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating
- **Concentrations (if any):**

In Greek: Concentrations

In English: Concentrations



The present document has been prepared within the framework of the authority and competencies of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, according to the provisions of the “Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws” of 2015 to 2021 [L.136(I)/2015 – L.132(I)/2021].

A. Guidelines on content and structure of the report

- *The Higher Education Institution (HEI) based on the External Evaluation Committee's (EEC's) evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4) must justify whether actions have been taken in improving the quality of the programme of study in each assessment area. The answers' documentation should be brief and accurate and supported by the relevant documentation. Referral to annexes should be made only when necessary.*
- *In particular, under each assessment area and by using the 2nd column of each table, the HEI must respond on the following:*
 - *the areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
 - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*
- *The institution should respond to the EEC comments, in the designated area next each comment. The comments of the EEC should be copied from the EEC report without any interference in the content.*
- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on separate document(s). Each document should be in *.pdf format and named as annex1, annex2, etc.*

Introduction

We refer to the report of the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for the evaluation – accreditation of the programme of study PhD in Criminology (3 years / 180 ECTS, Doctor of Philosophy), which was prepared following the onsite visit at the University of Nicosia by the members of the EEC on 07 November 2022, from 09:30 to 18:30 Cyprus time.

We would like to thank the External Evaluation Committee (EEC) for their professional and thorough work during the onsite evaluation of the PhD in Criminology programme. We would also like to express our appreciation for the collegial and constructive approach with which they conducted their evaluation.

We have considered their report thoroughly and the following is our response to all points raised by the EEC. Under each assessment area, please see our brief comments to the findings and / or strengths outlined in the EEC report. In response to the areas of improvement and recommendations made by the EEC, please find our response and actions taken in column 2 of the table in each section.

1. Study programme and study programme's design and development (ESG 1.1, 1.2, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9)

The EEC found that the PhD in Criminology programme consists of 180 ECTS and it is noted that the course can be taken full-time or part-time. The EEC positively noted that the Social Sciences Department to which the program belongs to, consists of “27 faculty staff who are well qualified with impressive CV’s” and “well-connected to key forensic academics in other countries”. In addition, it was noted that “the quality assurance process, regulations, and information are appropriate, well communicated, administered and have been followed”. “The panel also felt that policies and procedures for monitoring students’ progress and needs are sufficient”. The EEC members “were able to meet online with a former PhD student who has completed impressive empirical research in prisons in Greece and this information was noted to be extremely helpful”.

The EEC also highlighted several strengths of the programme indicating specifically that: “We met very enthusiastic and highly committed staff across both the academic and administrative departments. The whole team appear committed to providing the best learning experience for the students. Pastoral and welfare assistance is in place. Resources are good and tutors and administrative staff are helpful. The committee is pleased to see that support mechanisms for students and teachers are established. The organization is providing support for special needs of students”.

The EEC made the following two recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The panel spent some time considering the philosophy of this program and elements of this will be returned to later in this document. The panel felt that the University may wish to think more about what its overarching philosophical aims are and what the implications of this	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out areas of improvement for the program and for making relevant recommendations to achieve this. We appreciate the EEC members’ recommendation in further enhancing the program’s staff expertise with mainstream criminology. We are taking into consideration their suggestion which will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget.	Choose an item.

<p>might be. In particular, we feel that in keeping with an overall aim to deliver the best quality criminology PhD program, that the University may wish to consider increasing its staff expertise in mainstream criminology but also the way in which the PhD is currently structured with credit points being allocated for individual elements of the PhD progress. This is something that we will return to later in this document.</p> <p>Although current staff are qualified in their particular specialisms social sciences is somewhat psychology heavy and we feel that the faculty may wish to consider increasing staff expertise in relation to mainstream criminology. We feel this would have great benefits for the appeal of the course. Given that they need to be sure of a subject</p>		
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specialism match prior to accepting an application, the panel felt that broadening their expertise would enhance recruitment.		
The panel felt that the program could be improved by the provision of much more detailed information on the curriculum and structure of the program including how the elements of the PhD are assessed, and the transparency of progression which in particular may be of note for the University, should there be issues of appeal over progression.	We thank the EEC members for their suggestions. As explained during the EEC's visit, this is a research-based doctorate, in which all stages of research work are being recorded and assessed via the completion of various DSO forms. We would like to repeat here that as provided in the application documents the PhD programme consists of 180 ECTS, which correspond to six semesters of study. During this time students take different steps in their doctoral work: (a) literature review, (b) final proposal/substantial piece of empirical research, (c) data collection and analysis, (d) write-up and (e) defense. They do so by engaging in individual study as well as one-to-one meetings with their supervisor. As stated above, these specific elements are assessed through the completion of the DSO forms (throughout the years of study) which are completed, reviewed, and evaluated by the student, the supervisors, the Departmental Postgraduate Programs Committee (DPPC) and the Office of Vice Rector for Faculty and Research. For more detailed information about the above, please see the document "Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral programmes", v.5.4, October 2022 (Appendix A). In addition, the students attend a number of seminars on Research Skills Development offered throughout the academic year by the VRFR office.	Choose an item.
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2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment (ESG 1.3)

The EEC positively noted the following strengths of the programme: “Staff are competent to supervise doctoral students and the criteria of having 3 supervisors is commendable; The system in place for final examination of the thesis is strong”.

The EEC made the following two recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
Based on our comments in the findings section we would strongly advise the University to move to an online system of PhD student management where all records can be kept, managed and accessed by the student, supervision team and the research office.	We thank the EEC members for their suggestion. As we indicated during the meeting, the VRFR's office continuously strives to improve the digital facilities to support the management of the PhD faculty and students. An example is the recently established online platform dedicated to the doctoral programmes (https://courses.unic.ac.cy/course/view.php?id=11564)	Choose an item.
Although we are impressed by the calibre of the staff available to supervise doctoral theses, we remain somewhat unconvinced that UNICS is availing itself of all the opportunities of doctoral registrations that might come its way if some staff were qualified to	We appreciate the EEC members' recognition of the staff's academic calibre and welcome their recommendation in further enhancing the program's expertise with mainstream criminology. We are taking into consideration their suggestion which will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget. In addition, if need arises (potential doctoral research proposal comes in) there is always the opportunity for supervisors from other academic and research institutions to be involved. It has to be noted, however, that the number of our criminology PhD students is very limited, and our program is currently small in size.	Choose an item.



supervise more mainstream criminology topics.		
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3. Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)

The EEC members positively noted that the “staff contributing to this program have strong and sustained research profiles with publications, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books and conference proceedings”. They commented that “staff profiles show active engagement in practice (policing, law, voluntary sector) as well as indicators of esteem, such as invitations to sit on expert groups relevant to their specialist subjects”. In addition, it was noted that “the University has a dedicated Research and Innovation Office to support staff in research grant applications, and it was suggested that central ‘top slicing’ and research funds is low – providing an increased incentive for staff to apply for research funding”.

The EEC also highlighted several strengths of the programme: “Many of the staff have strong academic profiles with sustained and high-quality publications, research activity and esteem; Staff are engaged with relevant professional organisations and contribute to training, committees, and expert groups; Staff are incentivized to publish in Scopus indexed journals, and to attend relevant conferences”.

The EEC made the following recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
We recommend several areas for improvement in relation to the program staff. Whilst most staff have strong academic profiles, there seems to be an over-representation of psychology-based expertise. We feel the program would be strengthened (in research and collaboration) with the recruitment of mainstream criminologists. We have some concerns that there is no core criminology focus which is an issue for a department who wish to develop this area. If this is the case UNIC need to consider a	We appreciate the EEC members’ recommendation in further enhancing the program’s staff expertise with mainstream criminology. As noted above, we are taking into consideration their suggestion which will be fully examined under the 2023-2024 Department and University budget. In addition, we intend to cover any possible needs in this area through the employment of specialised adjunct faculty.	Choose an item.

readjustment of their staff profiles towards a strengthened criminology team.		
Staff publications are strong, but activity appears have slowed in recent years. This may be a matter of CVs not being up to date, but it does suggest that staff may not be allocated sufficient research time.	We thank the EEC for identifying and pointing out that the “ <i>staff publications are strong</i> ”. The University, the School and the Department support the development of a research culture, encouraging all faculty members to strengthen their research profile. This is facilitated through various policies, such as the RTR, to be found in the Institution’s Internal Regulations (see Appendix B). We also agree with the EEC that the research activity of the teaching staff could be enhanced. Even though this is challenging due to the large course and administrative work, there are continuous efforts to establish different research groups and collaborations between the members of the Department and the School. The establishment of such research groups will allow for further collaboration between the faculty in the Department as well as interdepartmental and inter-institutional research activities.	Choose an item.
Training is provided to all staff, but we suggest that the University considers introducing additional teaching qualifications such as the Higher Education Academy.	We appreciate the EEC members’ suggestion, and the University will take this into consideration. We would like to note here that there is no official requirement for this from CYQAA.	Choose an item.
Staff are allocated protected research time, but this does not appear to be formalised in a workload allocation model. The introduction of such a model would provide transparency to all staff.	We appreciate the EEC members’ recommendation, and fully agree with it. We would like to refer to Chapter 6 of the University of Nicosia “Internal Regulations”, which covers “Faculty Matters and Policies” (6.5) including detailed information and policies governing Research Time Release (please see Appendix B).	Choose an item.
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4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

The EEC positively noted that “the University has a set of regulations in place regarding the admission, recognition, progression, and certification of students. These regulations are pre-defined and published”.

The EEC also highlighted several strengths of the programme: “The University has an admission system to PhD programs in place which is based on several steps and requirements, including an initial research proposal, a statement of purpose, letters of recommendation and individual interviews; The University has a good support system for students in place, which allows the University to assist doctoral students with extensive counselling services, welfare mechanisms and academic counselling; The role of the progress committee is well defined and the significance of the “Annual Report” is appreciated by the panel; The University also responds well to students with special needs”.

The EEC made the following recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
It is important to have regulations and procedures in place that fairly recognize any prior higher education qualifications and achievements of prospective students (including those acquired at institutions of higher learning outside of Cyprus.)	<p>We appreciate the comments made by the EEC members. Indeed, prior higher education qualifications including those acquired at institutions of higher learning outside of Cyprus are fully recognized given that they are included in the list of recognized institutions / programs listed in the “The Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications” (KY.S.A.T.S.): https://www.kysats.ac.cy/index.php/el/</p> <p>Achievements and /or relevant work experience of prospective students are taken into consideration. The admissions criteria can be found at the programme’s link: https://www.unic.ac.cy/criminology-phd/</p>	Choose an item.
We understood from our visit to UNIC that the program director	We thank the EEC members for their suggestion. We would like to note here that the masters students who are interested in continuing their education to doctoral level	Choose an item.

<p>indicated that applications from masters students who have not completed a masters thesis would not be viewed as favourably as those who had completes a masters thesis. In relation to accepting students who have graduated from their own masters program who have elected not to do a thesis as part of this, we would recommend they provide more clarity about admission criteria on this basis. We would discourage UNICS from accepting students with no masters thesis onto their PhD program but clearly this would have a knock on effect in terms of accepting non-thesis candidates from their own masters program.</p>	<p>are indeed choosing the thesis option during their last semester at the master's program.</p>	
<p>The panel are concerned that there is a mismatch in the documentation regarding admission requirements which indicate that it is possible to undertake the criminology PhD</p>	<p>We thank the EEC for pointing out this mismatch. The application was prepared and sent to the CYQAA in 2019. However, since then we kept noticing that the PhD applications received from students who did not have a previous degree in Criminology were of poor quality, and hence we decided to add this prerequisite in the admissions requirements. This is the reason why the program's director power point included this information, even though it was not incorporated in the application.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>

without any previous degrees in criminology (see p 14 of the application document and also the program directors power point on this received at the site visit.) In relation to this we would like to recommend that they clarify this position and provide some justification for it.		
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5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

The EEC positively noted that “there is a very structured programme for PhD students comprising 6 semesters and specific credits assigned to the completion of each semesters work”. In addition, they commented on the “faculty offering good resources to support PhD students (e.g., access to VLE materials, and the IT infrastructure is comprehensive). The library offers a range of resources to support student learning (access to databases and repositories of relevance to the discipline), and human support resources were judged to be good, both on the academic and the administrative side”, providing good support to students studying at this level.

The EEC made the following two recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
There are a number of staff available and able to supervise PhD candidates. Existing staff have qualifications from a range of prestigious international Universities and this is to be commended. However we felt that to attract a greater number of diverse students to this PhD program, UNICS might wish to consider the profiles of its current staff – which are predominantly psychology based – and think about future investment in staff with more mainstream criminology profiles.	We appreciate the EEC members commending the staff's qualifications and expertise, as well as their recommendation in further enhancing the program's staff expertise with mainstream criminology. As explained in earlier parts of this document, appropriate steps will be taken towards this direction.	Choose an item.

We would also recommend that the procedures for and basis upon which ECTS credits are given at the end of each semester of study on the PhD are revisited in order to provide greater clarity, consistency and transparency.	We thank the EEC for their recommendation, which we will thoroughly consider. We would like to refer to the program's Handbook (please see Appendix E, p. 7) for the breakdown of ECTS in each semester. We would also like to repeat here that the PhD programme is closely monitored by the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research (VRFR) Office and follows the University's Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes.	Choose an item.
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6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

The EEC positively noted that “the regulations governing the PhD program include details about formal requirements, processes and formats of proposal writing and dissertation work. The detailed, pre-defined and published regulations also include details about presentation of the dissertation, binding, and submission to the library. In doing so, the regulations provide formal directions that can be ordinarily expected from PhD programs”. The EEC members also commented on the “staff having very strong academic profiles with sustained and high-quality publications, research activity and esteem. Staff were also noted to be established academics, engaging with relevant professional organisations and contributing to training, committees, and expert groups”.

The EEC made the following two recommendations for improving the programme in this area. These are documented in column 1 of the table. The corresponding responses and actions are provided in column 2.

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
The PhD program can benefit from clearer word count target given for the dissertation work. While the current regulations indicate a clear maximum number of words, the minimum length of the dissertation appears to be more elusive. This aspect of dissertations should be clarified using the 80,000 word count as a target.	We thank the EEC for the suggestion, and we fully agree with this. Indeed, the new version of ‘Doctoral Degree Thesis – Submissions Guidelines’ states that: “ <i>The Thesis should normally be 80,000 words, excluding appendices, references and footnotes</i> ” (p.4). (please see Appendix C)	Choose an item.
It would also be helpful to the research process, if the “PhD Proposal Assessment Form” would emphasize	We thank the EEC for their suggestion. This has now been amended accordingly (please see Appendix D)	Choose an item.

the theoretical contribution of the proposed dissertation work. Significantly, the assessment form should also specifically refer to the expected contribution of the proposed research to the field of Criminology (rather than "Psychology").		
It is important to see plagiarism as a "major offence", however, we recommend that the regulations refer to a more detailed process as to how any cases of alleged plagiarism (as detected by the software, for example) will be handled.	We would like to refer to Chapter 7 of the University of Nicosia Internal Regulations, regarding the "Students Rules and Regulations" which clearly state the procedures for disciplinary action on cheating and plagiarism (please see Appendix F, p. 9). Also, please see Chapter 12 of the University of Nicosia Internal Regulations, regarding the 'Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes' which states amongst other things that: <i>"Any scientific or ethical misconduct in research is unacceptable and should be brought to the Senate's Faculty Disciplinary or Student Disciplinary Committees"</i> p. 15 (Appendix A)	Choose an item.
We recommend that the requirement for the examination team to have a minimum of one prior examination at PhD level should be strengthened. The examination team should have a collective experience of more than one prior examination, and	We thank the EEC for their recommendation. We already implement this in the specific doctoral program, and we will further strengthen it according to the committee's suggestion.	Choose an item.

where one member of the team has a lower number, this should be compensated by an experienced examiner.		
This is a Criminology program and, at present, the potential supervisors are largely specialists in psychology and law. We suggest that this team be strengthened with Criminologists to ensure that supervisor expertise matches key areas of criminological study.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation in further enhancing the program's staff expertise with mainstream criminology. Please see our comment above.	Choose an item.
The seminar program is adequate and includes key topics such as methods, conducting a literature review, ethics, the viva experience (etc.). However, this is not specific to the social sciences/Criminology. We suggest that a more tailored program would benefit students.	We appreciate the EEC members' recommendation, and we find ourselves to be in full agreement with their position. We will enhance accordingly the next series of seminars.	
Records of supervisions are kept by the Main Supervisor and the student. An online system that records	We thank the EEC for their recommendation. We would like to refer to Chapter 12 of the University of Nicosia Internal Regulations, regarding the 'Code of Practice and Regulations for Doctoral Programmes' which states that: <i>"The Vice Rector for Faculty and Research bears the overall responsibility for the doctoral programmes as well as being involved in the daily monitoring and overseeing</i>	

<p>attendance and stores notes on progress/issues would help the broader supervisory team to identify (and address) any issues and would allow transparency and accountability should the student drop out/fail.</p>	<p><i>of students' progress and welfare (through the approval of the DSO forms)" p.7. "A record of dates of meetings, decisions taken, and work submitted will be kept by the Supervisory Team, the Doctoral Programme Coordinator/Director and the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty and Research (Forms: DSO/4 and DSO/5). These records need to be considered and discussed during the Annual DPPC Progress Meeting of the doctoral student. It is also recommended that students should keep their own records too" p. 9 (please see Appendix A).</i></p> <p>Also, the progress of the students is evaluated annually through the DSO/4 and DSO/5 forms. The DSO/4 - Semester Student Supervision Record Sheet is used to record the student's progress. This form must be completed by the student at the end of every supervisory meeting. It is completed and signed by the student and supervisor(s) present at that meeting. The DSO/5 - Annual Student Progress Report should be completed no later than the 30th of September of each calendar year. It must be submitted along with at least two Semester Student Supervision Record Sheets (DSO/4) of the previous academic year. The DSO/5 is completed and signed by the Supervisory Team and the DPPC Chair who confirm their agreement on whether the student is allowed to continue to the next academic year. Both forms must be returned to the Office of the Vice Rector for Faculty & Research by no later than 30th September of each calendar year. All forms that have to be completed throughout the students' doctoral studies are being are available online.</p>
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7. Eligibility (Joint programme) (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
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B. Conclusions and final remarks

Conclusions and final remarks by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For official use Only
There are some evident strengths here in terms of some of the aspects of this doctoral program.	Thank you for your comments. We welcome the positive conclusions and final remarks by the EEC.	Choose an item.
One of our main themes throughout this evaluation has been that whilst existing staff have strong academic profiles, there seems to be an over-representation of psychology-based expertise. We feel the program would be strengthened (in research and collaboration) with the recruitment of criminologists. We appreciate that this is not something which may be acted on immediately, but we do feel that some concrete strategic actions about how this might be rectified in the future would be advisable.	Thank you for your recommendation. Please see above.	Choose an item.
In terms of the issues we raised regarding ongoing monitoring and review (section 1.2); assessment (section 2.3) and	Thank you for your recommendations. As stated earlier in the report, the PhD program carries 180 ECTS which are allocated to specific components. These specific elements are assessed through the completion of various DSO forms (throughout the years of study) which are completed, reviewed and evaluated by the student, the supervisors, the Departmental Postgraduate Programs	Choose an item.

<p>progression (section 4.2), we would re-emphasise the following.</p> <p>The program could be improved by the provision of much more detailed information on the curriculum and structure of the program including how the elements of the PhD are assessed, and the transparency of progression which in particular may be of note for the University, should there be issues of appeal over progression.</p>	<p>Committee (DPPC) and the Office of Vice Rector for Faculty and Research (please see Appendix A).</p>	
<p>We would strongly advise the University to move to an online system of PhD student management where all records can be kept, managed and accessed by the student, supervision team and the research office.</p>	<p>Thank you for your recommendation. There is close collaboration with the VRFR office on this matter and the University is heading towards the direction suggested by the committee. Further actions on this will follow shortly.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>
<p>We would discourage UNICS from accepting students with no masters thesis onto their PhD program</p>	<p>Thank you for your recommendation. This is something we intend to follow, and we are already implementing it. As stated above, students from our master's programme, who are interested in continuing to doctoral studies, are opting for the 'thesis' option during the last semester of studies.</p>	<p>Choose an item.</p>

<p>but clearly this would have a knock on effect in terms of accepting non-thesis candidates from their own masters program.</p>		
<p>The panel are concerned that there is a mismatch in the documentation regarding admission requirements which indicate that it is possible to undertake the criminology PhD without any previous degrees in criminology (see p 14 of the application document and also the program directors power point on this received at the site visit.) In relation to this we would like to recommend that they clarify this position and provide some justification for it.</p>	<p>Thank you for pointing out this mismatch. As explained at an earlier section of this report, the application was prepared and sent to CYQAA in 2019. As we kept noticing that PhD applications received from students who did not have a previous degree in Criminology were of poor quality, we decided to add this prerequisite in the admissions requirements. This is the reason that the program's director power point included this information, even though it was not incorporated in the application.</p>	
<p>If the team settles these concerns the panel feels that this would be an acceptable program.</p>	<p>Thank you for your recommendations. We welcome the positive conclusion and final remarks by the EEC.</p>	

C.

D. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Dr. STAVROULA SOUKARA	PROGRAM COORDINATOR	
Dr Marios Adonis	Head of Department of Social Sciences	
Prof. Klimis Mastoridis	Dean of School of Humanities and Social Sciences	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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Date: 09 February 2023

