ΔΙΠΑΕ CYQAA **ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΩΤΕΡΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ**
CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar//// enqa.

Doc. 300.1.2

Date: Date.

Higher Education Institution's Response

- **Higher Education Institution:
  Cyprus College**

- **Town: Nicosia**

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

  In Greek:

  Τεχνικός Ηλεκτρονικών Υπολογιστών και Δικτύων,

  2έτη Δίπλωμα,120 ECTS

  In English:

   Computer & Network Technician

  Language(s) of instruction: Greek

- **Programme's status:** Currently Operating

- **Concentrations (if any):**

  In Greek: Concentrations
  In English: Concentrations

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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 300.1.1/2 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.*

- *In particular, under each assessment area, the HEI must respond on, <u>without changing the format of the report</u>:*

  - *the findings, strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations of the EEC*
  - *the conclusions and final remarks noted by the EEC*

- *The HEI's response must follow below the EEC's comments, which must be copied from the external evaluation report (Doc.300.1.1 or 300.1.1/2 or 300.1.1/3 or 300.1.1/4).*

- *In case of annexes, those should be attached and sent on a separate document.*

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

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Regarding the internal quality assurance committee, it is important to ensure that the student member of the committee is elected, instead of being appointed by the college, in order to keep the academic integrity. While the internal quality assurance committee has provided an informative report for the evaluated programme, it is not clear whether any follow-ups have been carried out by the department, and therefore it will be important for the department to provide a formal response in written form for those issues raised by the internal quality assurance committee.

The college may also want to carry out more formalized moderation activities for the evaluated programme. For example, for the exam papers, it will be useful to carry out internal/external moderation in order to avoid any simple typos and ambiguous exam questions. If possible, moderation towards the students' marks should be also carried out.

Furthermore, the Programme Director is suggested to closely monitor performance indices, such as progression rate, continuation, drop out rate and attainment. In addition, the coverage of Programming also needs to be regularly reviewed as students seemed torn between their initial reluctance and their wish to learn more.

Institution's answer

We would like to thank the committee for its constructive suggestions in the context of the re-accreditation of the Diploma in Computer & Network Technician of Cyprus College Nicosia.

Point 1.1: Regarding the internal quality assurance committee, it is important to ensure that the student member of the committee is elected, instead of being appointed by the college, in order to keep the academic integrity.

The college has established the following procedure: The college will request from the student body a number of candidates for participating in the internal quality committee. The candidates' names will be made available to the student body online, through a link in order to vote for a student representative in the committee (see attachment "DCNT Information Site", where all students have access and this is used for elections and online meetings between students and staff). Such a meeting took place on 03/02/2022 at 15:00 where the student representative was elected. The name of the student representative is Michaelides Andreas. Additional assistant representatives were elected in order to form a student committee whenever necessary. These students are: Karipidis Giorgos, Savva George-Daniel and Christodoulou Prodromos.
The process will be repeated when the elected student will no longer be available for participating in the committee. The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2).

Point 1.2: The college may also want to carry out more formalized moderation activities for the evaluated programme. For example, for the exam papers, it will be useful to carry out internal/external moderation in order to avoid any simple typos and ambiguous exam questions. If possible, moderation towards the students' marks should be also carried out.

The following procedure will apply: Each instructor prior to the examination is currently submitting the examination paper to the college administration. The instructor will include on this email the program coordinator. The program

coordinator will be reviewing the content of the exam paper and if any issues arise they will discuss them with the instructor and if necessary the instructor will amend the exam paper and resubmit it. Please have in mind that procedure 1-g.4 of the Quality Assurance Policy (attached) specifies that indeed that examinations are monitored by the program coordinator each semester.

Regarding the student marks, the program coordinator currently discusses any arising issues regarding students' performance and marks with each instructor before the submission of their grade roster. The submitted marks are also reviewed by the director of the college before the grade roster is approved.

Point 1.3: Furthermore, the Programme Director is suggested to closely monitor performance indices, such as progression rate, continuation, drop out rate and attainment.

The program coordinator currently receives a yearly report with students whose GPA is either below or close to 2.0. The coordinator communicates with these students and provides advising that aims in the improvement of the students performance. In addition, the administration of the college, will keep a record of students that withdraw / drop-out from the program, and if possible the reasons for withdrawing from the program. This information should be communicated to the program coordinator.

Point 1.4: In addition, the coverage of Programming also needs to be regularly reviewed as students seemed torn between their initial reluctance and their wish to learn more.

Since the structure/curriculum of the program has been already fine-tuned and it is highly appropriate to the objectives of the program (something that has been confirmed by the EEC), the addition of an extra programming course will have the effect of deviating from the main objectives of the program as a technician's program (the EEC concurred to this). In order to review the coverage of programming instruction, additional programming content has been added to the course CST245 (Internet Technologies) (Updated CST245 syllabus attached - see additions in red font within the updated syllabus) to cover to an attainable extend programming for the web and/or mobile devices.

2. Student – centred learning, teaching and assessment
(ESG 1.3)

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Currently, students receive their grades and usually written feedback as well as discussion in class on more general feedback issues. The EEC recommends that student feedback is always written and private to each student.

Students' feedback is crucial to the development of any teaching programme. Currently, the Department has provided opportunities to students for feeding their suggestions back to the department, by asking each student to complete a questionnaire about each course at the end of each semester. This questionnaire contains both the suggestions to the course as well as to faculty members who deliver the course. Additional feedback mechanisms could be provided to students if they want to provide suggestions at the programme level. In addition, regular student-staff meetings can also be useful for the interaction between the Department and students, where a few student representatives can be elected from the student body (not by the management of the institution) and asked to attend such meetings. Currently, student representatives are selected by the Department management according to academic achievement. It is a better practice to have the student body electing its own representatives.

Furthermore, staff-student meetings can also be used as venues to inform the students of what actions have been taken by the Department following the students' feedback. Currently, the results of the student feedback about the programme and of the actions to be taken are not communicated widely to the student body. There is no discussion in which the student body at large can take part in. The EEC recommends that this point is addressed, by establishing open staff-student meetings.

This programme is closely related to industry. Because of the nature of this programme, students enrolled on this programme can benefit a lot if formal partnerships between the Department and industries can be established. As such, students can have more opportunities for carrying out their placement and internship. More interactions between the Department and the enterprise and career office of the College can also be helpful towards this purpose. Currently, internship opportunities are offered *after* graduation. This is not an internship as such, but rather employment after graduation. The EEC recommends that internships or industrial stays are interwoven carefully into the programme.

Institution's answer

Point 2.1: The EEC recommends that student feedback is always written and private to each student.

Blackboard Learn has been adopted as a learning platform for the program of study. All student assignments can be delivered by the students on-line, and the instructor can provide written and private feedback to each student. This procedure has already been adopted. A sample screenshot of the feedback page (see attachment "Sample Feedback on Blackboard") of a recent student assignment is attached.

Point 2.2: Additional feedback mechanisms could be provided to students if they want to provide suggestions at the programme level. In addition, regular student-staff meetings can also be useful for the interaction between the Department and students, where a few student representatives can be elected from the student body (not by the management of the institution) and asked to attend such meetings.

A specific provision which concerns the effective feedback from the students has been put into operation, after the suggestion of the committee. A student representative will collect suggestions from their fellow students in a special questionnaire (ANNEX 5) and once every semester they will have a meeting with the program coordinator for discussion and feedback. Student suggestions will be considered and incorporated into a report which will be made available to students. This decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the college. The minutes are attached (ANNEX 2).

Additionally, and as already mentioned in point 1.1 an online tool has been established where students and instructors can have meetings, carry out elections, have discussions, submit their requests and receive feedback (screenshot attached "DCNT Information Site")

Point 2.3: Students enrolled on this programme can benefit a lot if formal partnerships between the Department and industries can be established.

The department of Computer and Network Technology has a number of collaborations with the industry (i.e. NewCyTech Business Solutions Ltd (subsidiary of Logicom), Bionic, ATTelecom Advanced Networking Solutions and more). Personnel from these companies often serve us external advisors, provide equipment for practical training, serve us guest speakers and employee graduates of the program.

In addition, the department has already signed collaboration agreements with Axis Regional Academy, Stekom University in Indonesia and Vilniaus Kolegija in Lithuania (see attachments).

Point 2.4: The EEC recommends that internships or industrial stays are interwoven carefully into the programme.

As already mentioned earlier, the structure/curriculum of the program has been already fine-tuned and it is highly appropriate to the objectives of the program (something that has been confirmed by the EEC), so it is not (at this stage) desirable to remove any of the existing courses in order to allow room for an internship course. Furthermore:

- There are not always enough companies that are interested to receive students for internships, as the students cannot attend their placements on a daily basis, due to having to attend the rest of their courses. Companies are usually not willing to accept interns, for one or two days a week. The program replaces the experience that could be received from internships through the following ways.

- Students during the program receive a lot of practical experience through the "Maintenance and Troubleshooting", "Operating Systems", "Systems Administration", "Network and Communications" and other courses. Those courses include practical exercises that closely resemble the work that professional do in the industry (e.g. handling work orders, carrying out maintenance tasks, doing market research and providing technical suggestions for computing infrastructures, administering systems including creating user accounts email accounts, setting up operating systems, designing and administering computer networks etc.). These are the same tasks that students should ideally be doing in a work placement.

- A number of students during their second year of studies, have the opportunity to be employed at the IT department, where they provide technical support to other students, instructors and they are responsible of setting up and managing the computer labs on the premises.

3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

A scheme for peer-review of teaching could be considered to promote and share good teaching practices. In relation to this, exam material should also be moderated by peers, before it is released to students. Currently exam material is not moderated; instead, it has to be aligned with the course outline, which is in itself moderated. This is a good practice, but it should be accompanied by explicit exam material moderation. Some didactic & pedagogical training should be compulsory to all newly appointed junior staff. Research activities could be promoted and supported more explicitly.

Institution's answer

Point 3.1: A scheme for peer-review of teaching could be considered to promote and share good teaching practices. In relation to this, exam material should also be moderated by peers, before it is released to students.

In an effort to promote and share good teaching practices we have placed in effect the "peer observation" scheme. It has been decided that the program coordinator will randomly visit classes every semester in order to monitor lectures and teaching methods, to identify any possible overlaps and make suggestions for improvement. At the same time the program coordinator will review the exam papers before those are released to students so that they are in line with the syllabus and of appropriate level (also see point 1.2). The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2).

Point 3.2: Some didactic & pedagogical training should be compulsory to all newly appointed junior staff.

Whenever a new instructor needs to be employed, the candidates go through a personal interview as well as demo lectures. The instructors employed usually come from the industry and have extensive technical experience. Such professionals are normally already experienced instructors for professional courses and consequently they do not require any basic training.

All newly appointed instructors go through familiarization meetings with the program coordinator, administrative staff, as well as academic staff with whom they will have to work or replace. These meetings serve the purpose of getting the newly appointed members of staff familiar with all relevant procedures as well as the culture of the college and the basic teaching and learning requirements of the program's students.

In addition to the above the college often organizes training sessions that aim in informing all academic personnel in the pedagogical approaches and aims as well as facilities, technologies and procedures of the college.

Point 3.3: Research activities could be promoted and supported more explicitly.

The college's Quality Assurance Policy (attached) outlines specifically in Procedure 2, page 4, that the College has made improvements on research and has specific procedures to encourage and promote research and to create and maintain a research culture and direction within the college. Even though research is not mandatory for two-year diplomas, there are faculty members who are engaged in research. We wish to highlight that the college research

committee has regular internal research briefings in which the faculty members are trained on research and in general are infused with the research mentality but also exchange ideas as to new teaching methods.

Furthermore, a new promotion structure with academic ranks is now in place based on which faculty can be promoted within the college through PhDs and research activities (see ANNEX_4A for minutes). From now on faculty will be promoted based on research. At the same time our Research Policy, (attached) outlines ways through which we promote existing faculty to engage in research. For example, section 7, page 20 of the Policy specifies how a faculty member can take a reduction in teaching hours for doing research. We would like to note furthermore that we have members of the teaching personnel, like Mr. Athanasios Maimaris, who has been taking advantage of this option. Specifically Mr. Maimaris had a reduction of teaching hours for his project "Smart Pedestrian Net", co–funded by the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation and JPI Urban Europe's fourth call, ERA–NET Cofund Smart Urban Futures (ENSUF) — supported by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 program. Teaching personnel has the opportunity and is encouraged to take advantage of this provision in order to have a reduced workload. This will allow them to engage more extensively in research and / or submit research proposals. As a result, this will further strengthen research and enhance research and teaching synergy.

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4.Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

(ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.

Additional admission requirements could be considered and introduced to improve the average quality and attainment of the student cohorts.

Institution's answer

Point 4.1: Additional admission requirements could be considered and introduced to improve the average quality and attainment of the student cohorts.

The criteria for admission to Cyprus College have been prepared to enable the Office of Admissions to select students who have potential to do college-level work and to place students in courses and programs appropriate to the student's preparation, in an effort to help them successfully realize their academic potential.

The admission criteria for the Diploma in Computer & Network Technician students follow the general college admission criteria, as these are foreseen in the College's Internal Regulations. All applicants must have completed a secondary (high) school education or twelve years of schooling to be considered for admission. Cyprus College recognizes a strong academic performance at high school level as the primary determinant for college level success. When making an admissions decision, the college is interested in applicants with a solid high school record, evidence of extra-curricular involvement, a high level of commitment, and potential for personal growth. Applications for admission to Cyprus College, together with the applicant's credentials, are examined and evaluated by the Office of Admissions, which makes the final decision for the application. The office of Admissions checks that students have the appropriate academic background, so as to reduce possible dropout cases.

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5.Learning resources and student support

Areas of improvement and recommendations
A list of problem areas to be dealt with, followed by or linked to the recommendations of how to improve the situation.
It is important to improve teaching with external visiting staff and guest speakers to enrich teaching and connect it with the industry.

Institution's answer

Point 5.1: It is important to improve teaching with external visiting staff and guest speakers to enrich teaching and connect it with the industry.

Based on the recommendation of the EEC, it is recommended to all faculty members to have a guest speaker from the industry in their classes at least once every academic year. The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2) as well as a special form which will be completed and archived for this purpose (ANNEX 1).

6.Additional for doctoral programmes
   (ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Eligibility (Joint programme)
(ALL ESG)

Click or tap here to enter text.

B. Conclusions and final remarks

Please provide constructive conclusions and final remarks which may form the basis upon which improvements of the quality of the programme of study under review may be achieved, with emphasis on the correspondence with the EQF.

The EEC reviewed and examined the materials provided by the Cyprus College pertaining to the Diploma programme under evaluation. The one-day site virtual visit was held on 09.12.2021.

The EEC was presented with detailed information about the degree programme. During the site visit, the EEC met the college representatives, the programme director, the academic and administration staff. It also met two students, one from each year of the programme.

Based on the examination and evaluation of the accreditation materials and the remote site visit, the EEC concludes that the required standards are met.

The EEC identified a number of key strengths that make the programme successful in attracting a good number of applicants and able to provide valuable graduates to the industry of the sector. Overall, the programme has a consistent design with clear aim and objectives to meet job market demands. The level of support available to the students and the quality of the infrastructure are both excellent.

The EEC also identified a number of key areas for improvement and therefore, the following recommendations are made:

A. Student intake should be carefully monitored. A further increase may endanger the quality of the student learning experience and create difficulties with the current infrastructure. The introduction of additional admission requirements could be considered and introduced.

B. The programme Director should systematically monitor some performance indices, such as progression, continuation and drop out rates as well as attainment.

C. Links to industry could be better exploited. For example, with more regular meetings with the advisory board in order to maintain and strengthen the excellent job prospects of the graduates. Internships could be offered during the studies and not only afterwards.

D. The coverage and extent of Programming courses could be reconsidered: the current students seemed torn between their initial reluctance to study programming extensively and their wish to refine their programming skills that may give them access to other career and study options.

E. A report from the Internal Quality Assurance Committee should be followed by an action plan report from the Department.

F. The student representative in the Internal Quality Assurance Committee should be elected by the student cohort.

G. The results of the student survey should be communicated to the students.

H. The exam scripts should always be formally moderated at least internally and, possibly, externally.

I. A scheme for peer-review of teaching could be considered to promote and share good teaching practices.

J. Research activities could be promoted and supported more explicitly.

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Institution's answer

Please find below summary of responses to each of the points in the EECs conclusions and final remarks with references to the points where a related more extensive respond was provided earlier in the report.

POINT A: Student intake should be carefully monitored. A further increase may endanger the quality of the student learning experience and create difficulties with the current infrastructure. The introduction of additional admission requirements could be considered and introduced.

- The admission criteria for the Diploma in Computer & Network Technician students follow the general college admission criteria, as these are foreseen in the College's Internal Regulations. *Please see response in point 4.1 earlier*.

POINT B: The programme Director should systematically monitor some performance indices, such as progression, continuation and dropout rates as well as attainment.

- The program coordinator currently receives a yearly report with students whose GPA is either below or close to 2.0. The coordinator communicates with these students and provides advising that aims in the improvement of the students' performance.
- The administration of the college, will keep a record of students that withdraw / drop-out from the program, and if possible the reasons for withdrawing from the program. This information should be communicated to the program coordinator.

POINT C: Links to industry could be better exploited. For example, with more regular meetings with the advisory board in order to maintain and strengthen the excellent job prospects of the graduates. Internships could be offered during the studies and not only afterwards.

- Based on the recommendation of the EEC, it is recommended to all faculty members to have a guest speaker from the industry in their classes at least once every academic year. The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2) as well as a special form which will be completed and archived for this purpose (ANNEX 1).
- Students during the program receive a lot of practical experience through certain courses (*please see point 2.4*) through practical exercises that closely resemble the work that professional do in the industry (e.g. handling work orders, carrying out maintenance tasks, doing market research and providing technical suggestions for computing infrastructures, administering systems including creating user accounts email accounts, setting up operating systems, designing and administering computer networks etc.). These are the same tasks that students should ideally be doing in a work placement.
- Additionally, a number of students during their second year of studies, have the opportunity to be employed at the IT department, where they provide technical support to other students, instructors and they are responsible of setting up and managing the computer labs on the premises.

POINT D: The coverage and extent of Programming courses could be reconsidered: the current students seemed torn between their initial reluctance to study programming extensively and their wish to refine their programming skills that may give them access to other career and study options.

- Since the structure/curriculum of the program has been already fine-tuned and it is highly appropriate to the objectives of the program (something that has been confirmed by the EEC), the addition of an extra programming course will have the effect of deviating from the main objectives of the program as a technician's program (the EEC concurred to this). In order to review the coverage of programming instruction, additional programming content has been added to the course CST245 (Internet Technologies) – (Updated CST245 syllabus attached - see additions in red font within the syllabus) to cover to an attainable extend programming for the web and/or mobile devices.

POINT E: A report from the Internal Quality Assurance Committee should be followed by an action plan report from the Department.

- The action plan from the department has been analysed in the current report by describing the actions taken in response to all the comments of the EEC.

POINT F: The student representative in the Internal Quality Assurance Committee should be elected by the student cohort.

- The college has established the following procedure: The college will request from the student body a number of candidates for participating in the internal quality committee. The candidates names will be made available to the student body online, through a link in order to vote for a student representative in the committee. The process will be repeated when the elected student will no longer be available for participating in the committee. The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2). This procedure has already been put to practice with the student representative elections on 03/02/22 (please see point 1.1.).

POINT G: The results of the student survey should be communicated to the students.

- In points 1.1 and 2.2, the procedure of electing student representatives and holding student / instructor meetings has been described. The program coordinator will make use of those meetings as well as on-line discussion tools in order to communicate the results of the student evaluation surveys back to the students.

POINT H: The exam scripts should always be formally moderated at least internally and, possibly, externally.

- The following procedure will apply: Each instructor prior to the examination is currently submitting the examination paper to the college administration. The instructor will include on this email the program coordinator. The program coordinator will be reviewing the content of the exam paper and if any issues arise they will discuss them with the instructor and if necessary the instructor will amend the exam paper and resubmit it. Please have in mind that procedure 1-g.4 of the Quality Assurance Policy (attached) specifies that indeed that examinations are monitored by the program coordinator each semester.

POINT I: A scheme for peer-review of teaching could be considered to promote and share good teaching practices.

- In an effort to promote and share good teaching practices we have placed in effect the "peer observation" scheme. It has been decided that the program coordinator will randomly visit classes every semester in order to monitor lectures and teaching methods, to identify any possible overlaps and make suggestions for improvement. At the same time the program coordinator will review the exam papers before those are released to students so that they are in line with the syllabus and of appropriate level (also see point 1.2). The decision has been approved by the internal quality committee of the College. The minutes of the decision are attached (ANNEX 2).

POINT J: Research activities could be promoted and supported more explicitly.

- The college's Quality Assurance Policy (attached) outlines specifically in Procedure 2, page 4, that the College has made improvements on research and has specific procedures to encourage and promote research and to create and maintain a research culture and direction within the college. Even though research is not mandatory for two-year diplomas, there are faculty members who are engaged in research. We wish to highlight that the college research committee has regular internal research briefings in which the faculty members are trained on research and in general are infused with the research mentality but also exchange ideas as to new teaching methods.
- Furthermore, a new promotion structure with academic ranks is now in place based on which faculty can be promoted within the college through PhDs and research activities (see ANNEX_4A for minutes). From now on faculty will be promoted based on research. At the same time our Research Policy, (attached) outlines ways through which we promote existing faculty to engage in research. For example, section 7, page 20 of

the Policy specifies how a faculty member can take a reduction in teaching hours for doing research. We would like to note furthermore that we have members of the teaching personnel, like Mr. Athanasios Maimaris, who has been taking advantage of this option. Specifically Mr. Maimaris had a reduction of teaching hours for his project "Smart Pedestrian Net", co–funded by the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation and JPI Urban Europe's fourth call, ERA–NET Cofund Smart Urban Futures (ENSUF) — supported by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 program. Teaching personnel has the opportunity and is encouraged to take advantage of this provision in order to have a reduced workload. This will allow them to engage more extensively in research and / or submit research proposals. As a result, this will further strengthen research and enhance research and teaching synergy.

We would like to thank the committee again for its constructive suggestions in the context of the re-accreditation of the Computer and Network technician Diploma. The committee's suggestions were implemented.

C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Dr. Nasios Orinos	Director	
Chrysostomos Chrysostomou	Program Coordinator	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	

Date: 9/3/2022