

betDoc. 300.1.2

Higher Education Institution's Response

Date: 22.05.2024

- Higher Education Institution: NEAPOLIS UNIVERSITY PAFOS
- Town: PAFOS
- Programme of study Name (Duration, ECTS, Cycle)

In Greek:

Μεταπτυχιακό στις Διεθνείς Σχέσεις, τη Στρατηγική και την Ασφάλεια (MSc) (Εξ Αποστάσεως)

In English:

MSc in International Relations, Strategy and Security (Distance)

(1,5 years/ 90 ECTS)

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

In Greek: Concentrations
In English: Concentrations

KYΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

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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 <u>without any interference</u> 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.

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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 by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The EEC found that including recent epistemological trends in the study	The Department has decided to introduce a more robust process of evaluation and updating of course	Choose level of compliance:
of International Relations, and	curricula and readings to keep the Programme	
widening the agenda of security	aligned with the state-of-the-art in the field of	
studies, to include, for example, the	International Relations & Security. (See below	
varieties of critical security studies,	section 2)	
will benefit the formation and	Furthermore, in line with the EEC suggestions, the	
future employability of students.	Programme has updated the curricula of certain	
	courses to include more recent and less	
	traditionalist perspectives on International	
	Relations and Security. For instance, in the course	
	Homeland Security (DIRSS624), the notion of	
	human security was incorporated to reflect the	
	widening of the security concept in contemporary	
	debates. Likewise, new modules covering the topics	
	of pandemics, migration and environmental security were added, while the interplay of security	
	challenges, human rights and democratic principles	
	was reformulated under the prism of critical	
	security studies. Similarly, in the course Strategy	
	and Decision Making (DIRSS624), a new module	
	was added (The role of gender and culture in	
	decision-making), which introduces students to	
	non-traditional approaches to decision-making in	
	foreign policy. Moreover, in the course	
	International Law and Security (DIRSS623) a new	
	module was added "The International Protection of	
	Human Rights" that examines the protection of	
	fundamental human rights. The module's	
	interactive activity addresses the need to protect	
	minorities during armed conflict.	
	See attached:	
	 Annex 1 (DIRSS624 study guide) 	
	 Annex 2 (DIRSS612 study guide) 	
	 Annex 3 (DIRSS623 study guide) 	
The EEC found that more emphasis	Following the EEC's recommendations, the	Choose level of
on research methodologies would	Programme has updated the offered methodology	compliance:
allow the programme to enhance	course, which now provides students with a more	
the sustainable employment of its	comprehensive methodological toolset. In this	
students towards allowing them	respect, it familiarises students to a larger extent	
to encompass a wider variety of	with quantitative research tools, broadening thus	
phenomena in their analysis.	the horizon of researchable phenomena, while	
	enriching their overall skillset.	





	See attached: • Annex 4 (methodology course's study guide)	
The EEC had concerns with the level of criticality encouraged amongst students. For example, the MSc programme on International Relations and Security learning outcome refers to a 'basic understanding' and the Committee considered that this could potentially be presented in a more advanced manner. Critical engagement from the start of the programme would be desirable.	The PLOs of the MSc International Relations, Strategy and Security, particularly PLO2, PLO3 and PLO5, are designed to foster the critical engagement of students with international issues and debates. As the mapping of PLOs and CLOs indicate, starting from the 1st semester, students are called to critically approach and analyze complex international issues. By the same token, they are encouraged to engage with the learning material both from a theoretical and policy-related perspectives. See attached: Annex 5 (Programmes's PLOs and CLO's)	Choose level of compliance:



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

Areas of improvement and	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
recommendations by EEC	·	
· ·	The Quality Assurance Committee of the	Choose level of
updates of course curricula and	Department of History, Politics	compliance:
readings of the MSc programme.	& International Studies convened on	
	18/4/2024 and decided to institute an annual	
	meeting at the end of the academic year	
	dedicated to the evaluation and updating of	
	course curricula and readings. At the meeting,	
	the coordinators of the offered programmes,	
	selected tutors of the programme -and if	
	deemed necessary, external experts- will	
	propose changes to the course curricula,	
	reflecting developments in the respective fields and the state-of-the-art in terms of	
	current debates and literature. The Committee	
	will discuss and agree upon the suggested	
	updates.	
	apates.	
	See attached:	
	 Annex 6 (meeting's minutes) 	
	 Annex 7, p. 60 (Student Handbook) 	
The EEC suggests enhancing the	At the beginning of the semester, a course	Choose level of
processes of formative assessment	page is created on the Moodle platform for	compliance:
and feedback during the MSc thesis	every thesis that is being written during that	
writing process.	semester. There, the supervisor uploads	
	reading and multimedia material to assist the	
	student during the research and writing	
	process. Through the Moodle page, the	
	supervisors offer detailed feedback via Moodle	
	or the embedded Turnitin functionality on the	
	chapters uploaded by the student.	
	Furthermore, as stated in the Dissertation	
	Study Guide (p. 13), during the thesis writing	
	process six (6) videotaped teleconferences are held. During these meetings, the supervisors	
	provide guidance and detailed feedback to the	
	students. Moreover, the Distance Learning	
	Unit (DLU) offers a wide variety of seminars	
	and guides on mentoring of students during	
	thesis-writing. It also organizes bi-annual	
	coordination meetings (beginning of winter	
	and spring semester) to discuss best-practices	
	and improvements to the thesis writing	
	process. For the latest meeting (6/3/2024) and	
	relevant guides see Annex 10.	



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	See attached: • Annex 8 (sample Moodle dissertation page) • Annex 9, p. 13 (Dissertation Study Guide) • Annex 10 (DLU guides & coordination meetings for dissertation mentoring)	
The EEC also recommends a study guide for the thesis writing and clear instructions in terms of criteria for assessment of Msc thesis as well as a transparent process of selection of MSc supervisors.	There is a Dissertation Study Guide that assists students navigating through the thesis-writing process. It offers detailed explanations of the procedures, starting from the drafting of the proposal until the oral defense of the thesis, including the selection of supervisors and the general process of supervision (p. 13). In addition, it provides students with templates and useful tips and tools to assist them during research and writing. Moreover, it clearly states the assessment criteria employed for the evaluation of the dissertation (pp. 18-21). See attached: • Annex 9, p. 13, 18-21 (Dissertation Study Guide)	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC urges the University to upgrade to Moodle 4 to improve the user experience with its cleaner and more intuitive interface. This upgrade would make navigation and content management more userfriendly for both tutors and students. Although the current version is functional, it does not have the user-focused design of Moodle 4, which could greatly enhance the platform's ease of use and accessibility.	The IT unit of NUP has already set in motion the transition to Moodle 4. The IT team has tested the installation & configuration of the Moodle 4 on NUP's servers. The implementation will start in June, after the completion of the spring semester exams, so that it will be ready by August for tutors to create their course pages for the academic year 2024-25.	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC noted students' comments on the lack of detailed formative feedback on certain assignments, which is essential for guiding student understanding and highlighting areas for improvement. Therefore, the EEC strongly advises providing more in-depth and specific feedback, and directly within the submitted documents, rather than separately on the	The Department's Student Handbook (pp. 19-54) presents a detailed outline of the assessment and feedback process, emphasizing the individualized character of the provided feedback. Furthermore, with the Turnitin integration in the Moodle platform, feedback can be provided directly on the submitted file, a functionality which is used particularly in the assessment of mid-term essays. It should be noted also that with Moodle version 4 additional features are	Choose level of compliance:



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platform, aiming to support more effective learning outcomes for students. In addition, a note was collected from the students regarding poor peer interaction during teleconferences, attributed to the fact that most participants keep their cameras off.	added, helping the instructors to have more interaction with students, including Activity Completion Tracking, Dashboard and Timeline. See attached: • Annex 7, p. 19-54 (Student Handbook) • Annex 11 (sample of feedback with the use of Turnitin) For peer interaction and cameras, see comment below.	
The EEC recommends requiring all participants to have their cameras on during teleconferences to enhance peer contact and collaboration.	To foster peer interaction (see comment above) in line with the flipped classroom pedagogical methodology, the Quality Assurance Committe decided (18/4/2024) to address the issue by dedicating an induction week session on the importance of visual interactivity during teleconferences. Moreover, the Student Handbook for the distance learning programmes has been updated with the addition of a specific reference to the camera issue. See attached: Annex 6 (meeting's minutes) Annex 12, p. 20 (updated Handbook	
Concerning the administration of online final exams, the EEC urges the university to carefully consider the implications of proctoring these exams. While ensuring academic integrity is crucial, it is also essential to stay abreast of the latest advancements in online examination technologies, which offer various methods to secure exams without compromising fairness or privacy for students. The committee suggests exploring innovative solutions that balance integrity with a positive final exam experience for all participants.	for distance learning programmes) The implemented solution is fully compliant with GDPR and is carefully designed to respect privacy issues, adhering to strict EU regulations. Additionally, the IT unit is constantly focused on cybersecurity and protecting NUP's systems from any potential threats.	
The EEC has also identified a significant misunderstanding regarding the implementation of the flipped classroom methodology. Despite the intention to foster a more interactive and engaged	DLU has prepared a detailed presentation of the flipped classroom methodology. The presentation's aim is to train tutors on applying the flipped classroom approach in their courses. It includes (a) instructions on how to organize a flipped classroom; (b)	





online learning environment, the teleconferences following the preclass work tend to resemble traditional lectures rather than the intended collaborative discussions. This discrepancy suggests a gap in both the execution of the flipped classroom model and in communicating its objectives and benefits to students. As a result, students have expressed unawareness and confusion about the methodology's application in their courses. To address this issue, the EEC recommends a two-fold approach: (i) to enhance training for tutors on the effective use of the flipped classroom methodology, ensuring they are equipped to facilitate dynamic and interactive sessions that fully leverage pre-class work; (ii) to improve communication with students about the expectations and advantages of the flipped classroom approach, helping them understand how it contributes to their learning process and how they can actively participate in these sessions.

explanation of the four pillars of F-L-I-P; and (c) an analysis of the benefits offered by this methodology. The presentation is available on the NUP distance learning website. Moreover, the DLU has provided to all NUP tutors through Moodle an e-learning seminar to train them in distance learning. The seminars included inter alia an introduction to the flipped classroom methodology and instructions on how to apply it. Furthermore, the Department's Quality Assurance Committe decided (18/4/2024) to address the issue by dedicating an induction week session to inform students about the flipped classroom method and its advantages at the beginning of each semester.

See attached:

- Annex 13 (DLU's flipped classroom instructional material)
- Annex 6 (meeting's minutes)

The EEC suggests the university prepares for potential challenges if attracting more international students across remote time zones, highlighting the importance of enhancing asynchronous online interaction and collaboration, while constantly adapting the distance learning model to meet their needs.

The Distance Programme is designed with these challenges in mind. Therefore, all learning material is online, while formative and assessment activities are announced at the beginning of the course, allowing students to complete them at a time that is convenient for their schedule. That is also the case for interactive and collaborative activities, such as those using the forum activity, given that students can engage in discussions in an asynchronous manner. Furthermore, all teleconferences are recorded, and students can watch them asynchronously whenever they wish and is convenient for them.

See attached:

 Annex 12, p. 18-20 (Handbook for distance learning programmes)



3. Teaching staff

(ESG 1.5)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The EEC recommends the department to consider growing the epistemological and methodological areas of the department to better complete a picture of International Relations in the MSc.	 The Department has scholars with diverse epistemological and methodological backgrounds. Dr. Eleni Gavriil is a Lecturer in International Economic Law and Human Rights, Dr. Floros Flouros is an Assistant Professor in International Political Economy: Energy, Security and Climate Change, and Dr. Katerina Papazacharia is a Lecturer in Diplomatic History and International Relations. She is also the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee of the University. To address the deeply-entrenched traditionalist bias in the field of IR and to advance research and teaching under diverse epistemological approaches the Department is participating in the following research programs: "Diversity and Inclusivity in Security Studies" (Erasmus+ KA220-HED) (implementation stage, involving a consortium of seven partners from six countries). "Inclusivity and Resilience in European Studies" (Erasmus+ KA220-HED) - (application submitted, results due in June 2024, involving a consortium of seven partners from six countries). "MARLIN: Marginalised Languages In" (HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-01-05) (application submitted, involving a consortium of nine partners from nine countries). 	Choose level of compliance:
	 See attached: Annex 14 (Diversity and Inclusivity in Security Studies project card) Annex 15 (Inclusivity and Resilience in European Studies proposal) Annex 16 (MARLIN: Marginalised Languages In proposal) 	



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The EEC recommends the department to consider the gender balance of the department in future appointments.	The Department has exceptional female scholars, such as Dr. Eleni Gavriil, who is a Lecturer in International Economic Law and Human Rights, and Katerina Papazacharia, who is a Lecturer in Diplomatic History and International Relations. Furthermore, the Department has already taken initiatives in the direction of further improving the gender balance by appointing this academic year Dr. Marina Eleftheriadou, who is an Assistant Professor in International Relations and Security. Dr Eleftheriadou, apart from her teaching duties, serves also as the coordinator of the MSc Programme.	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC recommends the department to consider the appointment of visiting female scholars to add to the breadth of the learning experience.	The Department hosts two visiting female scholars. Dr. Carmela Lutmar from the University of Haifa and Dr. Victoria Pistikou from Democritus University of Thrace.	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC would like to note that the current policy does not require online teaching experience for faculty members to begin teaching online or transition from conventional programs. This approach may lead to problems, such as reduced student engagement and higher dropout rates. The university is strongly encouraged to revise its hiring criteria to require online teaching experience for new faculty members.	NUP takes concrete steps to support tutors that teach online. The aim of NUP's strategy is to address on a comprehensive level the challenges of distance learning, to increase interaction amongst students and tutors, to solve emerging problems and doverall to enhance student-centered teaching. In this context the following have been organised and implemented: (a) A seminar on student-centered teaching, learning and assessment. The seminar was mandatory for all NUP tutors. It included 5 units and upon successful completion of the assessment test a certificate of attendance was issued. (b) A workshop organised by the DLU and the Pedagogical Unit on the use of Artificial Intelligence tools in education, led by Professor Chatzichristofis, Vice-Rector of NUP. (c) Guides on the use of digital tools such as Teams and Kialo which are necessary in online teaching and can enhance interaction and engagement of students. Further guide is available dedicated to the creation of interactive activities (jigsaw, case-studies, forum discussion, peer review etc). It explains the different types of activities, what are their advantages, why to them and how to create them. (d) A website dedicated to the NUP distance learning unit. The website includes instructions and guidelines to support	Choose level of compliance:







permanent teaching staff and new faculty members that teach in online programs. It contains instructions amongst others about: flipped classroom method, learning outcomes, writing study guides, educational technology tools.

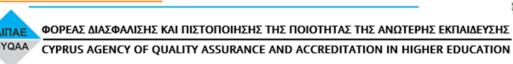
- (e) Mentoring seminars to MSc dissertation supervisors to support them in navigating communication with distance learning students.
- (f) Two seminars dedicated to the use of "Lumi" as a tool to enhance interaction and engagement in distance learning courses. In addition to the seminars, a Moodle course has been created with instructions and examples of interactive and engaging content.
- (g) A workshop (two hours) to train teaching staff in creating interactive activities on Moodle.

See attached:

- Annex 17 (DLU guides& seminars)
- Annex 24 (Al tools seminar)
- Annex 18 (guides on the use of digital tools)
- Annex 10 (DLU guides & coordination meetings for dissertation mentoring)
- Annex 19 (Lumi seminars & guides)
- Annex 20 (interactive activities seminar)

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification (ESG 1.4)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The University's main page contains a few areas of missing information. regarding information for admissions, such as the tuition fees.	NUP has designed an admission process that caters to the different needs of our prospective students. When they land on the homepage of NUP's website, they are encouraged to fill in a contact form that is received by the admissions office. To ensure a personalised and bespoke experience, staff from the admissions office contact the prospective student to inform them about the programme they are interested in and answer any questions they might have. If the prospective students have questions of academic nature, their file is forwarded to the coordinator of the Programme, who provides the necessary information and if deemed necessary arranges a Teams meeting.	Choose level of compliance:
Student feedback should be taken into account to fulfill the student's needs, if possible and practical. The academic staff should consider the immediate response to its students' messages and requests.	Following the recommendation of the EEC, the Quality Assurance Committe of the Department of History, Politics & International Studies, which convened on 18/4/2024, decided on a 24h policy in responding to student messages. This change is reflected in the updated Student Handbook. See attached: • Annex 7, p. 22 (Student Handbook)	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC recommends that innovations and best practices in education and learning could be more transparent and celebrated in the department.	NUP places paramount importance in developing and diffusing innovative pedagogical approaches through the production of regularly updated guides and the organisation of seminars under the supervision of NUP's educational technologist and instructional designer. Furthermore, NUP has created a Teams team dedicated to this goal, which is accessible to the teaching staff of NUP. For a detailed presentation of relevant activities and attached material see 3.4 above.	Choose level of compliance:





In online classes, the ways of teaching are very limited, meaning the staff should seek innovative ways to tutor. This involves adopting teaching methods and strategies which leads to effective ways of active learning and interested students.

To foster interaction between tutors and students and amongst peers, different strategies have been adopted during online classes. These activities aim to leave time for discussions and engagement with students. As an illustration, tutors use inclass activities that allow students to engage and discuss different case-studies, often drawn from current affairs to generate interest. In the same vein, students are called to read articles/summaries about a specific topic, watch videos or study maps and graphs. The tutor poses questions, steering students to discussions where they express their views, exchange ideas, and learn on a more integrated level.

See attached:

 Annex 21 (interactive activities during teleconferences)

The university should create a structured representation, outlining the academic workload expected for students to complete by the end of each semester, while overviewing their academic responsibilities and deadlines, which leads to planning for their coursework.

On the Moodle page of each course, the students can find in one place information on the academic workload. For instance, they might find the scheduled learning activities, including their deadlines and weight on the final grade, as well as the dates of the scheduled teleconferences. This way from the beginning of the semester, they can effectively plan their coursework.

See attached:

Annex 22 (students' academic workload)



5. Learning resources and student support (ESG 1.6)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
The EEC notes that the workload of the required readings is not well calculated, needing more time than informed to read and understand these materials. It is recommended to revise the required materials to study along with the recommended study time, to make the course readings more manageable while helping students plan their study effectively. The EEC believes there is room for improvement in this area.	Following the EEC suggestions, the workload of the required readings has been recalculated and where necessary readjusted according to the following formula. Each of the Programmes's courses accounts for 7.5 ECTS, that is approximately a workload of 200 hours. Of these, on average, 65-70 hours are allocated to required readings. Given that one hour corresponds to 10 pages, this translates to approximately to 55 pages per module. See attached: Annex 23, p. 12 (instructions for developing	Choose level of compliance:
The EEC suggests exploring the use of interactive videos to enhance engagement among online students during teleconferences, with features like quizzes, navigation options and additional resources embedded in the videos (e.g., Mentimeter). In addition, the EEC recommends exploring more advanced feedback methods, such as intelligent tutoring systems and conversational pedagogical agents enriched with learning analytics and gamification strategies for immediate and automatic student feedback.	study guides) To foster the use of interactive tools by the teaching staff a series of seminars have been organised by the University. a. Dr Vasilieos Balafas, NUP's educational technologist offered two seminars (four hours in total) dedicated to the use of "Lumi" as a tool to enhance interaction and engagement in distance learning courses. In addition to the seminars, a Moodle course has been created with instructions and examples of interactive and engaging content. b. The Pedagogical Unit has organised a workshop (two hours) to train teaching staff in creating interactive activities on Moodle. c. Guides on the creation of interactive activities is available to teaching staff. They provide	Choose level of compliance:



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guidance on the use of various kinds of interactive activities (kialo, jigsaw, case-studies, forum discussion, peer review etc). They explain what each activity is, what are its advantages, why to use it and how to create it.

See attached:

- Annex 19 (Lumi seminars & guides)
- Annex 20 (interactive activities seminar)
- Annex 18 (guides on the use of digital tools)

The EEC recommends that both the study guides and the student handbook be updated to include policies and best practices related to generative Al, along with academic guidance for students on the opportunities and risks these technologies present in education. This advice should also be extended to faculty staff.

The Department's student handbook has been updated with reference to the challenges of AI and platforms such as ChatGPT in education, promoting the responsible engagement with and use of similar technologies. Furthermore, NUP's Quality Assurance Committe has initiated a deliberation process with the aim to devise policy guidelines for the academic staff and students. It should be noted also that in December 2023 NUP organised an online seminar on the use of AI tools in education.

See attached:

- Annex 7, pp. 52-3 (Student Handbook)
- Annex 24 (Al tools seminar)

Choose level of compliance:

6. Additional for doctoral programmes (ALL ESG)

Areas of improvement and recommendations by EEC	Actions Taken by the Institution	For Official Use ONLY
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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
The EEC found that the MSc met the conditions and standards commensurate with a distance learning postgraduate degree in International Relations. Herein, we identify innovation and best practice as well as room for further improvement. The EEC was impressed with the overall achievements of NUP and the department given the short amount of time since its founding and the establishment of this degree. The EEC recognised the overall merits of the programme and were impressed with the support that was provided to staff with regards to the delivery of the distance learning MSc. As stated in the report the content of the MSc programme in International Relations and Security needs to expand to include more critical and contemporary research in the field. The EEC hopes that the points outlined in this report will be of value to the University as the department continues to grow and innovate, especially in the field of distance learning. The EEC is grateful for the support provided by the University on the day and the materials that were distributed in advance. We are grateful to the contributions from staff and students and are particularly grateful for the excellent support from the CYQAA, in particular Dr. Christiana Maki.	We thank all the Committee members for the productive and positive comments and we proceeded to response on the most adequate and appropriate way in order to fully comply with all the points outlined and relevant recommendations in the report.	Choose level of compliance:
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C. Higher Education Institution academic representatives

Name	Position	Signature
Prof. Pantelis Sklias	Rector	
Click to enter Name	Click to enter Position	
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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: 22.05.2024





