

MA PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT - COMMENTS

The members of the academic and administrative staff of the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Cyprus would like to express their gratitude to the four members of the Evaluation Committee and the Agency Officers for the whole procedure of evaluation for the postgraduate program (MA level). The meetings and the interviews with the members of the committee have been very productive and their recommendations are most welcome and helpful. As the Committee members note in their report, the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern studies of the University of Cyprus is *“one of the most comprehensive Turkish studies programme in Europe covering a wide range of areas, disciplines and periods. We were impressed by the intellectual coherence, the academic competence and commitment of the faculty”* (page 9).

Additionally, the members of the academic staff of the Department consider positively the good practices highlighted by the members of the Committee (page 9). The Evaluation Committee highlighted in its report that the good practices in the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies relate to *“Cooperative and constructive teaching and learning environment, good working relationship between students and academic staff, Impressive academic and linguistic preparation of the graduate students, research and instruction are conducted in an outward-looking international atmosphere, remarkable synergy between academic staff, departmental administrator and students, adequate teacher-student ratio provides suitable support for students”*.

Taking into consideration the recommendations of the Committee and the issues that have been graded with a grade of less than 5, and in order to strengthen the Department’s Postgraduate Program (Master level) the Board of the Department would like to comment as follows:

Recommendations by the Evaluation Committee and comments by the Department

1. A need to better frame the issues and problematic presented in courses within broader theoretical and methodological contexts. This can be achieved by updating the readings for the courses so that they incorporate also more recent studies and theoretical works.

The academic staff of the Department intends to take into consideration this recommendation. Each one of the members of the staff will update the bibliography used in the courses in order to incorporate the most recent studies in each research field and give emphasis on the broader theoretical and methodological context of the issues discussed in each course.

2. Advanced Turkish reading/speaking classes

This recommendation was discussed during the last Department Board and it was decided to introduce to the Master's Program of Studies a weekly course (3 hours) of advanced Turkish reading and speaking. This will be taught by one of the Language Tutors of the staff. The Department has already initiated the procedure for the inclusion of this course in the Master Program and this will start in the Fall Semester 2019/2020.

3. Opportunities for students to learn important working languages in the field of Turkic linguistics and literatures, such as German, French and Russian.

The Department will encourage MA students who work on Turkic/Turkish linguistics to register in German, French or Russian language courses in the Language Center. Additionally, the Department will stress the importance of learning languages and will encourage 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students who plan to continue their studies in the Linguistic field, to take one of the above languages as foreign language during their undergraduate studies.

4. Exploration of ways to combine some BA and MA courses

According to the Regulation of the University of Cyprus, every MA student has the right to register in two (maximum) 4th year undergraduate courses. MA students who graduated from Departments other than the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies, will be encouraged to register in 4th year undergraduate courses that are relevant to their research topic.

5. Increased student, academic and administrative staff awareness of university's guidelines and conflict resolution policies, especially regarding sexual harassment, work relations and gender issues

The Department Board decided to contact University authorities and submit an official request for the preparation of guidelines and conflict resolution policies for all students. Additionally, the Department has already prepared guidelines for the students for matters related to conflict resolution, which have already been uploaded on the Department's website.

6. Problems emanating from the particular situation on Cyprus (a. Educating students and researchers about support mechanisms for students doing fieldwork in North Cyprus and Turkey, b. Facilitation of book and journal acquisition from Turkey and North Cyprus)

For the last 25 years, the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies has been dealing with these kinds of problems successfully. There are no official visits in the occupied area of Cyprus organized by the Department. Students go there individually.

Nevertheless, the academic staff is aware of the students' mobility, advises all the students where to go and where not to go, while the students are advised to contact any member of the academic staff if any problem occurs. In case one or more students travel to Turkey, and since there is no Embassy or Consulate of the Republic of Cyprus in Turkey, students are advised that, in case of emergency, they must contact one of the members of the academic staff of the Department and at the same time they must contact the Greek Consulate in Istanbul or any other European Consulate located near their place of their accommodation. However, addressing the recommendation by the members of the Evaluation Committee, the Department has already prepared guidelines for the students for matters related to their accommodation in Turkey or their research in the occupied areas, which have already been uploaded on the Department's website.

Regarding the acquisition of books and journals from Turkey and the occupied areas, the Department (through the Library of the University of Cyprus) is already buying material from Turkey (using a private dealer in Athens). According to the policy of the University of Cyprus, the Library of the University or the Department cannot buy books or other material directly from the occupied areas. However, the Department will notify the University authorities about this recommendation in order for a more suitable solution to be found.

Issues graded with less than five (5)

The Department Board expresses its satisfaction since the Department's MA Program of Studies achieved the highest grade (5) in the vast majority of the 104 indicators, while in a small number of them it was graded with 4 or 3. Some of the indicators receiving a lower grade are related to policies decided centrally by the University authorities (for example the tuition fees) or to difficulties that the Department faces because of the Cyprus Question.

1.1.4.1: Library. As explained above, the purchasing of books and other material officially from bookshops in the occupied areas is not permitted by the University. However, all academic staff and students are buying individually, while books and other material published in the occupied areas are bought through Turkey.

1.1.4.4: Student welfare: This concerns the Administration of the University.

1.1.7: Communication between the students and the academic staff is at an excellent level. However, the Committee members were concerned regarding the absence of regulations or guidelines for conflict resolution. The Department will encourage MA students (as it often does) to contact the Postgraduate Studies Coordinator for any problems they may have with their studies. As mentioned above, the Department has already prepared guidelines for the students for matters related to conflict resolution, which have already been uploaded on the Department's website.

1.1.12: The students are informed – orally and in writing – that they are free to contact the Postgraduate Studies Coordinator and the Chairman of the Department for any complaint or issues related to their studies. Serious complaints are brought before the Department Board and students are always provided with solutions. Students are informed and

encouraged to contact the Postgraduate Studies Coordinator and the Chairman of the Department for any dispute resolution. As mentioned above, the relevant guidelines have already been uploaded on the Department's website.

1.2.7: (also 4.2.6): As mentioned above, books and material from Turkey are purchased on a regular basis. The issue of purchasing books and other material from the occupied areas by the University concerns the policy of the University of Cyprus as a public and state institution.

1.3.10: Regarding academic positions, the University had already given to the Department three academic positions in 2018 and the hiring procedures have begun. It is expected that by the Fall Semester 2019-20 the Department's academic staff will be increased from five to eight, and more academic positions will be given to the Department.

2.2.5: Regarding general education courses, these are the three courses taught in the first semester. Addressing the recommendations made by the members of the Committee, the Department will include in these introductory courses content related to thesis writing.

2.2.8: The content of each course is regularly updated with the latest research results in each research field.

3.1.2: The content of each course is regularly updated with the latest research results in each research field.

4.1.1-3: This concerns the Administration of the University.

4.3.4: The members of the Committee note that, given the economic conditions in Cyprus, tuition fees are too high. Tuition fees are not decided by the Department but by the University at the central level. However, the Department has already established a procedure to reduce fees when MA students face economic problems. For this reason, an application form for the reduction of fees has already been uploaded on the website of the Department and MA students are informed about this opportunity. Upon their application, the Department Board decides the total amount of the reduction. Additionally, students are encouraged to pursue scholarships from other institutions (IKY) and, at the same time, the Department employs students as Teaching Assistants during the semester.