

PhD 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 (PhD 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 (PhD level), the Board of the Department would like to comment as follows:

Recommendations by the Evaluation Committee and comments by the Department

1. The program would benefit from an addition of course work, especially in the areas of methodology, the professional writing of history, social science theory, linguistic and literary theory. These are courses that could be given at Faculty level to all PhD students of related disciplines. This will encourage collaboration across disciplinary and departmental lines. There is also an acute need to offer a departmental dissertation writer’s seminar which will include students preparing their research proposals as well as students at the writing stage. In such a seminar, students will present to professors and peers their prospectuses as well as chapters and other materials from their dissertations when ready.

The PhD students are encouraged to attend the relevant introductory courses offered in the MA Program of the Department. These courses introduce students to methodology and research, the professional writing of history, linguistic and literary theory.

2. Advanced spoken Turkish tutorials

The PhD students are encouraged to attend the relevant Turkish reading/speaking course offered every semester (beginning from September 2019) in the MA Program of the Department. In this way PhD students will have the chance to collaborate across disciplinary and departmental lines.

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 PhD 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 language and will encourage 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students and MA students who plan to continue their studies in the Linguistic and Literature fields, to take one of the above languages as foreign language during their undergraduate studies.

4. 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.

5. 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, colleagues and/or students are getting individually what they need.

Issues graded with less than five (5)

The Departmental board expressed its satisfaction since the Department's PhD Program of Studies achieved the highest grade (5) in the vast majority of the 122 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.

1.1.4.2: 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.

1.3.9: The members of the Committee note that the academic staff's teaching load limits the conduct of research, writing and contribution to society. The teaching load of the academic staff is decided centrally by the administration of the University and the members of the academic staff of the Department successfully achieve high level research production (books, articles) without undermining the quality of the courses taught.

2.5.1: The Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Cyprus already has Erasmus agreements with university departments in Europe and Turkey and it is constantly trying to expand its network with more departments. Additionally the faculty participates in research programs funded internally and externally whilst with the three additional new members of the academic staff it is expected that an increase in collaborations with other universities will follow.

2.5.2: The Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Cyprus is very careful in the choice of Visiting Professors. However often this choice is limited by the availability of potential candidates for the position of Visiting Scholar.

3.1.3: After the renovation of the Department's offices the teaching room of the Department has been equipped with a projector and all the necessary facilities for teaching with the use of modern technology. Additionally the Department uses the facilities of the University's Academia Campus which has been renovated recently and it is equipped with all the necessary technology.

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

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.

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 PhD 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 PhD 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.