

CEU PU Response to AQ Austria Expert Panel Report

See below the response of CEU PU to the recommendations made by the AQ Austria Expert Panel.

(1) The first recommendation deals with the transparency of the application procedure. The experts recommend allowing applicants access to both the ranking scheme as well as the points they achieved in order to provide additional transparency.

We accept the recommendation and will publish more detailed information on the criteria used for ranking, and the point system we use. Divulging to applicants their overall score will require an amendment to CEU's current admissions procedure. We will work with CEU's central administration on the matter.

(2) Second, and more important, while the aim to provide an integrative programme of both social science and data science (including computational science etc.) is to be applauded, the experts recommend to closely monitor whether integration is actually achieved and where this can be improved. Considering social science and data science as disciplines with different languages, it might - in the future - not be enough to speak each other's language, but also interaction and mutual communication should be practiced in order to arrive at innovative synergies. A BA programme like the one in Quantitative Social Sciences can be an excellent place to make progress in bringing together these different disciplines. The expert panel sensed, however, that there is a risk that the fields are taught next to each other instead of being integrated with the goal to solve research problems more comprehensively. A suggestion in this regard is to combine the courses more closely, e.g., to develop some forms of co-teaching of social science together with data science. Related to this recommendation is the observation that the courses in social science (including environmental science) have a less prominent function in the programme than the methods courses. A course of rigorous theory building in social science or on advancement in social science theory and knowledge might also be in place, in addition to the relatively basic reading courses of social thinkers.

We fully share the panel's concern with improving the integration between the quantitative and qualitative courses. This is an underlying challenge of our proposal, that needs to be closely monitored and continuously improved in an ongoing fashion, based on the feedback from the students and lecturers.

We will consider the suggestion by the panel of integrating more the courses, and implementing co-teaching. We are currently formulating a minor revision of the program that will include a new course on "Principles of Sociology" targeted QSS students with a more diverse background, and already goes some way into improving such a connection.

We believe that QSS will contribute to the development of a culture at CEU, where integration of the two approaches is natural and desirable from both ends. We are aware of the necessity of continuous quality assessment in this respect and will act accordingly.

(3) A final point of recommendation in this regard touches upon the heterogeneity of the social sciences in itself. Environmental science is quite different from sociology and sociology again differs from

political science or economics. Ethics of big data (which is also the name of one of the courses) is not social science at all, but more related to philosophy. It is important to emphasize the commonalities in these fields and avoid that the student's knowledge of social science is scattered.

Indeed, the broad choice of topics covered is a design choice of the program, since the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is not something that is confined to any of the particular branches of the social sciences. We aim to avoid scattering of the student's knowledge via the specialization tracks that they must choose.

This choice is also reflected on the topics that the student must choose for their BA thesis, and also for the several Data Science projects throughout the program. In this way, we are committed to the panel's recommendation to emphasize the commonalities between the different fields of the social sciences.