

May 6, 2020

The Board of AQ Austria
AQ Austria
Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
1190 Vienna

Dear Madam President, dear Members of the Board,

I hereby confirm that we have received and fully accept the Expert Panel Review Report regarding the following programs: MSc in Environmental Sciences and Policy, PhD in Environmental Sciences and Policy. We are pleased to learn that the Report confirms the academic excellence of the programs and that they fulfill all the criteria for accreditation.

We fully accept all the recommendations made in the Report. The administration of CEU PU will work closely with the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy to address every recommendation made in the Report. For specific responses to the recommendations of the AQ Austria Expert Panel, please refer to the detailed reply of the Department.

We would like to thank the Expert Panel members for their expertise and insights, as well as for the productive and collegial discussions during the site visit. We are grateful to the Expert Panel members for their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm with which they approached the task.

We await the decision of the Board with anticipation and looking forward to the opportunity of starting our programs in Vienna in the coming academic year.

Sincerely,



Michael Ignatieff
President and Rector
Central European University Private University

Mag. Pia Reinhalter and Mag. Barbara Schinwald
Secretariat of AQ Austria

Reference: I/A24-132/2020

May 5, 2020

Dear Ms. Reinhalter and Schinwald,

Further to your above referenced letter to our Rector and President, Michael Ignatieff I am pleased to attach the responses of the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy to the comments and recommendations included in your report. Annex 1 to this letter includes the responses regarding the Austrian accreditation of our Master of Environmental Sciences and Policy Program, and Annex 2 responses related to our Doctoral Program.

Please feel free to contact me at your convenience, in case our responses require any further clarification.

I would like to take this opportunity and thank AQ Austria and the Review Committee for the thorough work on our accreditation request and particularly the recommendations that we believe will help advance our program in Vienna.

Your sincerely,



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ANNEX 1: Response by the Department's Masters Program Committee

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27/7.2.1. and 38/1	As part of our Departmental strategy towards the CEU 2025 Plan, we have already identified this concern, which we share. We are already looking at ways of consolidating courses and/or clusters within the Winter Term, and reducing the number of courses offered over the next few years.
28/7.2.2. and 39/2	Related to the point above, we have already started dialogue on this issue, and will continue an iterative discussion with CEU PU, external teaching/research partners in Austria, and individual faculty as our teaching loads are sorted out across the various new BA programmes as well.
28/7.2.3. and 39/3	This is a welcome observation, and we will endeavour to seek an appropriate blend of science, policy, and management in relevant courses. Clusters do all have a policy component, so the potential to develop such an emphasis is there.
29/7.2.4. and 39/4	Most of our students already come into the programme well-versed in the content of at least one of the three foundational courses, and we do encourage them to enroll in the foundational courses where they have less of an academic background. However, we will consider the panel's suggestion to require students to take appropriate foundational courses (rather than leaving the choice to them), and/or introduce other measures to help ensure that all students will achieve the overall programme level learning outcomes.
31/7.2.7. and 39/5	We have started this process last Academic Year, and will continue to work towards applying a variety of suitable assessment methods that are able to capture (non-exhaustively) the prescribed course's Learning Outcomes.
32/7.2.11. and 39/6	CEU PU will be updating the referenced policy to the Austrian context, along with any other remaining policies that require an update. The updates will be made by the beginning of Academic Year 2020-21 the latest.
34/7.3.3. and 39/7	Many of our resident faculty are already embedded within scholarly expert networks (including collaboration with faculty in related disciplines from other CEU departments) and will continue to pursue such engagement. It is envisioned that this aspect of our activities will become more widespread across the department as we settle into academic life in Austria.
36/7.5. and 39/8	We assume that 'labs' here mean IT labs and not 'wet' labs. IT labs are currently being developed at CEU PU, which we trust will meet the needs of our teaching and research. Where wet labs are concerned, this would require substantial technical and resource capacity which we currently do not have. However, as in our programme based in Budapest, we will pursue working partnerships with Austrian universities and research institutions to allow some components of the programme to include hands-on exposure to such facilities. CEU PU leadership has expressed a commitment to cooperate with the Department on the matter.
37/7.7. and 39/9	As part of our Departmental strategy towards the CEU 2025 Plan we are considering the introduction of a professional track, which would probably include an extended internship along the lines outlined in this recommendation. We would, however, still likely retain the option of a more academic research project similar to the current model.

Please note the following suggestions related to the correction of factual errors in the report.

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25	REPLACE "Refinement of the course programme is undertaken by the MSc committee including all resident teaching staff" WITH "Refinement of the course programme is led by the Masters Programs Committee and ultimately involves all resident teaching staff."
26	REPLACE "In term 2, students follow electives in two clusters..." WITH "In term 2, students follow electives in one or two clusters..."
33	REPLACE "The whole programme is managed by a committee consisting of all staff and overviewed by..." WITH "...The whole programme is managed by a committee consisting of selected faculty and staff, and overviewed by..."
33	REPLACE "The programme governance is shared between the MSc director, the MSc committee and the head of department..." WITH "...The programme governance is shared between the Masters Programmes Director, the Masters Programmes Committee and the Head of Department..."
34	REPLACE "CEU PU does not quantify the divide of faculty time into research, teaching and administrative activities." WITH "CEU requires faculty to self-report the amount of time they spend on research, teaching and administrative activities in their annual faculty reviews."
35	REPLACE "...it is required that each faculty member teaches at least one course per semester in their research area. Since teaching in the fields of research is mandatory..." WITH '...faculty members are encouraged to regularly teach courses in their research area. Since teaching in the fields of research is strongly encouraged...'
36	REPLACE 'It is CEU PU policy to require faculty to teach at least one course per semester in their research area.' WITH 'CEU PU encourages faculty to teach regularly in their research area.'
37	REPLACE '...these co-operations are developed exclusively by the head of department to provide...' WITH '...these co-operations are developed by the head of the department and other faculty to provide...'

ANNEX 2: Response by the Department’s Doctoral Program Committee

Page number	
10	This is a welcome comment. We actively take faculty research interests and fit with our research clusters into account as key components of PhD student recruitment and will continue to do so. We will also encourage faculty to issue more directed calls for applications related to particular topics, in cases where topics and related funding can be clearly identified.
10	The department will continue to develop each research cluster and its international visibility. In regards to analyzing PHD placement, we have compiled some of the requested information which we did not have readily available at the time of the site visit. We have received career survey responses from 45 of the 55 alumni of our PhD program (please see attached). Of these, 29% are working in the academic/public sector, 27% in the private sector, and 22% each in international organizations and the non-profit sector. We will use this data to further explore how to help our students establish relevant professional networks already during their studies (see below).
12	This is an area of ongoing development and discussion within CEU. The department agrees and will be actively seeking internal CEU expertise (and/or new hires) to build capacity in this field for both the MSc and PhD programs.
14	This is a good suggestion as we find that about 70 per cent of our graduates are working outside academia. We will consider including an optional internship component into the Research Assistantship possibility to help students who do not plan to go into the academic field build up their research and professional networks. Similarly, we will explore the opportunities to award credits for completed internships as part of the Professional Development Practicum. In some cases this would require commitment of new resources from the central budget or from external sources.
15	In line with CEU regulations that govern the amount of coursework possible in the first year, the department will continue to require 8 ECTS credits of methods training in the first year of doctoral studies for all students. We are developing in-house capacity and collaboration in this field by showcasing the diversity of research approaches within our department in the 4 ECTS PhD course on methodological debates. Students then focus their methods training as it relates specifically to their dissertation research in a further 4 ECTS course anywhere within the University, chosen in conjunction with their supervisors. PhD students who require further specialized methods training have the option to apply for research grants to engage with centers of excellence in the necessary methods.
15	In addition to the 8 ECTS credits of methods training offered in the first year at CEU either in the department or at other Units in the University, we will actively encourage students to pursue opportunities for additional in-depth methodological training by applying for summer school/winter school grants to take methods courses at external institutions.
20	We agree and are currently reviewing the situation in the near term. As teaching in the BA programs expands, it may well become necessary to hire new faculty in order to further enhance the quality of our programs.

21	The suggestion for formalized PhD supervision training for new faculty hires is a good one, and we have brought it to the attention of the Central Administration to consider including through the Center for Teaching and Learning, as this is an issue across all departments.
21	The funding for the program is dependent on the structure of the University, not the department. We have brought this recommendation to the attention of the central administration, but there are currently no plans to change the structure. The funding for the first three years of the program is guaranteed as long as progress is maintained. The fourth year of funding will be slightly different for each student, as they are eligible to apply to spend one semester as a visiting scholar in an external university, but they can receive the funding if they have made all adequate arrangements. They must also apply for the last six months of write-up grant funding, which they receive if the supervisor confirms that they have demonstrated enough progress to indicate that they are likely to complete the dissertation for final submission within six months. In addition, students may apply for Global Teaching Fellowship positions, and new teaching assistantships will open in the BA program as it continues to expand. The University is also introducing a paid childcare leave policy for PhD students which should help reduce stress. We will make information about all of these possibilities clearly visible in our program handbook so that students know all their options upfront.