

June 12, 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: MA in Public Policy (One-Year), Master of Public Administration, MA in Political Science (One-Year), MA in Political Science (Two-Year), MA in International Relations (One-Year), MA in International Relations (Two-Year), PhD in Political Science. 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 Departments to address every recommendation made in the Report. For specific responses to the recommendations of the AQ Austria Expert Panel, please refer to the Departments' detailed reply in the Annex of this letter.

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

CEU PU Departmental Responses to AQ Austria Expert Panel Report

Cluster 3

Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations

We are grateful to the expert panel for the time and effort to evaluate the PhD program in Political Science of CEU PU, and find the report to be thorough, comprehensive and accurate. We would also like to thank the expert panel for the positive evaluation of our program. Our response addresses two issues: one factual clarification (page 8) and the main recommendation of the expert panel (section 3.1.2, page 9, and a final recommendation on page 20). We address each in turn.

1. Factual clarification

Page 8: Information on the application for the accreditation of the degree program includes a line stating that maximum enrollment in the PhD program is 15 students per year. We would like to suggest a correction (15-20 instead of 15) to account for year-specific variations in the size of our incoming cohort. The Doctoral School funds 15 doctoral positions from a general pool. Additionally, 2 earmarked fellowships are allocated to incoming students with certain research profiles (one in higher education, and one in nationalism studies, respectively). The maximum enrollment also includes occasional deferrals of admission from previous years. During the next academic year (2020-21), for instance, our incoming class has 20 PhD students.

2. Response to the main expert recommendation (section 3.1.2, page 9; and final recommendation on page 20)

The main recommendation offered by the expert panel on page 20 states: *“The expert panel members have the following recommendation to CEU PU. On the basis of their findings and especially on the basis of the interviews conducted, the experts recommend that doctoral students' community should be better represented at the university level as the current channels of representation seem highly informal and hardly institutionalized. This recommendation does not conflict with the overall positive evaluation of the development and quality assurance of the doctoral programme.”*

We thank the expert panel for this useful recommendation. As the report already states, PhD students are currently represented in decision-making processes at two levels – the Doctoral School and the university - as follows:

2.1. Doctoral School representation: The Doctoral Program Committee of the Doctoral School in Political Science is composed of the School Director, representatives of the five tracks within the School, and a student representative. The Committee aims at decision-making by consensus. If a consensual decision cannot be reached, the Doctoral Program Committee will take decisions with a simple majority vote. The participation of the student representative in the vote depends on the issue at stake as regulated by par. 1.8. (Section 1.5 of Doctoral School Regulations). A broader decision-making body, the Doctoral School Council, constituted by the Heads of the Department of Political Science, Department of International Relations, the School of Public Policy, the

Doctoral School Director, also includes a student representative (Section 1.6). The Student Representative, as well as one deputy, are elected annually by the Doctoral School's PhD student body and participates in all the activities and meetings of the Doctoral Committee, but cannot take part in decisions that concern specific individual students and applicants, appeals, complaints, admission, termination of probationary or candidate status, or disciplinary matters. If a student is presenting his or her case before the Committee, he/she can ask to have the student representative present during the relevant part of the meeting (Section 1.8).

In addition, the Doctoral School routinely conducts surveys of doctoral students on many specific issues, and organizes two town halls each year where all students are invited to participate and ask questions, express concerns, formulate claims, or make suggestions.

2.2. University-level representation of PhD students

Student Union representation

Every year the student body elects the Student Union Assembly to ensure adequate student representation and participation of students in university governance (as per article VIII of the CEU Student Union Constitution). The Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations selects two student representatives for each track. Indeed, as the expert report duly notes, despite *de jure* representation, there is a widespread sense among doctoral students that *de facto*, PhD representation is less effective in the Student Union as the vast majority of members primarily represent the interests of MA programs.

The student-initiated PhD Working Group

As a practical way to address the structural disadvantages of Student Union representation mentioned above, CEU PhD students (including a core group of Doctoral School students) founded an informal working group on PhD specific problems that interacts routinely with the administration. In general, based on the feedback, students find its activities to be useful, flexible and practical. Its flexibility has been essential during the Covid-19 pandemic when the PhD working group was able act quickly to collect data and prepare policy briefs for the administration. However, despite its flexibility and ad-hoc approach to solving practical problems, many students would like a higher level of *de jure* institutionalization of the working group in order to ensure policy continuity across mandates.

These discussions are ongoing and are not specific to the Doctoral School of Political Science, but rather to CEU PhD student representation, in general. We will give proper consideration to the expert panel's recommendation regarding better channels for PhD student interests and the potential *de jure* institutionalization of their activities and mandate.

Department of International Relations

We are grateful to the expert panel for the time and effort to evaluate the MA programs in International Relations of CEU PU, and find the report to be thorough, comprehensive and accurate. We would also like to thank the expert panel for the positive evaluation of our programs. Our response addresses the recommendations of the expert panel.

- 1. The experts recommend that the University considers introducing certain innovations in teaching methods to include such methods as problem solving, student portfolio, peer assessment, study visits, etc. as well as the use of educational technologies. (p. 53 and p. 69)**

This particular recommendation results from the inadequacy in the presentation of the programs and the timing of that presentation. In reality, by the time the panel submitted its report, various innovations in teaching methods have already been in place within the programs, and further innovations are in the works for the upcoming Academic Year. Thus, some of the newly developed courses already included study visits (OSCE, Chancellery in Vienna in relation to the Congress of Vienna, etc.) In other courses (Foreign Policy Analysis, International Interventions) students were participating in simulations and were tasks with preparing policy-briefs.

For the next Academic Year, four courses would be redesigned to include extensive use of new educational technologies, including various modes of online learning.

- 2. The experts recommend that the University considers a revision of the programme intended learning outcomes provided in each syllabus in line with a distinction between knowledge, skills and competences as well as according to the newest standards in learning outcomes design (e.g. using active verbs, and the Bloom's taxonomy).**

The experts recommend that a more specific description could be provided in the course syllabi indicating which learning outcomes are evaluated by which examination methods. (p. 63 and p. 79)

This work is also underway. Revisions of the learning outcomes would be included in all syllabi already for the next Academic Year's Student Handbooks for both programs.

School of Public Policy

For both the Master of Public Administration and MA in Public Policy, as well as the other two degree programs of the School of Public Policy (SPP), a Curriculum Committee will be established before the beginning of the next academic year (AY). With the move of some courses to be delivered on-line for students who will not be able to make the journey to Vienna in time for Fall term 2020 due to corona virus restrictions, guidelines are already being established for online teaching delivery. A Curriculum Committee will help to systematize procedures but this Committee can also take on some additional issues such as those suggested below from the AQ Austria Expert Panel.

The Curriculum Committee will be an important venue to screen all new course syllabi and - from time to time - assesses syllabi of core courses for consistency (learning outcomes/evaluation) and topical overlap. This Committee will also contribute to the SPP five-year Strategic Review next academic year. This process culminates in an external review and assessment of SPP programs.

See below the responses to specific recommendations made by the Panel.

MA in Public Policy (One-Year)

- 1. External stake holders who would be interested in working with the students, such as think tanks, media outlets and NGOs, could be asked about their ideas and feedback on subjects to be studied in the degree programme. (p. 94)**

Once relocation has taken place, extensive interaction with government agencies and offices of international organizations will be sought. Similarly, faculty in the School will use their personal networks to approach non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors. Since the beginning, the School has benefited from a close relationship with the Open Society Foundations network and its partners.

Already commissioned for next AY is a course to be led by a former World Bank official (Andras Horvai) tentatively entitled “Getting Inside International Organization”. This type of course will give students direct access to the world of practitioners in Vienna. The School envisages additional courses of similar nature.

- 2. A mentoring programme of professionals around Public Policy could be a way to connect the students with ideas about their professional career. (p. 94)**

Mentoring of students in policy practice occurs in some measure through the Visiting Professors who deliver the ‘Skills for Impact’ courses as well as the George Soros ‘Practitioner’ Chair. However, the School recognizes that a more systematic approach could be developed.

In the past, SPP has organized ‘brown bag seminars’ where policy professionals were invited to talk about their career paths and answer questions related to career opportunities and strategies. This ‘seminar’ series can be revived in Vienna. Additionally, the School can look to ways to

better leverage alumni of the School and to draw them back into the orbit of SPP through a mentoring program.

A mentoring program is an excellent idea that can be incorporated and grown within SPP, particularly as SPP will have a new Director of 'Applied Learning' commencing in Vienna in September 2020.

- 3. The experts recommend to further improve the disciplinary foundation of the programme, by strengthening the foundational module with compulsory course components on law and governance. (p. 94)**

During academic year 2020/21 there will be significant refreshment and renewal of teaching resources. At the current academic year, four members of faculty will be leaving the School due to retirement and/or moving to a new university position. Their replacements will release resources and allow a refreshment of the School through appointment of new faculty members to develop compulsory courses on 'law and governance'.

- 4. The experts further recommend reviewing course syllabi as to the question which evaluation methods are best suited to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The use of evaluation rubrics could help in this regard. (p. 94)**

This is an important consideration that the School will take seriously. During AY2020/21, the School will undertake a joint strategic review with the Department of Political Science and Department of International Relations. Evaluation methods and rubrics will be at the core of this process.

Beyond the upcoming review process, the congruence between learning outcomes and evaluation methods will be regularly assessed by the Curriculum Committee that the School plans to establish.

Master of Public Administration

- 1. In the programme development more systematic attention could be given to the input of external stakeholders, such as employers of graduates: representatives from NGOs, international organisations, consultancies and public administrations. (p. 111)**

External stakeholders are important to the future career prospects of MPA graduates. Through two main mechanisms, students have regularized interaction with external stakeholders from government agencies, NGOS and international organizations through the Applied Policy Project and Applied Policy Lab on the one hand, and through the short intensive-mode Skills for Impact courses on the other. Each brings students into direct engagement with policy practitioners outside the School.

There are also more ad hoc arrangements such as the Visiting Speaker programs, as well individual Visiting Professors like the ‘practitioner’ George Soros Visiting Chair, the Holbrooke Fellow supported by the US State Department, etc. Nevertheless, relocation to Vienna offers a ‘golden opportunity’ to develop new contacts networks of stakeholders and individual members of faculty, and staff, relish the prospect of bringing these individuals and institutions closer to the School.

- 2. The Public Administration nature of the programme is implicit rather than explicit. The programme could do more to position its MPA in the disciplinary field, and clarify its disciplinary identity. This would also mark its difference with the Master in Public Policy. (p. 111)**

The School will take on board the recommendation to develop a required course in Public Administration for the MPA program. Given the 4 faculty departures this year, we envisage that the SPP will include the ability to teach such a course as a criterion for one of the replacement hire searches that will be conducted next academic year. Furthermore, it is envisaged that in order to distinguish the MPA from the MPP, greater capacity will be developed in quantitative methods, digital governance and management of big data.

- 3. The interdisciplinary treatment of substantive policies in the specialisation tracks merits a better framing from a public administration perspective. (p. 111)**

Especially for the core courses, SPP affirms this recommendation. As a first step, SPP faculty will be requested to review their syllabi and make sure that learning outcomes are distinguished along these three lines. As a second step, the creation of a “Curriculum Committee” for SPP will create a venue to systematically review the syllabi of all current SPP courses and vet the syllabi of future proposed courses.

Through the new appointments that the School will be making, we will strengthen the ‘public administration’ content. This will also involve terminating the ‘security specialization’ (due to faculty resignation) which will allow the School to further concentrate resources in public administration.

- 4. The experts also recommend to make the Public Management course compulsory. (p. 111)**

For AY 2020/21 it is not possible to make Public Management compulsory due to lack of teaching resources. However, with new positions to be advertised and appointed, it should be possible the following year. Currently, Public Management is a “mandatory elective”, where students have the option to choose between Public Management and Introduction to Global Governance and Public Policy but must take one of them. Subject to discussion in the Curriculum Committee it would be possible to make Public Management mandatory for the MPA as well as making the Global Governance course a cornerstone course for the MPP.

5. Revise intended learning outcomes in each syllabus in line with a distinction between knowledge, skills, and competences. (p. 111)

As the School is developing on-line variants of face-to-face courses, this represents a good opportunity to systematize intended learning outcomes from each course along the distinction between “knowledge, skills and competences”. The balance of each is likely to differ among courses. For instance, the SPP suite of ‘Skills for Impact’ courses (most of which are scheduled in Spring for students to take the knowledge they have learnt earlier and apply to real-world settings) are focused on ‘competences’. Again, this is a task for the Curriculum Committee to institutionalize in SPP practices and procedures

6. The experts recommend to describe explicitly in the syllabi which learning outcomes are evaluated by which examination methods. (p. 111)

As outlined in the beginning of our response, the Curriculum Committee will help establish consistency across courses concerning learning outcomes.

7. Adapt the diploma supplement to make a clear distinction between the compulsory nature of the Applied Policy Project and the elective nature of the thesis. (p. 111)

SPP Response: The Program Director (faculty) and program coordinator (administrative staff) for the MPA will undertake measures to make the nature of the APP clearer for students. The primary mechanism will be the Student Handbook. In Zero Week, via a round of face-to-face and on-line sessions with in-coming students conducted by the Program Director, the distinction between the compulsory nature of the Applied Policy Project and the elective nature of the thesis will be explained.

The course convener of the Applied Policy Project – who is a newly appointed Director of Applied Learning in SPP – will also be able to provide regular feed-back on the requirements of students in the two different routes they can take through the degree. This would be through ad hoc student consultations, but also hard-wired into the course design and documentation.

8. The experts recommend to add the global cooperation partners on the website. (p. 111)

The School completely agrees. SPP will update the website over July-August and will verify the list of global cooperation partners that are specific to the MPA program.