

May 4, 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 revised Expert Panel Review Report regarding the following programs: MA in Gender Studies, MA in Critical Gender Studies, PhD in Comparative Gender Studies. 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 Gender Studies 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 in the Appendix 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

## Appendix

### CEU PU Department of Gender Studies Response to AQ Austria Expert Panel Report

The Department of Gender Studies is deeply appreciative of the extensive work the expert panel has done to evaluate three of our programs (one-year MA, two-year MA and PhD in comparative Gender Studies) and of the overall positive assessment. We also appreciate the opportunity this whole process has given us to rethink what we are doing and identify elements we may want to adjust or improve.

Below are the responses of the CEU PU Department of Gender Studies to the specific recommendations made by the AQ Austria expert panel throughout the Report.

#### **I. Recommendations regarding the PhD in Comparative Gender Studies (p. 27):**

*1) The expert panel recommends that the CEU PU should seek to deepen the existing cooperations, e.g. with the University of Vienna. Such cooperations would further enrich the PhD programme, adding to the comparative dimension.*

We will continue our efforts to deepen and expand the existing cooperation with local and global institutions.

*2) Though faculty members expressed that they consider themselves to have support for supervising PhD students, the experts recommend that the institutional support provided by CEU PU is further developed. This to ease some of the burden now placed on informal structures of support, but also to further streamline and promote the professionalization of the supervision process across various departments at the CEU PU.*

We will communicate the need for the further development of institutional support for PhD supervision with the senior Leadership at the CEU PU, and actively participate in such support programmes.

*3) The experts would also like to express their support for further developing the co-supervision practices at the department. This as it could facilitate the work of both supervisors and doctoral students while also strengthening the doctoral programme's comparative-integrative approach.*

We are presently discussing and will further develop the co-supervision practices at the Department.

*4) The expert panel members recommend that the system of student funding is continued and financial space is provided for additional faculty and, if necessary, supportive staff seeing the projected rising needs of the programme due to higher student-teacher ratio compared to other programmes, and the introduction of additional courses and teaching hours in gender studies in the new BA programmes of CEU PU, the BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics or the BA in Culture, Politics and Society.*

We will continue our efforts to work with CEU PU administration to increase our departmental budget with all these areas in mind.

## **II. Recommendations regarding the 2-years Master program in Critical Gender Studies (p. 46-47):**

*1) Seeing the rise in applications and far larger interest than available places, the expert panel suggests the department continuously evaluates and is self-reflexive about the selection procedure, while it depends on certain subjective elements: student competences may reflect faculty those of the faculty. The expert panel also suggests that the selection takes into account more gender diversity (M/F/X) among the student body.*

The departmental Admissions Committee will annually monitor our selection procedures to ensure avoidance of selective biases.

We will add a line to our application page and recruitment materials to stress our goals of diversity and inclusion, and encourage gender- and sexuality-diverse applicants.

*2) Given the special circumstances related to the relocation of CEU PU, the experts would highly recommend evaluating the plan, and the efficiency of, the centralisation of administrative tasks, and the following reduction of non-academic staff at the department. This in order to ensure that an appropriate workload of the latter is secured also in the future.*

The department will continue to stress this issue actively with the CEU PU administration, and strive to protect all departmental staff, and thus the effective functioning of the department.

*3) The experts would also like to recommend that the workload of the faculty is evaluated further on given the introduction of the new BA programmes of CEU PU, the BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics or the BA in Culture, Politics and Society, and the considered second-year specialisation track on 'Gender and Policy Making'. This to ensure that the CEU PU still provides sufficient staff for operating the Master's programme in Critical Gender Studies.*

The Department faculty, and particularly the Department Head and the Curriculum Committee, will maintain observation as these programs begin and approach operation, and, based on institutional calculation methods for student and faculty ratios, will request from the CEU administration for new full-time faculty lines to support them.

*4) The experts would like to express their support for the above-mentioned proposition of hiring additional faculty to assist teaching, especially in times of change and transition. This to ensure that the faculty (especially junior members) has enough time for research and development. Providing more time for the assistant professors to pursue their research and publications is thus recommended.*

Besides seeking the additional faculty positions mentioned in the response above, the Department will strive more actively to develop a formal structure for the mentoring and

protection of junior faculty from excessive teaching and service obligations, and to more actively support their development towards promotion.

5) *In addition to current measures, such as reduced teaching load and possibility to take 6-month sabbatical leave after 3.5 years, the experts would also like to recommend that the assistant professors are freed from major administrative duties. The experts would also like to express that they hope that the possible strains related to the reallocation of CEU PU are taken into consideration when evaluating the performance of both faculty (especially junior members) and non-academic staff in the upcoming years. Also, given the expressed desire to attract more students to the second-year specialisation labelled 'The Applied Track' the experts would like to emphasise the possible need for further faculty assistance in the future. This given the degree of assistance required for helping students in both planning and undertaking the internship.*

The Department is committed - in express coordination with other CEU PU departments, who face the same pressures - to emphasizing to the CEU PU administration the need to take into consideration the tremendous additional strain that the circumstances preceding, surrounding, and likely following upon the move to Vienna, and the additional critical labor they have been compelled to undertake, have placed on the faculty - and especially the junior faculty - and their scholarly productivity during these years. We will insist that these factors be taken into consideration in the evaluation and promotion process of all faculty - but especially junior faculty.

6) *The panel recommends that the system of student funding is continued and financial space is provided for additional faculty and, if necessary, supportive staff seeing the projected rising needs of the programme due to higher student-teacher ratio compared to other programmes, and the introduction of additional courses and teaching hours in gender studies in the new BA programmes of CEU PU, the BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics or the BA in Culture, Politics and Society, which will start the upcoming winter term.*

We will continue our efforts to work with CEU PU administration to increase our departmental budget with all these areas in mind.

7) *Regarding students, a room designed for those in gender studies programmes—if only once a week – might be helpful to collect and focus beyond the hours of courses and in an otherwise flexible and open space. Considering the teaching staff, although this environment offers all necessary resources, the openness of the place and teaching in many different programmes on campus may make it difficult to withdraw and work “focused and undistracted” for each programme. This is not only important for teaching preparations but even more so for research. The open door policy on all levels thus might need a slight revision with regular intermissions being allowed.*

We will attempt to secure such a dedicated and safe space in the new CEU PU campus building, preferably something like a social lounge in the same wing of the Quellenstrasse 51 building as our departmental offices.

**III. Recommendations regarding the 1-year Master program in Gender Studies (p. 64):**

*These recommendations are the same as those for the two-year Master in Critical Gender Studies, so we refer to our responses above.*