

Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS

On the degree programme

- „English Language Teaching“ (B.A.)

at the Eastern Mediterranean University (Turkish Republic North Cyprus)

Based on the report of the expert panel and the proceedings of the Accreditation Commission in its 54th meeting on 17./18. February 2014 the Accreditation Commission decides:

1. The Bachelor's programme “**English Language Teaching**” (**Bachelor of Arts**) offered by the **Eastern Mediterranean University** is accredited according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
2. The study programme complies with the requirements defined by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **five years** and is valid until **30. September 2019**.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programme:

1. Activities to foster student experience in English speaking countries should be intensified.
2. There should be an increased number of courses in the curriculum which address school experience and teaching practice.
3. The institutionalized participation of students in relevant quality-assurance-procedures should be reflected in the related documents.

With regard to the reasoning of this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



Assessment Report

on the degree programme:

“English Language Teaching” (B.A.)

offered by the Eastern Mediterranean University

Visit to the University: 4./5. November 2013

Panel of Experts:

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AQAS

Agentur für Quali-
tätsicherung durch
Akkreditierung von
Studiengängen

1. Introduction

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching programme offered by the Eastern Mediterranean University. The review is based on the criteria derived from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that were developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and presented to the Bologna Follow-Up group in 2005.

The University produced a Self Evaluation Report. The accreditation procedure was officially initialized through a decision by the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 13./14. May 2013. The Accreditation Commission nominated the before mentioned expert panel, and the University did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report on 4./5. November 2013 a site visit to the University took place. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders and consulted additional documentation and student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings by the group of experts to the University representatives.

2. Profile and Goals

The qualification goal of the Bachelor-programme is to train all-rounded modern language teachers of English. The central idea of the programme is to provide a rigorous and comprehensive training for BA students so that they can acquire an adequate competence in English language teaching. To this effect, a well-balanced emphasis on theory and application is maintained throughout the BA study; commencing with the first year of language work and culminating with school experience and teaching practice at the close, students have opportunities to relate theory to practice and to explore career options. Moreover, a range of Area Core elective courses provide students with opportunities to familiarize themselves with the most recent developments in the field.

The Learning Outcomes in respect to the BA in ELT Programme are as follows:

Upon successful completion of the course BA students will have

- developed skills for effective oral and written communication in English;
- developed analytical, critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- acquired core ELT concepts, as well as theoretical and practical knowledge compatible with contemporary professional requirements;
- developed skills for effective planning, preparation and execution of language teaching;
- applied acquired knowledge and skills to practice through microteaching as well as in real English language teaching classrooms;
- become confident, creative and autonomous language teachers;
- gained an adequate competence in English language teaching or for MA studies
- become aware of professional ethics;
- become receptive to the philosophy of lifelong learning as well as continuous professional development;
- become aware of the ELT impact in the globalizing world.

Experts' Evaluation

A realistic assessment of the extent to which the programme meets its qualification goals has to be based on the acknowledgement of the restrictions that result from the regulations for teacher education. EMU provides a standardized Bachelor-ELT programme in accordance with the regulations and restrictions of YOK (Higher Education Council in Turkey) and YODAK (Higher Education Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council in TRNC). Namely, ELT departments in the universities in the Turkish Republic North Cyprus and Turkey follow almost the same standardized Bachelor's programme with 34 Area Core courses, 6 Area Core elective courses, 14 Faculty Core courses, and 4 University Core courses. This provides EMU and other universities with only very limited flexibility regarding their courses. Nevertheless, from the experts' assessment the university provides more flexibility than many other universities, which is seen very positively by the panel.

Some flexibility is provided through the sequential organization of the courses over the four years and through six elective courses that students can take. Of these six, three courses are dedicated to a second foreign language, and the remaining three are elective in that students may choose from a range of over 160 courses that are offered university-wide.

The panel of experts comes to the conclusion that, taking these limitations into account, the Bachelor-programme is appropriate to achieve the desired qualification goals. The intended learning outcomes are clearly defined and match the level of a bachelor programme.

Within the limited freedom of the curriculum, the panel believes that further improvements could be reached if the programme could provide a larger variety of elective courses that are specifically geared towards the practicalities of (English) language teaching, thus providing an even better preparation for the 'reality in the classrooms' (see below). **(Finding)** While this does not question the overall quality of the programme design, it would offer students the chance to be even better prepared for the challenges of English teachers in the 21st century.

On the level of the profile and general setup of the programme the panel of experts recognizes that the ELT department yet faces challenges to promote student exchange to US-American and British universities. The panel acknowledges the high level of internationality that EMU as a whole provides (including a sizeable number of students from the UK) and the fact that all courses in the programme are taught in English. At the same time the panel believes that future English teachers should be provided with opportunities and incentives to study in an English-speaking country, immersing themselves in the English language as well as in Anglophone cultures. **(Finding)** In this context it is important to mention that structural limitations (e.g. the inaccessibility to the Erasmus programme) exist which are not in the responsibility of the faculty. As a result, the panel strongly recommends to further increase the number of individual connections between EMU and universities in English-speaking countries. A promising starting point in that respect might be the already existing connections to the University College London, the University of Warwick and the University of Austin, Texas.

It became obvious in the discussions with the staff of the programme that the importance of a student experience in an English speaking country is not disputed and that on an individual level students are supported once they show interest. These activities should be strengthened in the future and developed to short- to long-term strategies to foster student mobility to English-speaking countries.

Summing up, the panel of experts is of the opinion that the programme is appropriate to train all-rounded language teachers of English with a well-defined profile that fits academic and generic requirements. The level of the learning outcomes is in line with the requirements of

the Bachelor level of the European Qualifications Framework. Improvements could be made regarding the practical side of ELT as well as exchange offers to English-speaking universities.

3. Quality of the Curriculum

The key elements of the programme are 34 Area Core courses, 6 Area Core elective courses, 14 Faculty Core courses, and 4 University Core courses.

The standard period of study for full-time BA students enrolled in the programme is 8 semesters and it requires fulfilling a total of 240 ECTS credits and 159 credit-hours according to the Eastern Mediterranean University's (EMU) regulations. The University Core, Faculty Core, Area Core and Area Core Elective courses are offered in fall and spring semesters, respectively.

Full-time students start their undergraduate studies with 8 courses in the autumn (1st) and spring (2nd) semesters of year I, respectively. These students are assigned mostly English language development and communication skills courses (10), professional courses (2) such as Introduction to Educational Sciences and Educational Psychology, 2 computer courses and 2 Turkish Communication courses (for Turkish speaking students).

As of year II of the undergraduate studies BA students take, until graduation, 7 courses per semester. In semesters 3 and 4 students are offered such Area Core courses as Presentation Skills course, a sequence of 2 Linguistics foundation courses, 2 Approaches in ELT courses, 2 English Literature courses, as well as Language Acquisition, Special Teaching Methods 1, English-Turkish Translation courses (for Turkish speaking students), and Research Methods in ELT. Moreover, in the same year they continue with such professional courses as Principles and Methods of Instruction, Instructional Technology and Materials Design and History of Turkish Education.

Subsequently, year III of the BA studies (semesters 5 and 6) aims at complementing and strengthening students' professional and vocational background through a sequence of 2 Teaching English to Young Learners courses, 2 Teaching Language Skills courses, 2 Literature and Language Teaching courses, as well as Special Teaching Methods 2, Language and Society, Application of Service to Community, Turkish-English Translation courses (for Turkish speaking students). Moreover, they benefit from such professional courses as Classroom Management and Measurement and Evaluation. Importantly, as of semester 5 (year III) BA students undertake a sequence of Second Foreign Language courses (French or German) to be continued in semester 6 and completed in semester 7 (year IV).

In year IV (semesters 7 and 8), in order to enhance their acquired knowledge and skills, BA students are assigned 2 Area Core courses, Materials Development and Adaptation, and Testing and Evaluation in ELT; further, they are required to complete 3 Area Core elective courses such as Audio-Visual Aids in ELT, Applied Linguistics in ELT, and English for Specific Purposes. Furthermore, they take the remaining professional courses such as Counselling, Special Education, Comparative Education, and Turkish Education System and School Administration. As part of their graduation requirements, these students (for Turkish-speaking ones) have to complete 2 University Core courses related to Atatürk Principles and History of Turkish Reforms. Finally, pre-service English language teachers are required to successfully complete School Experience and Teaching Practice.

It should be noted that every course lasts for one semester (covering 16 weeks, minimum 80 working days, examinations inclusive). Some courses such as area core electives, second foreign language courses, computer courses, as well as school experience and teaching practice have a flexible time framework. If required, they can be offered every semester.

Experts' Evaluation

The curriculum of the programme is well designed and enables the students to reach the defined learning outcomes on the programme level. The panel agrees that the admission criteria are well defined, transparent and available to potential students.

The requirements for a Bachelor's programme in the fields of knowledge, skills and competence are fulfilled through the curriculum. The workload that is expected from the students is clear and made transparent. An appropriate and transparent transfer system from the EMU system of credit points towards the ECTS is available and in use.

Quite obviously, the transfer of knowledge is facilitated through a good atmosphere within the ELT department enabling a productive dialogue between students and teachers. This dialogue is apparently also used to discuss the workload with the students and adjust it if required.

While different assessment methods are used it seems to the panel that for most of the courses written examinations are of high importance. Still, this does not contradict that the assessment methods are well aligned with the competencies that students have to acquire.

With regards to the overall potential for further improvement of the curriculum, in particular, staff and students alike would welcome an elective course on learning and teaching technologies. This perception is shared and even intensified through the observation of the panel of experts that it might be helpful to include a general course on study skills in the earlier part of the programme.

Finally, the panel agrees that it should be of high importance to the programme to further consider courses that fall in the area of school experience and teaching practice. **(Finding)** While no deficits can be found in this field still it seems to the panel that within a strong programme this field could use some more attention. Acknowledging the huge amount of logistic and infrastructural demands as well as restrictions imposed by governmental regulations, the panel is aware of the fact that changes cannot be achieved in the near future. However, the panel would encourage EMU to develop mid-term and long-term strategies to meet this demand. A possible short-term measure might be to promote the exchange of students and alumni of the ELT programme who currently work as teachers and use the options offered through electives.

4. Student Support

Each student enrolled in the ELT Department, from the commencement of academic studies until graduation, is assigned an Advisor, an academic staff member, to provide students assistance and advice with academic, administrative and other matters.

As regards Guidance/Counselling Services ELT students can benefit from the services of the EMU Psychological Counselling, Guidance and Research Centre in terms of various workshops and sessions on a range of educational, psychological and social issues. According to the Self Evaluation Report the Department pursues an open-door policy whereby students can seek advice regarding their university experiences in general, or course selection, regis-

tration, adding courses, dropping courses, course withdrawal, etc. Advisors follow their advisees' progress throughout the semester in terms of at least attendance and achievement.

Especially at the beginning of their departmental studies ELT students can also benefit from the Faculty Help Desk where students can obtain information related to the Faculty in general and the Department specifically.

Experts' Evaluation

Obvious to the panel was the implemented open door attitude in terms of exchange between teachers and learners. The relatively small number of students allows a direct and intense interaction to raise questions but also to follow up on the students' progression. Furthermore, the open door policy seems to be a general attitude beyond the departments. In the interviews, different examples could be given of the good availability of responsible staff. The panel concludes that this policy clearly supports a positive learning experience. Moreover, there are clear structures and responsibilities for the coordination of teaching and classes. This enables students to address questions to the right person.

For new students, there are appropriate offers to help them find their way at EMU and in the department. Also with regard to the entrance level of English proficiency, different language class levels are available to students depending on their individual needs. From the experts' perspective this is very helpful to reach the required level but also to support students in getting there.

The requirements regarding student assessment are transparent and are part of the course outlines that are available to the students. Different methods of assessment are used appropriately. In the discussions with the staff of the faculty and the students examples could be given as to how the special needs of students with handicaps are addressed not only as part of the regulations but also as part of the teaching and assessment practice.

Positive mentioning should be given to the implemented mentoring system that allows advisors to follow up on "their" students' success. Considering the relative low number of students, this is an appropriate tool to support students. It complements the open door policy, as open doors represent availability but do not reach students who are at risk to get lost in their studies. For this reason the mentoring system should be continued even with growing numbers of students.

On an individual level there is also support for students who wish to include a stay abroad in their studies. Two aspects have to be mentioned in this context: As the experts understand, many students from foreign countries study at the ELT department of EMU leading to the fact that for them it is already a study experience abroad and they have no additional intention to move abroad for a semester. At the other hand the exclusion of the TRNC from the official Bologna mechanisms complicates institutional cooperation and leaves support on the individual level as the most effective way to find a solution. The panel recognizes that this individual support brings greater responsibility to the staff involved and encourages the department as well as the university to work on long-term solutions.

5. Career orientation

ELT graduates are mostly trained for English language teaching positions in the state and private sectors across pre-university as well as university preparatory levels. In the process of planning and implementation of the BA Programme the ELT instructors have been taking into account expectations and feedback of some stakeholders. In this regard, the ELT in-

structors of the School Experience and Teaching Practice courses formed an Advisory Board with representatives of the Partner Schools. (The setup of the advisory board is documented in an Annex to the Self Evaluation report). In spring 2012, the ELT Department was cooperating with the EMU English Preparatory School, Doğa College, as well as another English medium college and 2 High Schools in Famagusta. Career-integrated studies are complemented and enhanced through School Experience and Teaching Practice at the culmination of the BA Programme which provide valuable input and opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge and skills to practice.

Experts' Evaluation

From the panels' perspective, the department for ELT is a fairly small one, which thus manages to keep a very close relationship to all of its students. It is therefore very well documented, what career path students choose after their studies and also how satisfied they are.

It is understood by the panel of experts that career placement is somewhat difficult as to the size of the market (schools offered) and competition; one helpful resource that is used by the department is the private university attached Doğa College (private high school attached to EMU) and its prep-course, where some of the graduates find both teaching-placement and jobs.

The school experience programme seems well organized and clearly structured. The utilized portfolio is not only a desirable assessment tool but also equips future teachers with a useful and contemporary methodological tool. The panel of experts clearly underlines the potential connected with this method of assessment.

It is to be noted that the teacher placement follows on a goodwill basis of the ministry and on a voluntary basis of the participating instructors. Besides the school experience programme, in the discussions during the site visit microteaching was often mentioned as a form of professional training. Some students insofar criticized this, as they didn't feel like it was 'the real situation,' especially with regard to classroom discipline. However, it was commonly agreed that it is a good form of both teaching and learning, and the panel therefore can only encourage the department to think about ways to increase the "real situation" learning experiences for students.

Overall, it seems to the panel that there is a high satisfaction with the programme among the various stakeholders. As reflected in the interviews with the students they believe to be very well prepared for their work life. This was also the tenor in the discussion with the university graduates.

Based on the documentation and the interviews on site the panel of experts concludes that the Bachelor's programme is well oriented towards the requirements of the labor market. The exchange with schools and teachers is well implemented to support a facilitated transition of graduates into the labor market.

6. Resources

The outline of the human resource structure and distribution in the ELT Department is as follows: 8 full-time Faculty members, 1 Executive Assistant, 2 Research Assistants (a PhD and an MA Candidate), as well as numerous support staff.

The ELT teaching staff represent 3 nationalities. They obtained their first, second and third academic degrees from universities in Turkey, Russia, UK , USA, as well as EMU and have

also taught in different instructional contexts such as Turkey, Russia, North Cyprus and USA. The academic staff includes 2 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, 4 Assistant Professors, and 1 Senior Instructor. At present all academic staff members teach in the ELT Department only. The fact that they hold full-time status shall ensure continuity of the educational services.

In cases where the department requires more staff to teach multiple groups of the first/second year courses, Assistant Professors or Senior Instructors from the School of Foreign Languages are appointed to teach in a given semester, and their performance is monitored and supported by the Department Head.

EMU Library was founded in 1993 with a seating capacity of 800. There is a multi-purpose auditorium with 240 seats, an audio-visual room with a 60-seat capacity, a special exhibition hall, all areas being centrally air-conditioned. EMU library offers computerized research facilities, over 140,000 books and over hundreds of journal and periodical subscriptions. Additionally, there is a separate ELT library within the department for English Language Teaching.

Experts' Evaluation

Considering the number of the students at BA level (126), the staff at the department, 8 full-time Faculty members, 1 Executive Assistant, 2 Research Assistants, as well as numerous support staff (together with the supporting staff from the School of Foreign Languages and other departments when needed), with their educational, academic, and professional background in different high quality universities in different countries are without a doubt adequate in both number and quality to run the Bachelor's programme appropriately. This judgment is based not only on the documents including the CVs of the teaching staff, but also on the meetings with the staff and the students and graduates during the site visit.

Based on the impression of the panel, all staff showed great enthusiasm, passion, and commitment towards the programme, the development of a joint understanding of quality, and the work they do at the university. There shall be no doubt that the staff can be seen as one strength of the programme.

The facilities, including the university library with over 140,000 books and numerous journal and periodical subscriptions, support the staff with their desire and effort to provide high quality education.

The financial dependence on students' fees and a late decrease in the number of students was addressed during the site visit to assess the sustainability of material resources required for the programme. The clear commitment of the heads of the university combined with a recent rise in enrollment numbers are convincing arguments for the panel, not to overemphasize concerns in this field. To conclude, it can be stated that the requirements towards staff, material resources and facilities are positively fulfilled.

7. Quality Assurance

The departmental board and the post-graduate committee are the decision making bodies for the undergraduate and postgraduate academic affairs, respectively, at the departmental level. The Departmental Board consists of all the full-time faculty members teaching in the department.

The departmental committees/teams are as follows: The Curriculum Committee (responsible for continuous review of the BA programme and making recommendations for improvement

to the Departmental Board); The Quality Assurance Team (responsible for the continuous review of the departmental Quality Assurance System and related procedures, as well as making recommendations for improvement to the Departmental Board), The Socio-Cultural Committee (responsible for planning and organization of various socio-cultural activities in the department, accountable to the Departmental Board), The Committee responsible for Applied Courses (in charge of continuous assessment and making recommendations for improvement to the Departmental Board related to such courses as Service to Community, School Experience, Teaching Practice).

A Student Representative also attends Departmental Board meetings, especially for those issues on the agenda that immediately concern the ELT students.

Experts' Evaluation

The provided documentation and interviews during the site visit support the impression of the panel that the ELT department has a profound understanding of quality for teaching and learning in their programmes. The practice of an open door policy facilitates an exchange with students and allows the implementation of feedback.

The results of evaluations are used for the further development of the programme, and different stakeholders are included in the procedure. The quality assurance process of the department is embedded in university wide activities that support one another.

Two comments should be raised regarding the quality assurance for the programme. First the so-called quality team takes primary responsibility for quality within the department. While the panel welcomes the clear definition of responsibilities it is also important to underline that all members of the department must support quality in teaching and learning, and thus interaction between the quality team and all other members of the department is of utmost importance. Quality itself cannot be delegated – it must be developed and enhanced jointly in an integrative approach. The small size of the department and the open door policy leading to a generally pleasant culture of communication does cause a problem at present, but it should be monitored on the long run.

Secondly, the panel found a good involvement of students in the processes of the department. Interestingly, this implementation could be found on the operational level, e.g. the participation of students in the departmental meetings while in the documentations students did not sign the protocol of the meeting as the other “regular” members did. The panel positively concludes that the current leadership of the department implements a strong effort towards quality in teaching and learning, student participation and programme enhancement. This is reflected in well functioning procedures and operations as reviewed by the panel. However, with regards to continuity a stronger formalization that also guarantees student participation and stakeholder involvement in the long run should be seriously considered. The institutionalized participation of students in relevant procedures should be reflected in the related documents.

8. Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts finds the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance appropriately reflected in the English Language Teaching (B.A.) programme of the Eastern Mediterranean University. The panel of experts recommends an accreditation of the Bachelor Programme “**English Language Teaching**” (B.A.) offered by **the Eastern Mediterranean University**.

Findings:

1. Activities to foster student experience in English speaking countries should be intensified.
2. There should be an increased number of courses addressing school experience and covering teaching practice in the curriculum.
3. The institutionalized participation of students in relevant procedures should be reflected in the related documents.