



June 3, 2015

Ruth V. Watkins  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
205 Park Bldg.  
Campus

RE: Graduate Council Review  
Middle East Studies Program

Dear Vice President Watkins:

Enclosed is the Graduate Council's review of the Middle East Studies Program. Included in this review packet are the report prepared by the Graduate Council, the Program Profile, and the Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the review wrap-up meeting.

After your approval, please forward this packet to President David Pershing for his review. It will then be sent to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next Senate meeting.

Sincerely,

David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School

Encl.

XC: Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, Interim Director, Middle East Studies Program  
Nathan P. Devir, Department of Languages and Literature  
Mark Bergstrom, Associate Dean, College of Humanities

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**The Graduate School - The University of Utah**  
**GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT TO THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**  
**AND THE ACADEMIC SENATE**

*March 30, 2015*

The Graduate Council has completed its review of the **Middle East Studies Program – Middle East Center / College of Humanities**. The External Review Committee included:

William M. Schniedewind, PhD  
Kershaw Chair of Ancient Eastern Mediterranean Studies  
Professor of Biblical Studies and Northwest Semitic Languages  
Chair, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures  
University of California, Los Angeles

Mahmoud Al-Batal, PhD  
Professor of Arabic  
Director, UT Arabic Flagship Program  
Department of Middle Eastern Studies  
The University of Texas, Austin

The Internal Review Committee of the University of Utah included:

Amy Bergerson, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy

Mira Locher, MArch  
Associate Professor and Chair  
School of Architecture

This report of the Graduate Council is based on the self-study submitted by the Middle East Studies Program, the reports of the Internal and External Review Committees, and the letter in response to the Internal and External Committee Reports that was signed by the Interim Director of Middle East Studies and the Dean of the College of Humanities.

## **DEPARTMENT PROFILE**

### **Program Overview**

The Middle East Studies Program (MESP) has undergone several leadership changes since the last Graduate Council Review (2006-2007) and lost its Title VI National Resource Center funding in 2010. Leadership changes and the loss of funding resulted in a moratorium on graduate student admissions in Fall 2012. According to the self-study report, all graduate students admitted prior to the moratorium who are still completing degree requirements are expected to complete their degrees by Spring 2015. Given the moratorium on graduate admissions, the focus of this review will be on the undergraduate degree program.

The mission of the Middle East Studies Undergraduate Degree Program (hereinafter the "Program") is to prepare students "to be knowledgeable about the culture, civilization and languages of the Middle East and to possess the necessary research and communication skills to continue to learn about the Middle East in areas of Anthropology, History, Political Science, and one of the four Middle East Languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish."

The Program, which offers an interdisciplinary Middle East Studies BA degree, has an Interim Director (appointed in January, 2013) and reports to the Dean of the College of Humanities. Since her appointment, the focus of the Interim Director's efforts has been on "consolidating and strengthening the undergraduate Middle East Studies degree and on cooperation with academic departments and other programs."

### **Faculty**

No tenure-track faculty lines are housed in the Program. The Program's self-study report indicated that there are 25 faculty who are affiliated with the MESP (affiliation was defined in the self-study as teaching departmental courses that are cross-listed with the MESP). Further, the self-study reports that the MESP employs several adjunct faculty and instructors each year on a per-course basis, but will shift all instructional hires to academic departments after the 2014-2015 academic year.

The self-study stated that, given that no faculty lines are housed in the MESP, information that academic departments provide in a self-study (e.g., gender, racial/ethnic composition, teaching and scholarship recognition, service, and RPT information) was not included. However, review of faculty vitae indicated involvement in a variety of research, teaching, and service activities. During conversations with the Internal Review Committee, the Interim Director stated that the number of faculty who express an active interest in the MESP is declining. Both the Internal and External Review Committees noted the need for increased investment and involvement of the existing faculty who are affiliated with the Program. Further, the External Review Committee noted the need to hire additional faculty (specifically in the areas of Islamic Studies, Political Science, Turkish Studies, and Turkish Culture) as well as hire an additional lecturer in Arabic.

The External Review Committee indicated that faculty/administrators in the MESP identified problems within the Department of Languages and Literature that houses many of the faculty affiliated with the MES Program. Specific information regarding the problems was not provided, but the External Committee suggested that restructuring is needed. Resolution of these problems is likely to have a positive impact on the overall health and vitality of the MESP.

## **Students**

As noted previously, a moratorium is in effect for graduate admissions, and graduate students have not been admitted since Fall 2012. The self-study report indicated that the Interim Director and the academic advisor have worked with the remaining graduate students and their committees to achieve a completion of all graduate degrees by Spring 2015.

The Internal Review Committee referenced OBIA data in reporting 41 enrolled majors in Fall 2013 and indicate that this is the lowest it has been since 2007. The letter in response to the Internal and External Committee Reports that was signed by the Interim Director of Middle East Studies and the Dean of the College of Humanities responded to this statement by stating that Academic Reports (which, unlike OBIA, includes double majors) indicates that there are 52 majors enrolled in Spring 2015 and suggests that this represents a potentially upward trend. The self-study stated that the goal is to increase the number of majors to 80, and to graduate 20 students annually.

The self-study reported that the MESP advisor, MESP Interim Director, and the recently hired Outreach Coordinator for International and Area Studies Programs (IAP) are actively engaged in recruitment activities both on and off campus. Further, the self-study report indicated that the Program is participating in an outreach campaign to promote the University of Utah's International and Area Studies Programs to diverse student populations in Utah high schools, at Salt Lake Community College, and at the University of Utah. If successful, these efforts should serve to increase the number and diversity of students seeking an undergraduate degree in Middle East Studies.

The self-study reports that 29 graduate awards and fellowships, and 30 teaching assistant awards have been granted since the last review. However, the self-study reports that support for undergraduate students has been limited to "a handful" of study abroad scholarships, and one undergraduate tuition scholarship per year. The Internal and External Review Committees both identified student financial support (for undergraduate tuition as well as for learning abroad opportunities) as an area of need.

Representation across a range of students was limited during informal discussions with review teams (the External Review Committee met with only one undergraduate student and the Internal review Committee met with Teaching Assistants in the Languages and Literature Program). Furthermore, information related to undergraduate students' comments and/or concerns regarding the MESP was not delineated. Although specific information from students was not included in reports, positive efforts related to advising were noted by both the Internal and External Review Committees. However, both teams identified additional coordination with affiliated departments and the International Center as an area for improvement.

## **Curriculum**

Under the leadership of the current Interim Director, the Program has refashioned the undergraduate program. Specifically, in Spring 2014, the University of Utah Board of Trustees approved the request to discontinue the four separate Middle East Studies language degrees and to offer one single Middle East Studies degree with a language emphasis. To receive the Middle East Studies BA degree, a student must complete seven area studies courses (21 credits) with two of the courses foundational (1000/2000 level) and two at the 4000/5000 level. The degree also requires a minimum of four courses (14-15 credits) in a Middle East language (Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, or Persian) and a signature experience approved by the advisor.

The self-study report indicates that the consolidated Middle East Studies degree with different options for language study aligns with other area studies degrees offered on campus (e.g., Asian and Latin American Studies) and across the United States. As noted by the External Review Committee, the restructuring has already resulted in an increase in Middle East Studies majors.

## **Diversity**

With respect to students, the Program is currently comprised of 37% women students and 63% male students. Although not yet achieving gender parity, this represents an increase in female students from a low of 27% females in 2007. Approximately 24% of students currently in the Program identified themselves as other than white. Although there is variability from year to year, this represents an increase in students who identify themselves as other than white from a low of 10% in 2008.

A breakdown of faculty affiliated with the MESP by rank and faculty-type revealed a distribution of 4 Professors, 6 Associate Professors, 5 Assistant Professors, 2 Research Professors, 2 Directors, 1 Associate Director, 2 Professor-Lecturers, and 2 Adjunct Assistant Professors. Further, diversity of academic focus was represented in the distribution of the MES affiliated faculty across 17 different academic departments/programs. As mentioned previously, the self-study indicated that, given that no faculty lines are housed in the Program, information that academic departments typically provide in a self-study (including gender and racial/ethnic diversity) was not included.

## **Program Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment**

Since the Program in its reconfigured structure is new, the Program self-study provided limited information regarding program effectiveness and outcomes assessment and the Interim Director indicated that no other processes (except those built in to courses) were used to assess program effectiveness. The self-study did identify a language proficiency assessment as a newly adopted measure for informing program effectiveness. However, given that this assessment was only recently adopted, actual data obtained from the language proficiency assessment was not provided. No data on graduate student employment or the present/projected job market have been gathered since the moratorium on graduate student admissions.

## **Facilities and Resources**

The Program self-study indicated that they are faced with two budgetary issues that must be addressed as they strive to increase the number of students seeking the Middle East Studies degree. The first issue is related to the impact of shifting SCH to academic programs on the interdisciplinary MESP and the second issue is related to making Middle East language instruction financially sustainable.

The MESP shares space with the other U of U IAPs (Asia Center, Center for Latin American Studies, and International Studies) on the second floor in the Carolyn Tanner Irish Building and receives technology support from the College of Humanities computer staff. The self-study indicated no space or technology needs beyond what is currently provided.

In addition to space and resources in the Carolyn Tanner Irish Building, the University of Utah's Marriott Library houses the Aziz S. Atiya Middle East Library. This is the fifth largest Middle East Library in the United States and is supported by one full-time and two part-time staff who are employed by the Marriott Library. The External Review Committee identified the Middle East Library as "a remarkable asset." However, the Internal Review Committee noted that the Middle East Library staff expressed concern regarding the lack of resources needed to maintain and expand the collection and support constituents who access the Library's collection.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. Given the significant changes in the MESP since the last review, faculty, staff, and administration are commended for their efforts to identify and address short-term as well as long-term goals/objectives.
2. The Program is commended for their efforts to align the Middle East Studies Program with other International and Area Studies Programs at the University of Utah.
3. The adoption of the Language Proficiency Assessment will serve as one important indicator of program effectiveness and will provide critical data to inform current/future practices.
4. Reconfigurations resulting in shared space, academic advisors, and an outreach coordinator with other International and Area Studies Programs are an excellent use of shared resources and provide a basis for future collaborations.
5. The quality and commitment of Middle East Studies faculty and staff to their students and to the MES program is notable and bodes well for the MESP during this time of transition.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Program needs to identify a permanent director of the MESP in order to build upon recent efforts related to the reconfiguration, specifically as it relates to strategic planning and future vision for the MESP including, but not limited to, the graduate degree program.
2. In order to assess program effectiveness and outcomes, the Program should develop and use metrics to gauge progress toward specified goals. The Program should consult the numerous tools available nationally and on campus in order to identify appropriate evaluation metrics.
3. The Program should expand upon their current efforts to involve and/or reinvigorate faculty in order to ensure that they are part of the growth/development of the Program.
4. The Program should work with Administration to address challenges related to financial resources and ensure that the U of U continues to emphasize the Middle East region as part of its overall emphasis on global studies.
5. The Program should work with Administration and the Department of Languages and Literature to address current and future instructional/financial needs of the MES language programs as well as the current moratorium on graduate student admissions.
6. The Program should build the tenure-track faculty who are affiliated with MES to include a faculty member in Islamic Studies and faculty member in Political Science with Middle East specialization.

Submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Graduate Council:

Susan S. Johnston (Chair)  
Professor, Department of Special Education

Ryan E. Smith  
Associate Professor, School of Architecture

Timothy J. Garrett  
Professor, Department of Atmospheric Sciences

Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski (Undergraduate Council)  
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs/Associate Dean for University College  
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy

## Middle East Language & Area Study Program

2007-08    2008-09    2009-10    2010-11    2011-12    2012-13    2013-2014

### FTE from A-1/S-11/Cost Study Definition

Full-Time Salaried	12	10	13	11	10	9	9
Part-Time/Career-Line/Adjunct	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Teaching Assistants	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

### Number of Graduates

Bachelor's Degrees	11	10	10	13	13	14	11
Master's Degrees	0	8	3	13	9	6	5
Doctoral Degrees	2	2	0	2	1	3	1

### Number of Students Based on Fall Third Week Semester Data

Undergraduate Pre-Majors	7	5	10	7	6	5	3
Undergraduate Majors	37	45	46	45	42	47	38
Enrolled in Masters Program	22	34	28	24	15	7	4
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	14	13	15	11	13	13	9
Department FTE Undergrad	27	30	29	35	29	31	21
Department FTE Graduate	22	28	20	21	12	12	9
Department SCH Undergrad	823	891	878	1,059	863	924	633
Department SCH Graduate	435	561	399	424	238	231	180
Undergraduate FTE per Total Faculty FTE	2	3	2	3	3	3	2
Graduate FTE per Total Faculty FTE	2	3	1	2	1	1	1

### Cost Study Definitions

Direct Instructional Expenditures	1,014,653	966,907	1,016,713	767,250	492,283	342,239	163,612
Cost Per Student FTE	20,630	16,743	20,658	13,580	12,105	8,081	5,436

### Funding

Total Grants	417,076	419,040	472,305	51,652	46,166	0	0
Appropriated Funds	478,621	517,202	478,702	718,951	321,872	382,202	227,357
Teaching Grants	417,076	419,040	472,305	51,652	46,166	0	0



## **Memorandum of Understanding Middle East Studies Program Graduate Council Review 2014-15**

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on May 5, 2015, and concludes the Graduate Council Review of the Middle East Studies (MES) Program. Ruth V. Watkins, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Robert D. Newman, Dean of the College of Humanities; Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, Interim Director of the MES Program; Nathan P. Devir, Incoming Interim Director of the MES Program; David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School; and Donna M. White, Associate Dean of The Graduate School, were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the recommendations contained in the review summary report presented to the Graduate Council on March 30, 2015. At the wrap-up meeting, the working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

**Recommendation 1: The Program needs to identify a permanent director of the MESP in order to build upon recent efforts related to the reconfiguration, specifically as it relates to strategic planning and future vision for the MESP including, but not limited to, the graduate degree program.**

Dr. Nathan Devir, a faculty member in the Department of Languages and Literature with an appointment in Jewish, Religious, and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, has been appointed as the new Interim Director of the MESP. One of his priorities is to work with the faculty to create a strategic plan and future vision for the Program. He will also work closely with the incoming Dean of the College of Humanities to co-create that vision and align the strategic plan with that of the College. The status of the graduate degree program will be considered at a future time as progress is made and resources are available to do so.

**Recommendation 2: In order to assess program effectiveness and outcomes, the Program should develop and use metrics to gauge progress toward specific goals. The Program should consult the numerous tools available nationally and on campus in order to identify appropriate evaluation metrics.**

From the former Interim Director's response: *"MES now requires that all graduating seniors complete the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, a standard measure of students' ability to communicate in a foreign language. MES will take advantage of the L2TReC Proficiency Flagship to determine instructional and curricular adjustments, based on the results of the proficiency assessments."* (This is one example of "closing the loop.") Also stated in the Interim Director's response: *"MES will also benefit from the GLAD grant that was awarded to International Studies for global competence assessment. The measures, to be developed during 2014-2015, will be available to MES, and the other international programs, for adaptation to their outcomes assessment needs."* The incoming Interim Director will consult with an assessment

expert on campus (Donna Ziegenfuss – Marriott Library) to identify appropriate tools and evaluation metrics for the MESP. Given the transition the Program is currently undergoing, existing ELOs will be reviewed by the new director and the faculty to ensure their currency. Feedback on all of these metrics for program effectiveness and outcomes will be provided to The Graduate School in regular update reports. The former Interim Director will provide additional data on numbers of majors and student outcomes to the Sr. VPAA as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 3: The Program should expand upon their current efforts to involve and/or reinvigorate faculty in order to ensure that they are part of the growth/development of the Program.**

As stated in Recommendation 1, the reinvigoration and engagement of the faculty is a priority for the new Interim Director, and the new Dean will undoubtedly have a positive impact on morale and faculty involvement in planning for the future of the Program. There are numerous possibilities for overlaps and collaborations with faculty in other programs such as Asian Studies, Religious Studies, and Languages and Literature. Those will be encouraged. Progress will be documented in regular updates to The Graduate School.

**Recommendation 4: The Program should work with Administration to address challenges related to financial resources and ensure that the U of U continues to emphasize the Middle East region as part of its overall emphasis on global studies.**

According to the academic leadership present at the meeting, the University intends to emphasize the Middle East region as part of its overall focus on global studies. Exactly how that emphasis will manifest itself is to be determined by new leadership in both the College and MESP. The Dean has returned salary for one year from the Arabic faculty member who has left Languages and Literature; MESP will discuss with the department the possibility of using a portion of these funds for Arabic instruction during 2015-16. The larger resource issues for the future will necessarily be part of the new Dean's charge. More details will be forthcoming in updates to the Graduate School.

**Recommendation 5: The Program should work with Administration and the Department of Languages and Literature to address current and future instructional/financial needs of the MES language programs as well as the current moratorium on graduate student admissions.**

To address current and future instructional/financial needs of the MES language, and other programs (including possibly ending the moratorium on graduate student admissions in the future), the Dean, Sr. VPAA, and Director discussed several related and relevant overlaps, collaborations, and cross-disciplinary thematic possibilities that exist on campus, including but not limited to programs in Health Sciences, Law, Environmental Humanities, and Languages and Literature. With what seems to be growing interest in certain areas of Middle East studies, the strategic planning process might include plans for the sharing of resources, both instructional and financial, that could develop into new growth possibilities for the future of the MESP. In connection with the consultation discussed in Recommendation 2, student and faculty input on strategic development of the MESP curriculum and programming would be useful.

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Middle East Studies Program  
Graduate Council Review 2014-15  
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Because the MESP has not been admitting graduate students recently, there may be a reduction in available and qualified TAs and instructors in the future. The Interim Director and Dean will work together to develop a plan to provide adequate instructional personnel/TAs to deliver the coursework needs of the undergraduate students.

**Recommendation 6: The Program should build the tenure-track faculty who are affiliated with MES to include a faculty member in Islamic Studies and faculty member in Political Science with Middle East specialization.**

As was mentioned in previous recommendations, there are numerous affiliated programs with which the MESP might partner. It was decided by the previous Interim Director and Dean that a shared faculty member with Political Science was not desirable at this time. Refer to Recommendations 4 and 5.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by regular letters of progress from the Director of the Middle East Studies Program to the Dean of The Graduate School. Letters will be submitted until all of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs have been completed.

Ruth V. Watkins  
Robert D. Newman  
Johanna Watzinger-Tharp  
Nathan P. Devir  
David B. Kieda  
Donna M. White



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David B. Kieda  
Dean, The Graduate School  
June 3, 2015