

Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies

The Graduate School, University of Washington, Seattle

Response to the Review Committee's Report (6 November 2019)
for NMES 10-year Program Review

January 27, 2020

Response prepared by:

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In collaboration with:

Executive Committee, Core Governance Faculty Sub-Group, & Graduate Students
Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies Program

PART I OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM'S RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW COMMITTEE'S REPORT OF 6 NOVEMBER 2019

The NMES program believes that the Review Committee's Report provides an excellent overview of the current intellectual strengths of this program, as well as the institutional challenges faced by this program. The program fully concurs with the overall findings of the report.

The NMES program specifically noted that the final report provides an excellent analysis of the program's strengths as well as a clear articulation of the institutional support—importantly but not exclusively in the form of funding for graduate students—that is required to maintain this program's excellence through the coming decade and heighten its visibility across the US and international academies. The NMES faculty also found the recommendations for initiatives that can be taken by the NMES faculty—to strengthen the current program by enhancing linkages and collaborations and to brand it more effectively—to be extremely thoughtful and productive.

The program faculty met in a special faculty meeting on 9 December 2019 and Graduate Students met with 2 members of the Executive Committee on 10 December 2019 to discuss the report and the program's response. All of the participants in these discussions noted the informed professionalism and seriousness of the members of the Review Committee. Faculty and graduate students of the NMES resolved to thank Prof. Priti Ramamurthy (Committee Chair, UW), Prof. Richard White (UW), Prof. Heather Sharkey (University of Pennsylvania), and Prof. Devin DeWeese (Indiana University) for their detailed report, careful assessment, and productive recommendations.

PART II DETAILED RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED IN THE REPORT

This section reviews, in detail, the specific recommendations in the report. Because many of the recommendations are not directed at the program, but at several institutional sites within the UW administration, this section strives to identify the administrative unit addressed by the recommendation, identify steps taken/planned by the NMES program to pursue the fulfillment of the recommendation, and state the current anticipated timeline/ action steps required to fulfill the recommendation.

A. Recommendations under the responsibility area of the CA&S:

- 1) **Recommendation:** "The 15 quarters of TA funding per academic year offered by the College of Arts and Sciences over the past five years should be increased to 21 quarters, with the commitment linked to the ten-year review cycle." (p.8)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The NMES Director met with Dean George Lovell (A&S) and Assist. Dean David Canfield-Budde (Graduate School) on 4 November 2019 to follow up on this recommendation as made in the exit discussion. The NMES Director agreed that an initial 5 year commitment with an process for renewing that commitment annually to extend by one year (so that the program always has a rolling five-year commitment) will both allow the program to make package offers to students and

guarantee that the CA&S/NMES partnership around these TAs will remain responsive to priorities of the undergraduate teaching mission of the university.

- b. **Outcome/ Action Items/ Timeline:** As of 24 January 2020, the program has received an email stating that the CA&S will provide NMES with 15Q/AY for the next 5 years, and that a formal letter with the full details will be forthcoming. The formal letter with an outline of the rolling annual renewal commitment and renewal process has not yet been received. The program will need this commitment in writing before it can make package offers to an incoming class. The letter must be received by 15 February 2020 for effective recruitment efforts the 2019/2020 admissions cycle.
- 2) **Recommendation:** “The university should work with departments to ensure that faculty who work with NMES students are not disadvantaged by their efforts beyond their departments. In particular, NMES is an unusual unit lacking adjunct faculty status, and as a result the standard checklist for the tenure and promotion process does not generate the need for support letters, rendering the labor invisible. The university should standardize a way to generate support letter requests from NMES.” (p.9)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The NMES Director met with Dean George Lovell (A&S) on 4 November 2019 and this point was discussed. Dean Lovell reported that he intended to raise this as a general issue, with NMES as a case example, at the CA&S Chairs and Directors meeting. In informal feedback, the NMES Director was told that Chairs and Directors reported that this is not an issue. NMES faculty and notably members of the NMES Executive Committee, however, strongly endorsed this point as an important administrative reform that would have a very positive impact on junior and mid-career faculty, and yet require no additional resources.
 - b. **Action Items:** The NMES program hopes the CA&S will implement this recommendation

B. Recommendations under the responsibility area of the Graduate School:

- 3) **Recommendation:** “The 9 quarters of RA and Fellowship funding offered by the Graduate School for first year students and recruitment should continue.” (p.8)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The Director met with Assist. Dean David Canfield-Budde on 4 November 2019 and 19 December 2019.
 - b. **Outcome:** The Graduate School expects to continue this commitment of funds.
- 4) **Recommendation:** “The Graduate School should provide a backstop in order to allow the program to offer competitive five-year funding packages to prospective students.” (p.8)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The Director met with Assist. Dean David Canfield-Budde on 4 November 2019. It is very likely that the Graduate School will guarantee a backstop of the 5-year commitment to funding.
 - b. **Action Items/ Timeline:** Confirmation of this likely guarantee will need to be received by the program in writing by 15 February 2020 so that 5-yr package recruitment offers can be sent this year.
- 5) **Recommendation:** “The Graduate School should offer one course release/buy-out for the program Director per academic year, in addition to the current administrative stipend.” (p.9)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The Director met with Assist. Dean David Canfield-Budde on 4 November 2019 and 19 December 2019. This point was discussed. The graduate school is currently not able to commit to meeting this recommendation for reasons

large burden for graduate students, especially for international students who are not eligible for many funding opportunities tied to US citizenship/ permanent residence status. Summer support is not an area focused on in the initial self-study or the review committee's report, but students felt that in relation to recruitment of our top candidates, that some form of summer support is increasingly normative and will be very important in the coming decade to attracting our top candidates including international students and may be essential to diversity efforts to attract URM students and FGLI students.

C. Recommendations under the responsibility area of the NMES Program:

- 1) **Recommendation:** "The Committee agreed that admitting three students per academic year was appropriate for NMES, given the expanded level of support recommended..." (p.9)
 - a. **Response:** The program agrees with the committee's assessment. However, this recommendation was made on the basis of the levels of funding in the report, which recommend a total increase of 9 quarters per year (6 Q of TAs from CA&S and 3 Q of SA from the Graduate School). At this time, CA&S has renewed the level of support at 15 quarters and has made the funding secure. The Graduate School has committed to maintain current funding, but not to offer the recommended 3 Q of SA support. This allows NMES to offer recruitment packages, but not to admit additional students.
 - b. **Outcome:** At the current guaranteed level of funding, the program believes that it can admit two students per academic year.
- 2) **Recommendation:** "To compete realistically in recruitment, the Program needs to offer incoming students 5-year packages..." (p.5)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The faculty concurs and plans to make 5-yr package offers to admitted candidates starting in Fall 2020, subject to confirmed long-term funding security. As described above in II.A.1.
 - b. **Outcome/ Timeline:** Recommendation to be implemented Winter 2020, subject to final written confirmation of funding guarantees by the CA&S and commitments by the Graduate School to backstop offers (since students may actually use their 5 yrs. of support over a 7-year time horizon, accounting for time spent doing field work).
- 3) **Recommendation:** "The NMES program needs to emphasize its traditional strengths... while highlighting emergent areas of expertise that draw on the strengths and research interests of faculty across the university." (p.4) Also, "in a related vein, the Graduate School needs to revise the application process by changing the rubrics by which applicants to the NMES program signal their interests. These rubrics should correspond to the program's stated areas of expertise." (p.4)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The faculty concurs, although they believe that the specific emergent subfields mentioned in the report need further refinement.
 - b. **Action Items/ Timeline:** The faculty believes that this work should begin in Spring 2020 or at the latest in Fall 2020 and should be led by the NMES Director who will be appointed in 2020 for a term starting in July 2020. The Director should form a committee to pursue this important initiative. This work should be complete by October 15, 2020 in order to be relevant to the Winter 2021 admission process.
- 4) **Recommendation:** "To admit a diverse body of students, NMES should consider working more closely with Go-Map..." (p.5)

- a. **Steps taken:** Subject to the confirmation of long-term funding security and the ability to offer recruitment packages, we agree that NMES work more closely with Go-Map. The faculty believes that it is not possible to recruit URM or FGLI graduate students without the ability to commit to long-term support.
 - b. **Action Items/ Timeline:** The Director is meeting with Go-Map leadership on 28 January 2020 to discuss best practices for a program of this size and will report back to the faculty group on recommended action items. The program should also develop a program specific diversity statement. These issues should be discussed in the Winter/Spring 2020 Faculty meeting(s) and a plan of action developed by the Core Governance Faculty Group.
- 5) **Recommendation:** “the NMES program should consider liaising more closely with certain other departments and programs when offering workshops on topics in professionalization ...” (p.5)
 - a. **Steps taken:** The faculty concurs.
 - b. **Action Items/ Timeline:** These issues should be discussed in the Winter/Spring 2020 Faculty meeting(s) and a plan for coordination and communication developed by the Core Governance Faculty Group.
- 6) **Program Initiative:** The Director and Faculty recognize that it is likely that it will not be possible to address some of these recommendations fully within the rubric of our usual quarterly business and governance meetings. The NMES program has already scheduled an additional meeting for the end of Spring Q 2020, which should be convened by the incoming Director (term July 2020- June 2025). This meeting should function as a retreat to address these recommendations and to take up some additional feedback offered by our graduate students reporting response meeting of December 2019.

**ADDENDUM (20 FEBRUARY 2020)
TO THE NMES PROGRAM RESPONSE (AS SUBMITTED 27 JANUARY 2020)
TO THE REVIEW COMMITTEE'S REPORT (OF 6 NOVEMBER 2019)**

NMES thanks the Graduate School for accepting this addendum to the Response to the 10-year Program Review Report, submitted 27 January 2020.

This addendum was necessitated by a substantive change in section II.A.1.a-b regarding program funding security and stability, a major focus of both of the Self-Study Report and the Review Committee Report.

In our response of 27 January, we reported that in follow-up meetings with the Deans of the College of Arts & Sciences in November 2019, it was discussed that funding stability for the program could be achieved by an “initial 5 year commitment [of a TAship package] with a process for renewing that commitment annually to extend by one year (so that the program always has a rolling five-year commitment).” The program agreed that such an arrangement would “both allow the program to make package offers to students and guarantee that the CA&S/NMES partnership around these TAships will remain responsive to priorities of the undergraduate teaching mission of the university.” However, on 13 February 2020, CA&S Social Sciences Divisional Dean George Lovell clarified to the program that the forthcoming confirmation of the CA&S commitment would be limited to 5 years, without a stated commitment to or agreed process for annual extension or renewal. This changes our response in substantial ways.

The commitments we made in section II.C regarding the program's intentions to follow the Review Committee's recommendations were predicated on our understanding that there was a plan for the long-term funding security and stability of the NMES program. However, without a commitment to the principle of a yearly rolling renewal of the CA&S TAships and the articulated intent to renew subject to fulfillment of clearly articulated metrics of good stewardship, the NMES program has not achieved funding stability and security. If the package is limited to a hard 5 years, even with the possibility of renewal at the end of 5 years, NMES will not be able to use these TAships to recruit top students to the PhD program. We will therefore not be able to fulfill our plan to follow the review committee's recommendation as outlined in II.C.2; Fall 2020 entrants will be the only class to whom we can offer 5-year packages similar to those offered by peer institutions. Importantly, we will also be unable to fulfill our plan to follow the review committee's recommendation as outlined in II.C.4; we do not believe that we can recruit URM or FGLI students without the ability to commit to long-term support.

We believe that this issue of funding security must be resolved now, as a part of the 10-year review process. Otherwise, over the course of the coming 5 years, while we will successfully graduate and place our currently enrolled students, we will not be able to recruit the next classes of top students to this field and possibly, in year 5, this excellent program will be effectively lose all funding for continuing students, in the middle of the 10-yr review cycle.

The NMES program urges the Graduate School to partner with CA&S to develop a plan for the long-term funding security of the NMES program. We recommend that the Graduate School, CA&S, and the NMES program develop an MoU that clearly articulates metrics to evaluate the success of the TAship allocation in reaching two goals: (1) maintaining the high level of NMES

graduate student scholarship, which contributes to the prominence and reputation of the UW, and (2) assuring that the TAs and their allocation to courses, faculty, and departments across CA&S remain responsive to priorities of the undergraduate teaching mission of the university. The NMES program is enthusiastic to partner with CA&S to enhance Middle East course offerings and content across multiple courses and departments in the College. TAs allocated to the NMES program are sticky to the College and support its undergraduate teaching mission. They also directly increase enrollments, particularly in Humanities and Social Sciences divisions. We particularly endorse steps recommended by the Review Committee (and discussed previously in program response II.B.5 and II.B.6) that the Graduate School could take with CA&S to ensure the funding stability and continued scholarly excellence of the NMES PhD program.

Addendum prepared by:

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18 February 2020