

**Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program  
In  
Near and Middle Eastern Studies  
Review Committee Report**

In September 1992 the University of Washington Board of Regents granted authority in Resolution 92-18 for the Interdisciplinary Near and Middle Eastern Studies Group in the Graduate School to offer a program leading to the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. The Program was authorized on a provisional basis and conditioned on a review every five years until granted continuing status. Pursuant to this review requirement, in December 1998 Marsha L. Landolt, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost of the University of Washington, constituted the first Review Committee, comprising as chair John O. Haley, Professor of Law and of International Studies, University of Washington, and as members Charles Bergquist, Professor of History, University of Washington; Patricia Conroy, Associate Professor of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, University of Washington; Irene Bierman, Associate Professor of Art History and Director of the von Grunenbaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles; and Charles D. Smith, Professor of Near Eastern Studies, University of Arizona.

The Review Committee conducted an on-site review on February 1 and 2, 1999. The Committee met initially with Jere Bacharach, Professor of History and of International Studies, who serves as director of the Program as well as Director of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. The Committee subsequently interviewed eight of the fifteen students in the Program, six of the eighteen participating faculty, including all but three of the faculty who chair one or more Ph.D. advisory committee, and Terry Duffey, the Program Coordinator and Program Advisor in the Graduate School. The daily schedule of the on-site review is attached as Appendix A.

The Committee also reviewed written materials related to the Program, including the initial Report of the Near Eastern Languages and Civilization Ph.D. Proposal Review Committee submitted on June 16, 1989 and an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Near and Middle Eastern Studies Self-Study Document for Academic Review, as well as resumes of most of the participating faculty. These documents are attached as Appendix B.

**Recommendation**

On the basis of this review, the Review Committee respectfully recommends that the Program be continued on a provisional basis.

**Findings**

In addition to advising the University with respect to the continuation of the Program, the Review Committee was asked to evaluate the academic quality of the

Program and to suggest improvements. More specifically the charge to the Committee included the following questions:

1. **Students:** What attracts students to the Program? Do they find what they seek? Do the students seek academic positions? Are they advantaged or disadvantaged by the multidisciplinary of the Program? What is the probable success of their respective plans?
2. **Multidisciplinary:** To what extent is the level of expertise developed by students in the Program as great as that of students trained "more narrowly" in a single discipline? Does the Program succeed in developing student interdisciplinary expertise?
3. **Faculty Scholarship and Educational Development:** Does the Program contribute to faculty scholarship? How well do the faculty communicate with respect to the Program's educational goals and their own research?
4. **Program Design and Direction:** What changes have been made in the Program? Are they needed? Are they worthwhile?
5. **Financial Support:** Is the Program adequately funded?

Overall, the Review Committee is pleased to report the Program is fundamentally sound. In all respects the Program is fulfilling its initial promise. The University is fortunate to have faculty committed to the Program. It is also fortunate to that the Program began with equally committed students and has continued to attract bright, highly motivated students who appear to be headed toward successful careers in which their educational experience will have considerable value. At least two will complete their degrees this year, a potential turnover rate that is a credit to students and faculty. The Program also enhances interdisciplinary faculty perspectives. It has adapted with commendable flexibility to student needs and has effected several needed changes. Although additional financial support, especially for recruitment, is desirable, the Committee believes that the Program is adequately funded at present and can continue to satisfy its basic goals without any substantial increase in financial support.

With respect to specific questions the Committee's responses are as follows:

*Students:* The Program admitted four students during its first year (1993-94). The number of students in the Program gradually increased thereafter to eight students in 1995-96, nine in 1996-97, and twelve in 1997-98. During the current academic year (1998-99) fifteen students are enrolled in the Program. Although several have chosen to transfer to Ph.D. programs in disciplinary departments, particularly Political Science as indicated, the Program has enjoyed stable growth. None of the students admitted into the Program have yet to complete the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies. Five have successfully completed their General Examination and are currently engaged as Ph.D. candidates in dissertation research and writing. Two are

expected to complete and defend their dissertations by the end of the current academic year. Three continuing students have professional employment in the field.

The quality of the students seems quite high. Those the Committee met were bright and articulate. Even one student who had expressed some confusion was intelligent and articulated her sense of lack of direction quite clearly. The Committee did not meet two students whose performance seemed to be the most questionable.

Because no student has yet completed the Program, the employment prospects of its graduates remain speculative. Nonetheless, one of the two students anticipated to complete the degree requirements this year has secure employment plans. He will return to Almaty, Kazakhstan as the pastor in a multi-ethnic, protestant church. Similarly another student, a Turkish national expected to complete the program next year, will return to full-time teaching in a university in Southern Turkey. The Committee thus anticipates that graduates of the Program will seek and find career opportunities in a wide variety of fields, including government service, nongovernmental organizations, international business, as well as teaching. However, the extent to which Program graduates may experience any difficulty in finding traditional academic positions in the United States remains unanswered. This question should be addressed in the next five-year review.

*Multidisciplinarity:* The Program was initially proposed as a Ph.D. program in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization (NELC). To be viable as a Ph.D. program, however, an expansion of the number of participating faculty beyond the limited resources available in NELC was considered necessary. Consequently, although conceived as a multidisciplinary effort, the Program has had a more ambivalent emphasis. Nevertheless, it has developed a strong multidisciplinary in several respects. First, the participating faculty are all members of the Middle East Studies Program, an interdisciplinary area studies program centered for administrative purposes in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. Moreover, NELC is itself a multidisciplinary department with a faculty whose members combine expertise in applied linguistics, history, religion, and literature. As a result the Program tends to reflect the interests of two groups of faculty and students; on the one hand those with the Jackson School's social science emphasis and on the other, the NELC's orientation in the humanities. Of the 23 faculty in Near and Middle Eastern Studies (including three emeritus professors and two new members neither of whom is listed in the *Self-Study Document*), nine are members of the NELC faculty (including Michael Williams, the department chair, whose principal appointment is in the Jackson School (Comparative Religion), four (not including Michael Williams) in the Jackson School (two in International Studies, one in Comparative Religion plus Jere Bacharach, the School's Director), two in Anthropology, two in Linguistics, one in Art History, one in Music, one in Political Science, one in History, one with joint appointment in History and the Jackson School, and one emeritus faculty in Classics. However, only nine members of the Program faculty currently chair one or more of the 15 current student advisory committees. A single faculty member, Resat Kasaba, currently chairs five of the fifteen student committees. These five committees also tend to be the most interdisciplinary in terms of a combination of faculty in the humanities and the social sciences.

Most students interviewed expressed strong appreciation for the interdisciplinary emphasis of the Program. Several, however, indicated concern over a lack of adequate training in disciplinary methodology. From student comments as well as an assessment of the academic program being pursued by each of the students in the Program, it appears that the students divide into two categories—those with a predominate background in the humanities, especially those with a masters degree in Near Eastern Languages and Civilization from the University of Washington or its equivalent from another university, and those whose primary prior and current interests are centered in the social sciences. The students with a strong background in the humanities appear to have a more balanced interdisciplinary experience in the Program. More tend to develop additional expertise in a social science, particularly anthropology, and have a more balanced advisory committee with faculty from a wider variety of disciplines. Students with a predominately social science background appear to continue that emphasis, with in most cases an advisory committee drawn exclusively from social science departments. Nevertheless, they will have studied several languages and literatures. A significant number of students appear to be continuing their prior work, treating the Ph.D. program as an opportunity for advanced graduate work in their respective fields. For these students the Program seems to function as a Ph.D. opportunity in either Near Eastern Languages and Civilization or Middle East Studies.

As indicated below, the students in the Program have played an active and very constructive role in revising the requirements of the Program to satisfy their needs. They were instrumental in adding the requirement that all future graduates who intend to conduct field work or work with documents complete the basic course on Field Techniques of Anthropology (ANTH 550) in addition to either Political Research Design and Analysis (POL S 491) or Research Design (in Anthropology, ANTH 551) and all students engaged in “humanities-oriented” work and not conducting field work take at least two method and theory courses in the appropriate discipline or disciplines (see “New Requirements Projected for 1999-2000 Method, Theory and Core Courses,” in *Self-Study Document*, Appendix XVIII). As indicated in the Review Committee’s recommendations with respect to core courses (item 5) below, not all Committee members agree with these requirements. Several students—particularly those in the social sciences—and one key faculty, expressed the need for greater methodological training in a single discipline. The most serious problem the Committee encountered, however, was a student with two degrees in law who had not had any previous graduate training in any discipline of either the humanities or social science.

*Faculty Scholarship and Educational Development:* The Review Committee did not detect any significant influence of the Program on faculty scholarship or development, although service on interdisciplinary student committees encourages such perspectives. The principal interactions among Program faculty occur within the context of regularly scheduled meetings of the Middle East Studies Program and, for members of the department, NELC. Of the seven advisory committees whose full membership were identified, only three included faculty from both the social sciences and the humanities. The remaining four comprised faculty drawn almost exclusively from Comparative Religion, Political Science, NELC or a combination of political science and sociology. A

proposal has been made that time be devoted to discussion of the Program during at least one Middle East Center faculty meeting a year.

*Program Guidance:* The Committee perceived a definite need for improvement in the Program guidance for students. Although only two students expressed concern about lack of direction, several students in the Program are older and already employed. Others have moved up from University of Washington masters programs. In other words, many knew their way around or had enough self-confidence and motivation to find their way around. Even one in-coming student, whom a committee member happened to meet, remarked that she knew the Program and people in it before she arrived, so she knew what to do and had help from fellow students. Incoming students without such contacts--or more important, without adequate preparation in either a social science discipline or the humanities--need better guidance. The idea of having an introductory meeting after classes have begun is inadequate. Only now, five years into the Program, are methods/theory/core courses actually being printed for guidance. No list of core faculty has been provided. More systematic monitoring should be emphasized. And those students with non-traditional backgrounds or with professional degrees rather than graduate study in a social science or the humanities need to be counseled if not required to take appropriate "make-up" courses prior to the General Examination.

*Faculty Involvement and Commitment:* Much of the success of the Program can be attributed to the commitment of particular faculty as well as certain ad hoc arrangements that should be formalized in a more systematic fashion. Some students have benefited, for example, from the willingness of faculty who have no direct relationship to the Program. The Committee's experience also served to stress the commitment of individual faculty, such as Resat Kasaba, to the Program.

Some members of the Committee consider NELC to be the key department. Others argue that one of the challenges for the Program as a whole is to use the next five years to establish an institutional identity free of and separate from any department or program—what one Committee member referred to as the "intellectual space" of the Program. "This intellectual space," in her words, "needs to be carved out." In any event, for students, as observed by Professor Karimi-Hakkak and several students, there is today no home department for the students. Mention was also made of more applicants on the humanities side of the Program than the social sciences, but the Committee's impression is that there are more actual students in social sciences. Such observations raised questions for some members of the Committee about the involvement of NELC faculty, especially since the Program was created as much if not more for them than for Jackson School faculty.

Jere Bacharach stated that NELC did not have enough faculty to teach courses that could serve the Program. One member of the Committee expressed concern that there also seems to be an issue of who teach most of the Arabic-language courses and how that affects programmatic offerings of service to the doctoral program. Terri DeYoung, he noted, could teach modern literature but seems to teach more language courses; Brannon Wheeler, who could teach language courses is teaching medieval text courses in Arabic when the Program is directed at modern studies. Several people,

including Michael Williams, said the Program needed more involvement of NELC faculty. Members of the Committee may agree but question whether the department has sufficient faculty and the extent to which demanding teaching assignments permit greater commitment of NELC faculty to the Program. The Comparative Religion Program within the Jackson School could, as suggested by Professor Williams, be more involved. It would be healthy for another program to involve itself, especially one dealing with religion, to relate to the language offerings of NELC.

*Program Design and Direction:* As the principal architect of the Program and its director, Jere Bacharach has provided the leadership that has been critical to the Program's success. He and the Program Coordinator in the Graduate School, Terry Duffey, have provided the principal linkages for both students and faculty. The Program has been administered with considerable flexibility and responsiveness to student needs and suggestions. A proposal for new requirements in method, theory and core courses, to become effective in 1999-2000, was, it appears, initiated and developed entirely by students working with the Program Director, with incidental advice and suggestions by individual faculty.

The anticipated retirement of Jere Bacharach in three or four years is cause for concern. His leadership in initiating and developing the Program has been critical to its success. The Review Committee believes that the Program will depend upon the leadership and dedication of his successor.

*Financial Support:* The need for increased financial support was noted by nearly all students, faculty and administrators involved with the Program. Upon closer examination, however, it appears that no student in the Program currently suffers from lack of fellowship or other means of financial assistance. The Martha Glazer Fellowship, a three-year stipend (approximately \$15,000 per year) has been used to recruit one outstanding student every fourth year. The Graduate School has also granted the Program a 9 month research assistantship each year (approximately \$16,000) as a recruitment allocation. An additional 9-month teaching assistantship has also been available. Other students have received Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships through the Department of Education-funded Middle East Resource Center as well as teaching assistantships in NELC, the International Studies Program in the Jackson School, and other departments. Needless to say, the Review Committee could not determine the extent to which inadequate student stipends may have precluded highly qualified students from applying or enrolling in the Program.

In view of these observations, the Review Committee recommends that the Program be continued on a provisional basis with a full review in five years. The principal issues that the Review Committee now believes will need to be addressed include:

1. *The identification of the Program Director to replace Jere Bacharach.* As indicated above, the Program Director has played a pivotal role. The Review Committee believes that the Program will continue in the future to require similarly dedicated faculty leadership. Thus one of the primary tasks of the

Program during the next five years will be the identification of Jere Bacharach's successor as director.

2. *Expanded opportunities for interdisciplinary interaction among Program students and faculty.* The most significant shortcoming of the Program as currently organized has been the failure to provide for greater informal as well as formal interdisciplinary interaction among students and faculty. The proposal that the Program be discussed at least annually at a regular meeting of the Middle East Studies Program is welcome. The opportunities for such interaction could also be expanded in other ways. These, the Review Committee suggests, could include a requirement that all student advisory committees include faculty from separate disciplines, or perhaps at least one member from a discipline in the humanities and one from a social science discipline. The Committee also recommends two additional changes be considered: (a) the creation of an executive committee for the Program to meet periodically with the director and students, and (b) a common room for Program students and faculty.
3. *Monitoring of Academic Placement.* Members of the Committee also expressed concern that the Program must also provide sufficient training in a single discipline to enable its graduates to compete for academic positions. The Committee thus recommends that the academic placement of graduates and the adequacy of disciplinary training be closely monitored during the next five years.
4. *Expanded financial aid for entering students.* The need for increased financial aid appears to be greatest for entering students. By increasing the number of one-year, recruitment stipends for students during their first year, the Program should be better able to attract more qualified students and maintain a sufficient number of entering students.
5. *Core Courses.* The Review Committee applauds the student-initiated proposal to require that all Program students complete a set of common "core" courses. At least two members of the Committee recommend, however, that the methods and theory courses in Appendix XVIII be reconsidered. One questioned why students not doing fieldwork but using documents should be required to take either the Anthropology or Political Science course. Students in history, for example, or comparative religion, might use documents but not need field work. The students doing humanities-oriented courses, including those using documents, and not doing fieldwork should have a list of sample methods and theory courses in disciplines. Given the many demands on students in the Program, a requirement for at least one methodology course (not two) in a humanities or social science discipline appropriate to the dissertation research of each candidate should suffice. This disciplinary theory or methods course could be supplemented by considerable other course work in that discipline. At least one faculty member from that discipline could be a member of each student's committee and in some cases might co-

chair the dissertation committee with the area studies dissertation advisor. (In addition, those who undertake certain kinds of research, such as field interviews, might also be encouraged (or required) to take additional methodological courses, such as those specified in Appendix XVIII, in one or more disciplines.) History should also figure as one of these disciplines. Core or "key" courses from NELC should also be mentioned. The faculty should also be urged to set basic entrance expectations and identify a few courses that all students must take regardless of their department or primary field. An example would be a requirement that all students have completed courses in the modern and medieval history of the Middle East.

Enthusiastic testimony by both faculty and students persuaded the Committee of the Program's viability both intellectually and in placing graduates. Clearly, many of the students are aspiring to hold positions where the lack of disciplinary credentials will not be a handicap. Those aspiring to hold positions in mainstream academic departments should be encouraged to privilege the disciplinary aspects of their training by taking more courses in a discipline, by including one or more faculty from a given discipline on their committees, or by choosing a disciplinary co-chair of their dissertation committees.

6. *Core Faculty.* The Committee recommends that steps be taken to assure a better organization of the Program with guidance to the students and better identification of faculty who could serve them and the Program. A cadre of key faculty should be developed. Greater involvement of faculty from NELC and, hopefully, from the Comparative Religion Program, especially Michael Williams, is desirable.

To list an adviser for the social science track and another for the humanities/languages-literature track may also be desirable. This might serve to involve both students and faculty in the second track.

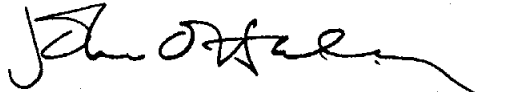
7. *Recruitment and Program Guidance:*

- A brochure should be printed describing requirements.
- A list of sample disciplinary methods and theory courses in humanities as well as in social sciences should be published in this brochure.
- Advisers for the Program should be listed. (As it is, the students seem to do most of the advising to each other, recommending course changes and requirements.)
- An orientation session should be held before classes start and preferably before students register—not after classes have begun as occurs now.

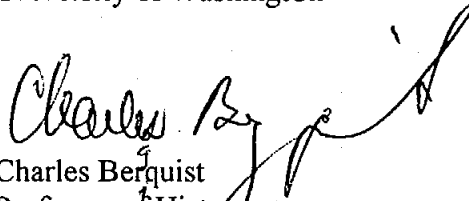


- Involved faculty should attend this orientation, if only for a brief period when such faculty would be introduced and would discuss their areas of specialization.

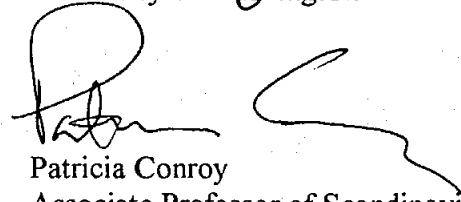
Respectfully submitted,



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