



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

May 21, 2025

Professor Nicholas Rule  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
University of Toronto

**RE: Interim Monitoring Report on UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, Faculty of Arts & Science**

Dear Professor Rule,

I write in response to your letter of July 10, 2024, requesting an Interim Monitoring Report on the December 3-4, 2020, UTQAP cyclical review of the Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations and its undergraduate and graduate programs.

The UTQAP cyclical review process is an invaluable exercise that affords us the opportunity to take stock of our academic units and programs, to recognize achievement, and identify areas for improvement. As you note, under section 6.9.1.4 of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process, a brief status report on the implementation of plans outlined in the Dean's administrative response is due midway between the year of the last and next UTQAP review site visits.

I am pleased to send you this status report in the attached Table, where each of the Implementation Plan recommendations have been addressed with updates from the unit and from the Dean's office on progress made to date.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to prepare this Interim Monitoring Report. The reviewers' comments and recommendations continue to help inform the future priorities of the Department of Sociology and its undergraduate and graduate programs.

Sincerely,

Stephen Wright  
Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science  
Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

cc:

Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Chair and Graduate Chair, Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, Faculty of Arts & Science

Gillian Hamilton, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning, Faculty of Arts & Science

Lachmi Singh, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Caitlin Burton, Senior Manager, Governance, Academic Planning & Reviews, Faculty of Arts & Science

Gianna Leggio, Academic Planning & Review Officer, Faculty of Arts & Science

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George Street, Suite 2005, Toronto, ON M5S 3G3 Canada

Tel: +1 416-978-3383 • Fax: +1 416-978-3887 • [officeofthedean@artsci.utoronto.ca](mailto:officeofthedean@artsci.utoronto.ca) • [www.artsci.utoronto.ca](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca)

# UTQAP Cyclical Review Interim Monitoring Report

As required under [UTQAP section 6.9.1.4](#), the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs (VPAP) will request the Interim Monitoring Report from the Dean midway between the review and year of the next site visit.

Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, Faculty of Arts & Science

UTQAP Cyclical Review: December 3-4, 2020

Review Reported to Governance: October 26, 2021

Request Prompt <i>verbatim from the request</i>	Dean’s Implementation Plan Update	Program Innovation Fund (PIF) Y/N
<p><b><i>The reviewers made several observations and recommendations regarding the undergraduate programs:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b><i>The reviewers encouraged the Department to reconsider the balance of undergraduate course offerings, to engage students with a wider range of disciplinary backgrounds or interests</i></b></li><li><b><i>They recommended expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to engage in research and other outside-the-classroom experiences.</i></b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations is working on renewing their international field school on an ongoing basis. Since 2020, the department has offered NMC261Y1Y four times. The course consists of a six-week archaeological field school which takes place in the Republic of Georgia. Students contribute to the active and ongoing research program of the Gadachrili Gora Regional Archaeological Project expedition (G.R.A.P.E.). G.R.A.P.E. is part of an international collaborative project investigating the origins of agriculture in the peripheral regions of the Fertile Crescent, specifically the south Caucasus. However, due to low enrolment, the department is re-fashioning the course into two half courses, including NMC261H1, which is now advertised on the University’s Experiential Learning Hub. The department anticipates that having two half courses that allow students to build on their knowledge will allow for increased engagement for students.</li></ul>	N

<p><b><i>The reviewers observed that “many graduate students end up with very little or no teaching experience by the time they graduate.”</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations has instituted a teaching fellowship program to give more students the opportunity to co-teach and develop a syllabus. This program was launched in 2023-24. The program provides a Course Instructor position for graduate students that allows them to teach alongside a faculty member. The courses offered through this program must be ones that require a significant revamp or a new course to allow the graduate students the opportunity to develop skills in syllabus preparation and development, teaching, and mentorship from a faculty member, thus increasing their chances of success in the academic job market by building up the graduate student’s skills tool box before they graduate from their doctoral program.</li> <li>• The department has also developed a process and a committee to fully review all TA applications and assignments to ensure graduate students get a full range of teaching opportunities through their TA position rather than a student being assigned to the same course multiple times. This diversification of assignments encourages continued engagement in the courses by the TAs as opposed to rote work, and ensures our graduate students are exposed to a variety of teaching styles and class formats across the discipline, which may help in the academic job market post graduation.</li> </ul>	<p>N</p>
<p><b><i>The reviewers noted increasing PhD time-to-completion rates as a cause for concern, and commented that more flexibility regarding requirements, specifically the languages of scholarship, may help to address the issue</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Associate Chair, Graduate is actively involved in meeting with students to assist with them moving through their PhD, adding an extra layer of support for students beyond the supervisor and supervisory committee.</li> <li>• The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations is encouraging more regular meetings between supervisors and students to support a reduced time to completion. The Department has taken to routinely communicating to faculty via emails and at faculty meetings the merit of increased supervisory meetings for students, and the department has set up mentorship for new faculty to encourage that regular meetings between supervisors and students is part of the departmental culture as well as for new faculty who are also recent graduates, to support their transition from mentees to mentors.</li> </ul>	<p>N</p>
<p><b><i>The reviewers flagged faculty concerns regarding obstacles to inter-departmental cooperation, and recommended increased cross-</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have developed courses with other departments as well as courses that are co-taught by a cross section of NMC faculty, many of whom are cross listed with other departments. Two examples are JMH385H1 <i>Islamic Law and the Modern State</i> which is a joint offering between Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations and the Department for the Study of Religion, and NMC277H1: <i>Topics in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations: Women and Gender in the Ancient and Modern Near and Middle East</i>, which is taught as an NMC course co-taught by a number of NMC faculty to provide a</li> </ul>	<p>N</p>

<b><i>listing of courses between NMC and cognate units.</i></b>	wide range of perspectives on a topic that spans several sub disciplines.	
<b><i>In their comments regarding faculty complement planning, the reviewers encouraged NMC to “think strategically and creatively” about expanding into new disciplinary areas, while also acknowledging the value of comprehensive coverage in existing core areas.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindful of the mandate of no new faculty positions, core program strength has taken precedence over expansion. However, the Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations has applied for a new position called Palestinian Literature and Culture at the end of February, 2025. This position was awarded April 2025. This position aligns with the reviewer’s feedback from the last review to strengthen the Department’s offerings in Modern Middle East beyond the study of history. In addition, the successful candidate in the FAS Jewish Studies junior search will be cross-appointed in NMC. The new awardee specializes in Modern Hebrew Literature, also strengthening our offerings in Modern Middle East beyond the strict study of history.</li> </ul>	N
<b><i>The reviewers suggested that faculty members felt there was confusion around complement planning and the basis on which decisions were made to hire faculty to non-continuing CLTA appointments, or to tenure stream positions. This included a sense of lack of transparency around the potential for faculty in CLTA positions to compete competitively for tenure stream positions.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have increased the transparency around faculty complement planning at faculty meetings, including circulating agendas before meetings, having minutes taken during the meeting and distributing the meetings along with presentation materials after each meeting. Faculty meetings are also held in a hybrid format to promote participation of faculty members. Faculty complement planning is discussed routinely at these meetings and all faculty members share their perspectives, which the Chair takes under advisement when deciding on the positions to apply for.</li> <li>• The Department has begun a faculty mentoring program for new faculty and CLTAs to help them with their career progression, both in terms of progressing to interim review or preparing to compete for full time tenure stream positions.</li> <li>• In 2024 NMC had a new teaching stream position that stemmed from a CLTA position that is coming to an end. The position was successfully secured as part of the annual Faculty Appointments Committee process, which reviews requests across the Faculty for many more positions than it awards.</li> </ul>	N
<b><i>The reviewers highlighted departmental cohesion as a significant issue, and noted several barriers to integration among the department’s various stakeholders. They also report that students at both levels commented on</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations has increased the number of departmental events to include students in the life of the department. Events are <a href="#">promoted on the departmental website</a> and of particular note, the Department would like to highlight the <a href="#">Michael E Marmura Lecture Series</a> and the <a href="#">Teach in Syria event with Jim Reilly</a>, Professor Emeritus in the department. The Department also holds annual Departmental Social Events which feature presentations by faculty and/or graduate students. These events are not advertised on the departmental website as they are restricted to faculty and graduate students, but the events are promoted via fliers and email communications.</li> </ul>	N

<i>feeling “removed from the life of the department.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department has given the undergraduate and graduate students union groups space within the department in the Bancroft Building to increase their visibility and connection to departmental life.</li> </ul>	
<b><i>The reviewers noted that the department’s leadership structure places a considerable amount of responsibility solely on the Chair, and identified other areas in which additional administrative support would benefit the department.</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A full review of administrative positions has been completed and significant progress made regarding offering additional support to the position of the Chair.</li> <li>The administrative staff have all been in place for over a year and have increased their cohesion by use of regular staff meetings, and regular meetings between the Chair and Associate Chairs and staff.</li> </ul>	N
Other recommendations or implementation plans not prioritized in the Request for Administrative Response	N/A	
Findings of assessments of program effectiveness, conducted as outlined in the self-study (see section 3.4 of the <a href="#">self-study template</a> for more information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations is moving to a published 3-year cycle of courses to make course planning easier for graduate and undergraduate students.</li> </ul>	N
The status of any additional items discussed at the AP&P meeting as captured in the FAR/IP	N/A	
Consultation in developing this brief report and (where applicable) a statement of how the Faculty has monitored the implementation of review recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department of Near &amp; Middle Eastern Civilizations consulted with faculty members and brought this document to a faculty meeting in February 2025 for discussion. The A&amp;S Dean’s Office produced this report in consultation with (and the active involvement of) the Department’s Chair and Graduate Chair, the Associate Chair, Graduate, and Department faculty involved in the pedagogical review. As well, the A&amp;S Dean’s Office consulted with members of its own senior leadership and administrative leadership on various aspects of this report as relevant. The A&amp;S Dean’s Office monitors implementation of review recommendations through period meetings with Chairs, Directors, and Principals and through regular governance and curricular oversight.</li> </ul>	

