PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON FIRST-YEAR ON-CAMPUS SEMINAR COURSE AT METU-NCC

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON
FIRST-YEAR ON-CAMPUS SEMINAR
AT METU-NCC

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This thesis study investigated the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course offered at Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus. The purpose of this study was to evaluate first-year students' overall interest and their perceptions with regard to the objectives, content and implementation of the course.

A survey design was utilized, and an online survey questionnaire including both closed-ended and open-ended items was administered to all the first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course in January 2011. The survey was completed by 255 students.

The findings yielded that the majority of the students were interested in the course. The study also revealed that GPC 100 course was successful in achieving its goals related to introducing the campus and academic programs; yet, it was weak in assisting first-year students' adjustment to the university. In addition, the study revealed that topics on academic programs and issues were found to be useful by students; but, subjects' perceptions on the content revealed that they did not get enough benefit from topics related to health issues as wellness and addictions. The students suggested that more emphasis should be given on topics related to undergraduate programs. Moreover, the study revealed that the students were satisfied with discussion and seminar related instructional strategies. Furthermore, the study revealed that the subjects were pleased with having peer mentors during the course, and the experiences of peer guides had helped them get to know the campus and adapt academic and social life at university. Additionally, the study yielded no statistically significant differences between groups – except for one – in regard to students' interest toward GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of the course.

Keywords: First-Year Seminars, Freshman, Freshman Orientation, Peer Mentoring, Students' Perception

ÖZ

ODTÜ-KKK'DEKİ KAMPUSTE İLK YIL SEMİNERİ DERSİNE DAİR ÜNİVERSİTEDEKİ İLK YIL ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ALGILARI

KUTLU, EMİNE
Yüksek Lisans, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü
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Bu tez çalışması Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi-Kuzey Kıbrıs Kampüsünde verilen GPC 100 Kampüste İlk Yıl Semineri (GPC 100) adlı dersteki ilk yıl öğrencilerinin deneyimlerini araştırmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı 2011 Güz döneminde GPC 100 dersinde kayıtlı olan öğrencilerin derse karşı ilgilerini ve dersin amaçlarına, içeriğine ve uygulanmasına dair algılarını ölçmektir.

Çalışmada betimleme yöntemi kullanılmış ve GPC 100 dersinde kayıtlı bütün öğrencilere Ocak 2011'de internet üzerinden kapalı ve açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anket uygulanmıştır. Anket 255 öğrenci tarafından doldurulmuştur.

Bulgular öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun derse ilgili olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca çalışma GPC 100 dersinin kampusu ve akademik programları tanıtma amacını

gerçekleştirmede başarılı olduğunu ancak ilk yıl öğrencilerinin üniversiteye alışmalarına yardımcı olma amacını gerçekleştirmede ise yetersiz olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, çalışma öğrenciler tarafından akademik programlar ve konularla ilgili içeriğin faydalı bulunduğunu ancak öğrencilerin bağımlılık ve mutluluk gibi sağlıkla alakalı konulardan yeterli derecede faydalı görmediklerini düşündüklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öğrenciler, içerikte lisans programlarına ait konularına daha fazla yer verilmesini önermişlerdir. Ayrıca çalışma öğrencilerin tartışma ve seminer ağırlıklı öğretim yöntemlerinden memnun olduklarını ve bu şekilde işlenen derslerin daha fazla olmasını önerdiklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Buna ek olarak, çalışma katılımcıların akran danışmanlarından memnun olduklarını ve akran danışmanlarının deneyimlerinin geçiş döneminde kendilerine kampüsü tanıma ve üniversitenin akademik ve sosyal yaşantısına alışmakta çok yardımcı olduğunu düşündüklerini göstermiştir. Ek olarak, çalışma öğrencilerin GPC 100 dersine karşı olan ilgileri ve dersin içeriği ile uygulanmasına dair algıları açısından gruplar arasında – bir tanesi hariç – istatistiksel bir fark olmadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlk Yıl Seminerleri, Formatif Değerlendirme, Akran Danışmanlığı, Birinci Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Oryantasyonu/Uyumu

To My Beloved Family

Menderes, Hacer and Evren Kutlu

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ES	Engineering Sciences
GPC 100	GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar
METU	Middle East Technical University
METU -NCC	Middle East Technical University-North Cyprus Campus
SAES	Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background information for the study through pinpointing the rationale behind first-year seminars. Following this section, purpose of the study is explained and research questions are stated. In addition, significance of the study is discussed and some important terms used in the study are clarified.

1.1. Background of the Study

Education has always played an important role in the society over the centuries. In the earliest civilizations, higher education was considered as some sort of social superiority or privilege. The access to higher education was limited, and only a fairly small proportion of the society was trained for clergy, civic leadership or military in higher education institutions (Perkin, 2007; Silver, 2006). Then, in medieval ages, another form of elite education which was lack of homogeneity and inequality stood out and the institutions educated young upper-class wealthy men (Sinclair, 2006). Later, in the developed countries, higher education evolved from elite education into mass education, and even into the universal education (Perkin, 2007; Silver, 2006; Trow, 2007). In mass education, entry to higher education is considered as a right for the individuals who have certain formal qualifications; on the other hand, enrollment in higher education is seen as an obligation for those from the middle and upper-middle classes and those from racial or ethnic groups in universal education (Trow, 2007).

As Dunn, McCarthy, Baker and Halonen (2011) suggested educating undergraduate students has become the most important mission of higher education and earning an undergraduate degree at the *ivory tower* is not seen as a luxury any more, but seen as a necessity for those who plan to pursue a professional career in many fields. Due to the developments in technology and the ease of access to knowledge and information, society gets more complicated and dynamic. To keep up with the constantly evolving world, today's business leaders prefer well-educated and qualified university graduates who have self-confidence, effective oral and written communication skills, strong interpersonal skills to interact positively and work effectively with individuals from different cultures and backgrounds, and critical and creative thinking skills to analyze situations and problems and to come up with new perspectives and solutions for them.

The change in characteristics of institutions during the transitional period from elite to mass and universal education resulted in expansion and diversification in higher education systems, and the demands of the business world have promoted them. As a result of the expansion in higher education, the number of higher education institutions and the number of students studying there have increased. This increase has resulted in the enrollment of academically less-prepared, less able and less well motivated students in higher education (Erickson, Peters & Strommer, 2006; Trow, 2007). The students are getting lower scores on standardized admission tests compared to the past (Crissman Ishler, 2005). The expansion of the institutions and students in tertiary education also has reflected in the diversity of students' demographics and characteristics (Brown, Hinton & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Crissman Ishler, 2005; Erickson, Peters & Strommer, 2006; Johnston, 2010; Kantanis, 2000; Silver, 2006). As Crissman Ishler (2005) indicated the proportion of relevant age group has changed and the number of older students enrolled in higher education has increased. Also, the proportion of racial and ethnic groups accessing higher education has grown. The number of female students and students with disabilities in tertiary education has increased. Due to the

ease of access to higher education and the international arrangements and agreements between institutions, the number of international students in higher education also has risen. Moreover, university students diverse in their family background as a result of the change in the family structures and of the increase in the divorced or single-parent families.

The shift in the meaning and significance of pursuing tertiary education and changes in the characteristics of students in higher education have had some consequences for students' motivation and resulted in many problems (Trow, 2007). Among all the students enrolled in higher education, first-year students suffer most from these problems since "entering first year is one of the most powerful elements of the university experience, representing the beginning of a key period of change in an individual's social life and intellectual development" (Johnston, 2010,p. 2).

The first year of university education is hard and stressful for most of the students as they are in the beginning of their transition from adolescence to adulthood and they experience some changes when they step into the university. Bill Johnston (2010) claimed that these changes can occur in different dimensions such as in culture and community, academics, social life and personality. Students who undergo *cultural and community changes* may move from high school to university or move from familiar social class, racial or ethnic group and religious affiliations to diverse communities. New subjects and concepts of learning, increased quantity of materials and tasks, different teaching and learning approaches, and new feedback and assessment practices are some of the *academic changes* that first-year students may have to deal with. The *social changes* that first-year students may have to cope with are moving to a new place – to a town, city or even country, separation from friends and family, living in dormitory, and meeting with people from very different backgrounds and people with very different values and attitudes. First-year students may undergo some *personal changes* such as accepting and enjoying intellectually challenging tasks, adapting strategies to cope with disability, commuting and stress tolerance and so forth

(Johnston, 2010). Johnston (2010) highlighted the need to effective transition activities that assist first-year students' adjustment to the university and adaptation to academic rigor in their disciplines and that support positive first-year experiences.

Most first-year students typically think university as a mysterious, strange or alien land where, except for them, everyone else knows where to go and what to do, understands and uses *higher* or *educated* language and meets the requirements of their discipline such as assignments and exams (Kantanis, 2000; Sinclair, 2006). First-year students feel anxiety, alienation and isolation when they could not establish relationships with other students and faculty, cope with the terminology taken granted by university staff, understand and meet faculty expectations, and handle the style and pace of academic work (Kantanis, 2000). Although these feelings are natural, they could result in students' drop out in their first-year at university or failure to complete their degree in minimum time. However, as Kantanis (2000) pointed out, curriculum designs with increased guidance, support and encouragement that assist students in making a smooth transition could eradicate these negative feelings.

The emphasis on the undergraduate education has led higher education institutions to seek for opportunities to provide the best educational experience for undergraduate students (Dunn, McCarthy, Baker & Halonen, 2011). Consequently, higher education institutions have launched various initiatives (i.e. new student orientation programs; welcome week activities, rituals and traditions; first-year summer or common reading programs; first-year seminars; academic advising; academic support centers; supplemental instruction; undergraduate research initiatives; learning communities; service learning; and residence education initiatives) so as to create environments for students to increase their intellectual and social involvement and their feeling of togetherness (Hunter, 2006). Among these initiatives, first-year seminars have become the most common method used to aid their students' adjustment of university life and to increase their retention, involvement and satisfaction, especially in the USA. Although this initiative is quite new to the Turkish context, recent evidence highlights

that 74 % of U.S. campuses offer some form of first-year seminar (Hunter & Linder, 2005) and that the number of four-year institutions in the USA which some kind of first-year seminar in their first-year curriculum increases (95 %) (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006).

Turkish higher education system has gone through similar changes; evolved from Islamic madrasas – elite education systems – in 11th century to today's modern mass education systems (Arslanoğlu, 2002; Özsoy, 2004; Hasan Şimşek, 2007). As Özsoy (2004) mentioned, the global trend in the massification of universities has led to the diversity of higher education institutions and of the university students. The number of universities in Turkey has increased dramatically from 75 in 2006 to 172 in 2012 (Çetinsaya, 2012; Hasan Şimşek, 2007). Also, the number of students attending tertiary education has risen. While the enrollment rate was 6.5 % in 1999, the number has increased to 13 % in 2009. In 2012-2013 Academic Year, 355.984 new students were enrolled in undergraduate programs. Moreover, the number of foreign students attending higher education is increasing every year. While the total number of foreign students enrolled in first year at universities was 8.410 in 2011-2012 Academic Year (ÖSYM, 2011), it went up to 12.903 in 2012-2013 (ÖSYM, 2012). Furthermore, the international agreements and arrangements between countries and institutions attract many students, and they choose to pursue their undergraduate or graduate education – at least for a short period of time – in Turkey through the exchange and scholarship programs such as Erasmus and Socrates. Within the scope of Erasmus exchange program, 6.562 foreign students attended higher education in Turkey between 2004 and 2009 (Karaman, 2010).

With its internationally recognized universities giving accredited diplomas, higher education is gaining more importance in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) (Katırcıoğlu, 2010; Katırcıoğlu, Fethi & Kılınç, 2010; Warner, 1999). Since 1990s, the demand for higher education sector has been increasing in TRNC due to the Turkish students who could not manage to enroll in a higher education institution

in Turkey and due to the advertising in other overseas counties in Africa or Middle East (Katırcıoğlu, 2010; Katırcıoğlu, Fethi & Kılınç, 2010). According to the statistics obtained from TRNC State Planning Organization (SPO), the number of students who enrolled in four universities in TRNC was 9.615 in 1990-1991 Academic Year, and the number went up to 41.230 in six institutions in 2010-2011 Academic Year (SPO, 2013). Universities in TRNC attract not only students from Turkey but also students from other countries, and the flow of Turkish and international students increases the diversity in higher education institutions in TRNC. In 2010-2011 Academic Year, only 30.7 % of the students in tertiary education was Turkish Cypriots; the majority of them (59.0 %) were from Turkey and 10.3 % were from other overseas countries (SPO, 2013).

A growing body of literature has investigated the problems that university students encounter in Turkey (Erdur-Baker & Bıçak, 2006; Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya & Terzi, 2012; Kaygusuz, 2002; Özgüven, 1992; Özsoy, 2004; Tuncay, 2000) and the adaptation of university students (Erdoğan, Şanlı & Şimşek Bekir, 2005; Karahan, Sardoğan, Özkamalı & Dicle, 2005; Özkan & Yılmaz, 2010). Özgüven (1992) stated that university students suffered most from tension, anxiety, sleeping problems and adaptation and the most important cause for these problems was the courses and the situation of success. Also, Erdur-Baker and Bıçak (2006) found that first-year undergraduate students had more adaptation and psychosomatic problems. Moreover, a recent study by Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya and Terzi (2012) found that university students mostly suffered from emotional, academic and economic problems.

Erdoğan, Şanlı and Şimşek Bekir (2005) conducted a study to investigate the adaptation status of first and second grade university students enrolled in undergraduate programs of Educational Faculties at Gazi University. The results of their study indicated that the way how the society sees university students caused students to experience adaptation problems most. Also, the problems with their friends and the difficulties in establishing new relationships were other causes of students' adaptation problems. Additionally, the study found that the students had problems in

communicating with university staff, faculty and research assistants. Also, Karahan, Sardoğan, Özkamalı and Dicle (2005) explored the first-year students' academic, social and individual adjustment to the university in terms of participation to socio-cultural activities, and their study revealed that the students who did not participated in the activities held by the university experienced more adjustment problems than the students who joined these activities. Another study (Özkan & Yılmaz, 2010) investigated the individual adaptation status of freshmen and sophomores to university life and the results of their study indicated that a small number of students (19 % of 421 students) had difficulties in adaptation to university life. The study also found that the students who felt lonely, had problems in their relationships and had difficulties in joining cultural activities experienced more adaptation problems.

The tertiary completion rate in Turkey is more than 80 %, which indicates as low drop-out rate (OECD, 2013). However, the increase in the number of institutions and of students, the diversity among student characteristics, and the problems that students have to deal with may increase drop-out rate. To the best knowledge of the researcher, too little attention has been paid to the problem of dropout in Turkey. The studies on the reasons behind university students' decision to dropout revealed that problems related to academic issues such as low academic performance (Bülbül, 2012) and lack of interest in the study field (Hüseyin Şimşek, 2013), related to the institution like dissatisfaction with the university staff and faculty and with social activities (Bülbül, 2012) and to the city in which the university is located (Hüseyin Şimşek, 2013) had the most influence on students' decision to leave university.

When considering the issues stated so far, assisting first-year students in coping with social and academic challenges of university life is gaining more significance in Turkey, and concordantly, a few Turkish higher education institutions have initiated some sort of first-year orientation programs or courses. Among these few institutions, Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC) initiated GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course in Fall 2011 semester so as

to facilitate the university adjustment process of its incoming students. Also, to the best of researcher's knowledge, METU-NCC is the only higher education institution offering such a course in TRNC. GPC 100 course is offered by the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling (GPC) and coordinated by *Student Development and Counseling Center* (SDCC) at METU-NCC.

With regard to the experiences of university students, previous studies in Turkey focused on the problems that students encountered during their undergraduate education. However, a few studies investigated the university students' adjustment. The studies on the issues stated so far indicated the need for programs which would assist university students, especially freshmen, in eliminating the problems that they encountered during undergraduate education and overcoming these problems, foster their adaptation to university life academically and socially, and eventually promote their retention. Consequently, first-year orientation programs or seminars have been implemented by some higher education institutions in Turkey since more than a decade. At this point, in reviewing the literature, rare published study was found on exploring the effectiveness of these programs or courses, or investigating the impact of them on the issues such as students' success and adjustment to university in Turkey or Northern Cyprus. In this respect, this study aimed to investigate the impact of GPC 100 course with regard to the first-year experience via considering the perceptions of first-year students enrolled in the course with regard to their overall interest toward the course and the objectives, content and implementation of the course, which was assumed to address this much needed gap in literature of Turkish or Northern Cyprus context.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main intent of this study was to explore the impact of GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course on the academic and social adjustment of first-year students enrolled in the course to their university life at Middle East Technical

University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC). The study investigated the perceptions of first-year students attended GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester at METU-NCC with regard to their overall interest toward the course and to the objectives, content and implementation (i.e. allocated class time, instructional methods utilized and peer guides involved) of the course. The study not only delved into the perceptions of first-year students, but also sought for the differences among their perceptions regarding the core components of the course by certain background variables. With this purpose, the main research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. What are the interest levels of first-year students toward GPC 100 course?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the objectives of GPC 100 course?
3. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the content of GPC 100 course?
4. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the implementation of GPC 100 course?
    a. What are the students' perceptions of allocated class time for the course?
    b. What are the students' perceptions of instructional methods used in the delivery of the course?
    c. What are the students' perceptions of peer guides assisted in the course?
5. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course by certain background variables?
    a. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to gender?
        i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?

ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?

b. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to area of study?
    i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
    ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
    iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

1.3. Significance of the Study

Attending university for the first time is one of the major transitions that teenagers could face in their lives since they have to deal with the challenges of that new academic life and of the emerging adulthood. For some, this transition starts with leaving home and moving into another dormitory or apartment, or even into another city or country, and it continues with meeting new people, establishing new relationships with friends and instructors, and attending larger and more challenging classes in which they need to adopt new learning strategies to meet the demands of this academic life and to become successful. While some of the students consider this transition as a positive and exciting experience and they get used to this new life easily and feel well integrated, for some, this is a quite challenging period that they cannot fit well, feel stressed and alienated in some ways, and struggle a lot to cope with it.

It is not so easy to embrace the academic and psychological responsibilities of that new life, manage their self-development and succeed in their academic study. Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot (2005) concisely define first-year student success as "the successful completion of courses taken in the first year and continuing enrollment into the second year" (p. 8). Based on their thorough definition of first-year student success, in order to succeed, first-year students should develop academic and intellectual

competence, establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with faculty, staff and other students, explore identity development, decide on a career and life, maintain their wellness and health, consider their beliefs and values in the religious and spiritual dimensions of life, develop awareness on multiculturalism and diversity, and develop civic responsibility for the inside and outside of collegiate education (Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot, 2005).

It is widely known that first-year experience courses or seminars foster students' academic achievement. In addition to that, they could contribute to the identity development (i.e. cultural, personal and organizational identities) and socialization of students. Tierney (1998) delineated *socialization* among key elements of institutional culture and indicated that socialization could occur through such symbols as commitment to excellence for students. Pedagogical programs reflecting diverse cultures (Torres, Howard-Hamilton & Cooper, 2003) and fostering student-faculty interaction (Tierney, 2008) could lead students to fit into institutional culture and cultivate a sense of organizational identity, which promotes students' cultural integration and might even eventually contribute to the institution' improvement and success (Tierney, 2008).

Although the universities in the USA and many other countries (e.g. the UK and Australia) offer such courses that aim to help freshman students in coping with the psychological and academic issues that they encounter at their first year of college or university in an active classroom environment with peer activities and instructor guidance, offering such courses at universities is a recent issue in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus. Commonly, many universities in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus spend a couple of days or a week for orientation activities to create an opportunity for their students to meet academic staff, wander around the university and get to know its facilities and buildings when they step at the university life for the first time; yet, during these orientation activities, no sessions or courses are offered to aid students in academic issues. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there are only a few

universities in Turkey that offer such a course during a semester or a whole academic year.

In Fall Semester of 2011-2012 Academic Year, Northern Cyprus Campus of Middle East Technical University included new educational practices in their curriculum and GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar course was one of them. Since this course is among a few courses that seek to aid first-year students' adjustment to their university and to the responsibilities of that new academic life, and there are not many published studies on these courses in Turkish or Northern Cyprus context, it is significant to conduct studies on the experiences of students in these courses so that the effectiveness of them could dawn on educators. In this sense, this study would reveal the experiences of first-year students attending GPC 100 course through students' interest toward the course and their perceptions with regard to the objectives, content and implementation of the course. Also, data obtained from the study would reveal what aspects of the course were beneficial for first-year students' adjustment to university life most and would help how GPC 100 course could be improved in terms of its objectives, content and implementation.

Besides, the study is significant because it might highlight the importance of such courses in helping students adjust to university life, develop a sense of belonging to the university and organizational identity, have an awareness of different learning styles and gain some essential academic skills. In this sense, the result of the study might function as a model for the other universities that want to promote their first year students relationship' with their faculty and staff, and prepare them to navigate their new academic environment. Inspired by this study, they might revise their first-year experience courses or seminars and make use of the content and implementation strategies discussed in the study to assist their students' adjustment process, or they might initiate a first-year orientation program.

1.4. Definitions of Terms

Area of study: In this study, *area of study* refers to the major in which first-year students were enrolled in Fall 2011 semester at METU-NCC. Students' area of study was divided into two major subjects: (1) Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences and (2) Engineering Sciences.

Course content: The *content* of GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course mainly focused on (1) resources, facilities and activities on METU-NCC, (2) academic programs and issues (e.g. withdrawal, grading, and scholarships) at METU-NCC, (3) strategies for academic success, (4) wellness and lifestyle, (5) mental health, and (6) diversity, equality and discrimination. More information on how course content was designed can be found in *Context of the Study* section in Chapter 3.

Course implementation: GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course was offered at 17:30 every week, and it lasted for two hours. The delivery of course was consisted of group seminars/activities, small group reflection/discussion sessions, and group social and cultural activities. The course was implemented by a number of different instructors. While large group sessions were conducted by field experts, small group sessions were run by third- or fourth-grade students who assisted as peer guides in GPC 100 course. The schedule of the activities held in GPC 100 course and the medium of the instruction of the course (i.e. Turkish or English) varied according to Prep School students and First Grade students. Detailed information on the implementation of GPC 100 course can be found in *Context of the Study* section in Chapter 3.

Engineering Sciences (ES): In this study, *Engineering Sciences (i.e. ES)* refer to six undergraduate programs (i.e. departments) offered by Engineering Sciences at METU-

NCC in Fall 2011 semester, and these departments are (1) Chemical Engineering, (2) Civil Engineering, (3) Computer Engineering, (4) Electrical and Electronics Engineering, (5) Mechanical Engineering, and (6) Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering.

First-year seminar: *First-year seminar* is defined as a course which is taught in a small-group setting in which the first-year students and instructors exchange ideas and thoughts, and aims to introduce the students to the nature and value of a liberal education (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005). Also, Barefoot defined a first-year seminar as "a course intended to enhance the academic and/or social integration of first-year students by introducing them (a) to a variety of specific topics which vary by seminar type, (b) to essential skills for college success, and (c) to selected processes, the most common of which is the creation of a peer support group" (as cited in Keup & Barefoot, 2005).

First-year students: In this study, *first-year students* refer to the Prep School and First Grade students enrolled in GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminars course at Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus.

Peer guides: *Peer guides* who involved in GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminars course were third or fourth year students who enrolled in *GPC 310 Developing Skills for Peer Guidance* course which is a three-credit elective course offered by the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling in order to facilitate students' development of leadership, communication, and helping skills. The peer guides were responsible for (1) facilitating small group discussions, (2) assisting in checking attendance and active participation, (3) untangling the troubles encountered in the application process and (4) give continuous feedback in the course evaluation. Further

information on peer guides assisting in GPC 100 course can be found in *Context of the Study* section in Chapter 3.

Perception: Oxford English Dictionary defines *perception* (2013) as "an intuitive insight and understanding" and "an interpretation or impression based upon such an understanding".

Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES): In this study, *Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences* (i.e. *SAES*) refer to eight undergraduate programs (i.e. departments) offered by Economics and Administrative Sciences, and Humanities and Educational Sciences at METU-NCC in Fall 2011 semester. These departments are (1) Business Administration, (2) Business Administration (Joint Undergraduate Program with SUNY New Paltz University), (3) Economics and (4) Political Science and International Relations, (5) Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, (6) Guidance and Psychological Counseling, (7) Psychology, and (8) Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the historical background of first-year seminars and the theories upon which first-year seminars were built are presented. This is followed by a section regarding the characteristics of first-year seminars (seminar types and components). Also, models of first-year seminars from the Turkish context are described briefly with reference to the previous section. This chapter ends with studies related to first-year seminars, especially the impact of first-year seminars on student retention, and academic and social integration.

2.1. Historical Background of First-Year Seminars

Although first-year seminars seem as a new concept in Turkey's higher education system, the roots of such curricular interventions dates back the late 19th century. An early example of these seminars was introduced at Boston University in the late 1880s to help its first-year students adapt to the campus (Mamrick, 2005). In 1911, Reed College offered the first "for-credit" seminar as an integrated part of the first year curriculum (USC, 2013a; Padgett & Keup, 2011) with the focus on "the purpose of college, the college curriculum, the individual plan of study, student honesty, student government, intercollegiate athletics, and college religion" (as cited in Padgett & Keup, 2011). By the 1930s, the number of first-year seminars offered at colleges began to decrease due to the concerns of the faculty about the course's being lack of academic rigor (Padgett & Keup, 2011). However, as the number of institutions and students

studying at universities increased, the educators recognized that the students come to the university with insufficient preparation to cope with academic challenges and they need more support, that the support which students got from such informal networks as their peers was not sufficient enough to help them and that requirements of university life and curriculum and policies at universities got complicated, which led campuses to reintroduce first-year seminars in the 1970s (Mamrick, 2005).

In 1972, the University of South Carolina introduced University 101 (UNIV 101) on which many freshman orientation courses or freshman seminars are based (USCa, 2013), and by the 1980s, many educators, administrators and student affairs professionals from the USA and Canada showed a great interest in UNIV 101, which led John Napier Gardner to "found the Freshmen Year Experience (FYE) as an umbrella organization to foster the success of the first year student" (Watts, 1999, p.4). In 1983, Gardner organized the first Annual Conference on The Freshman Year Experience and about 350 educators attended this conference. The freshman year movement attracted educators so much that the number of national and international conferences on first year experience and the number of people attending them increased every year (Upcraft, Gardner, & Associates, 1989). Later, in 1986, the University of South Carolina established The National Resource Center, which became the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in 1998 (USC, 2013b). This center conducts many wide scale researches on the field and publishes reports evaluating the effectiveness of first-year seminars on student retention, and academic and social integration and proposing strategies for the development of the courses. Although the seminars differ from each other in their content, goals and implementation, the data obtained from the 2009 National Survey on First-Year Seminars indicated that approximately 87.3 % of the colleges and universities in the USA participated in the study offer some type of first-year seminar in their curriculum (Padgett & Keup, 2011).

The use of first-year seminars as an integrated part of higher education curriculum to assist students' transition to universities was not limited in America or Canada; it spread to the universities in other counties including Turkey. In Turkey, the most common way to introduce the university facilities that student can get benefit from and the strategies that students can use to cope with academic and social challenges of university is offering orientation programs with short trips around the campus and city and small presentations which last a couple of days. However, Bilkent University, a private non-profit university located in Ankara, offered the first orientation course (GE 100 Introduction to Academic Life Program) almost 15 years ago to help students get to know the university and adopt university life. Each student studying whether at English Language Preparatory Program or at faculty at Bilkent University is required to take GE 100 course, which is a one-credit compulsory course, and attend the list of one- or two-point-activities collect enough points to pass the course. Besides Bilkent University, one private university, Koç University, and four state universities, Middle East Technical University-North Cyprus Campus, Ankara University, Mersin University and Ege University, offer such orientation courses for their first year students. Detailed information regarding the first-year orientation courses at these universities will be provided in a separate section later in this part.

2.2. Theoretical Framework Behind First-Year Seminars

First-year seminars endeavor to ease students' transition and to foster their retention, and they have been embraced by a large number of higher education institutions. In this study, the two most widely recognized and used student development and retention theories, Astin's Theory of Involvement and Input-Environment-Output Model and Tinto's Student Departure Theory, which constitute the theoretical framework of first-year seminars will be explained as they are have had great influence on the development and implementation of these seminars.

2.2.1. Astin's *Theory of Involvement* and *Input-Environment-Output Model.*

Alexander W. Astin (1984) suggests that the greater the student academic and social involvement, the greater the success of students and the effectiveness of educational policies and practices. Astin defines student involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student commits for his/her academic experience. He indicates that an involved student manages his/her time effectively for studying, spends much time in campus, and participates in the activities and events hold by student organizations.

The theory of student involvement is based on his study which investigates the factors in college environment that affect students' desire to retain and complete their degree in college. He found that there is a positive relationship between student residence and retention. The residents – students living in campus dormitories or residences – are more likely to continue their education. Another finding was that student clubs and organizations and extracurricular activities have a positive effect on college retention. The more students join student clubs and organizations and engage in extracurricular activities, the less likely they are to drop out. His study also displayed that working at a part-time job on campus increases students' persistence. Based on his findings, it would not be wrong to assume that the students will have more opportunity to get together and interact with peers, faculty and staff by living in campus, joining clubs, activities and events in campus and working on campus, which will end up students' developing a sense of belonging to the campus and college and enthusiasm for finishing their undergraduate study.

Astin claims that to what extent the students can achieve a particular developmental goal is directly related to the amount of time and effort that they devote for the activities planned to reach this goal. When the scope and context of first-year seminars considered, the aim of this orientation course is to make the students' passage to the university easier and a lot of activities are prepared in the scope of first year

seminars to reach that aim. Based on Astin's involvement theory, it can be inferred that the more time and energy students spend in activities designed to help students during their transition to university, the easier they will adapt to academic and social life in university, which will increase their academic achievements.

Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model suggests that the success of students is related to what the students' background was before the college and what they have acquired there, and it aims to evaluate the effect of environmental experiences on any kind of change in the students under different environmental conditions by comparing before- and after-college variables (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). I-E-O model claims that the *Outcomes*, which are the effects of college, are a function of students' background and characteristics they brought to college, which is considered as *Inputs,* and the environments they experienced in college, which is referred as *Environment* (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). Figure 2.1 below depicts the simplicity of this model with the examples of variables that Astin identified for further understanding of I-E-O model.

2.2.2. Tinto's *Student Departure Theory.*

Vincent Tinto's theory reveals the interrelationship between and among the factors affecting student persistence and it denotes that the primary reason behind students' decision to leave university is the absence of academic and social integration (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Tinto, 1988). Tinto (1988) theorizes that the students are constantly evaluating their decisions to pursue their education or to drop out of university from the moment that they stepped into the campus as a result of their level of academic and social integration into the institution and, during this decision cycle, they have gone through a process of integration and institutional persistence which is comprised of three stages or "rites of passages": separation, transition, incorporation.

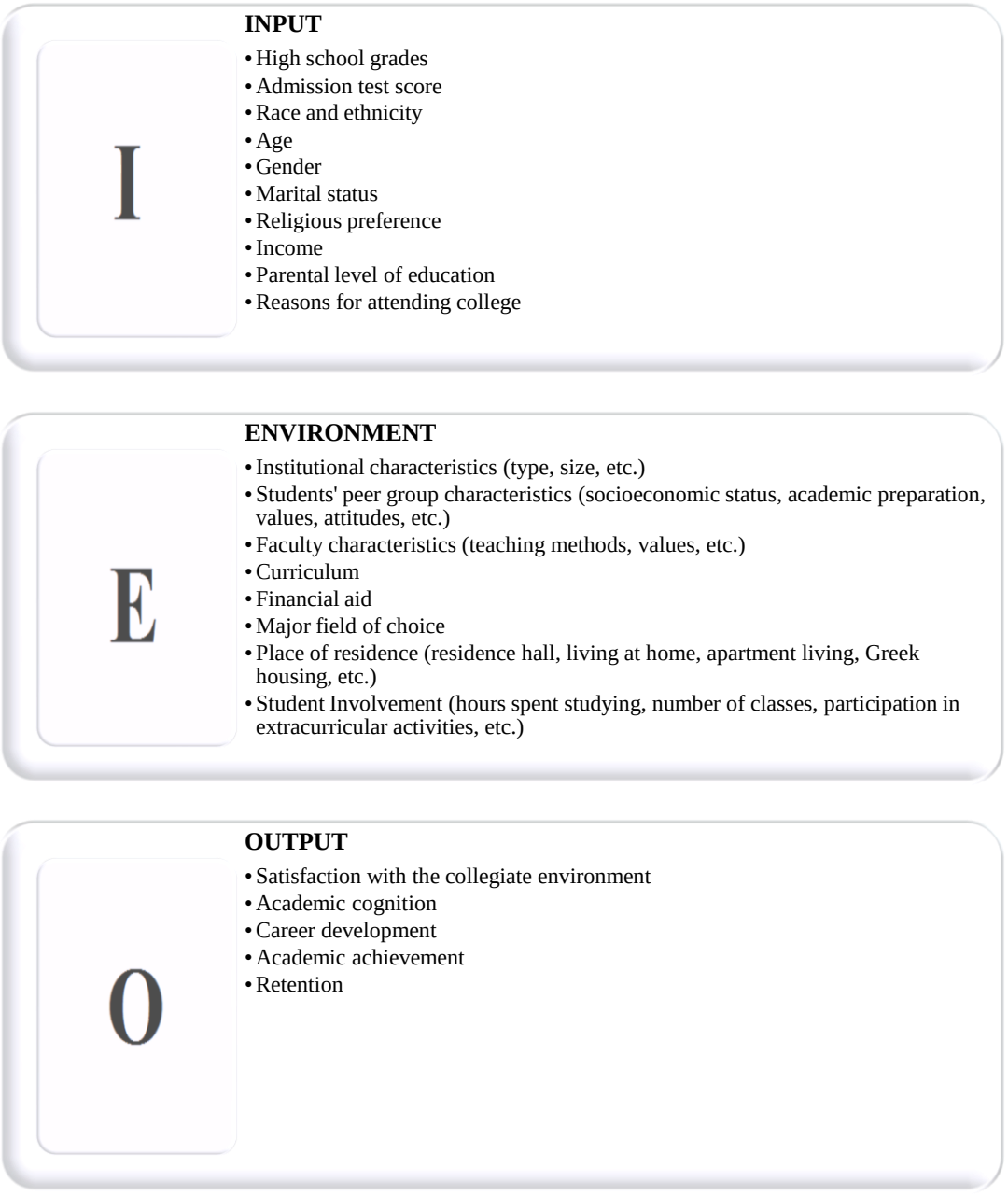

Figure 2.1 Astin's I-E-O Model Adapted into Figurative Description. (Adapted from *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (p. 32-44) by M. Lee Upcraft, John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Associates, 2005, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2005 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)

Separation reflects the students' disassociation from their past associations like high school communities and families. The students should break or loosen their physical or social connection with the individuals from their past so that they could fully integrate into the new communities of university. *Transition to college* connotes the period during which the students initiate interaction with new members of the university, i.e. peers and faculty, seek for membership in this new group and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills required for their performance there. *Incorporation* represents students' participation into the academic and social communities of university and their integration into the university life. These stages and different forms of adjustment that they bring about are inseparably intertwined and may occur simultaneously. Tinto suggests that students should separate themselves, at least to some degree, from their former communities so as to make their transition through their incorporation into the university life.

This movement can be stressful and challenging in varying degrees for students; some students may barely be aware of this process, yet for some, this can be severe more than they can stand. Also, not every student is able to cope with this challenge in the same way. As a result, the absence of social and intellectual incorporation among and between students, faculty and other members of the institution causes students to feel isolated and the difficulties that the students have experienced during the process of their social and academic adaptation to the new academic and social environment of the institution evoke student departure (Tinto, 1988). Tinto pinpoints the importance of first six months of university, which corresponds to the first-semester of higher education study, on students' persistence and the responsibility of institutions for assisting students to achieve their academic and social integration (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Tinto, 1988). When students make their initial transition through first year of college with success, the possibility that they will remain their study significantly increases, which is a result of their incorporation into the academic and social communities of the institution (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Levitz & Noel, 1989).

2.3. Characteristics of First-Year Seminars

Betty L. Siegel (2005) portrays the first-year seminar as an independent course which aims to provide students with essential skills that will help them succeed during their university education. Besides, Hunter and Linder (2005) designate the features of a successful first-year seminar as a credit-bearing course offered in the first year of university curriculum, designed and taught by faculty and student affairs professionals, assisted by upper-level undergraduate students, emphasizing instructor training and development, compensating or rewarding the instructors for the delivery of the seminar, and assessing its effectiveness and sharing the results with the campus community. This section elucidates the characteristics of first-year seminars for deeper insight into the course via presenting different types and core elements of these seminars.

2.3.1. Types of first-year seminars.

Two different classifications regarding the types of seminars offered two-year or four-year institutions were found in researches. Based on the study of Betsy Barefoot and National Resource Center on the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, Randy Swing (2002) classifies first-year seminars into four types according to their themes: (1) college transition theme, (2) special academic theme, (3) discipline-based theme, and (4) remedial/study skills theme. In Table 2.1 below, the definitions of these seminar types can be seen.

Mary S. Hunter and Carrie W. Linder (2005) introduce another classification based on the 2000 National Survey of First-Year Seminar Programming study. This classification was originally made by Betsy O. Barefoot in 1992 (Tobolowsky, 2005) and has changed very little since then. Seminar types by Hunter and Linder are (1) extended orientation seminars, (2) academic seminars with generally uniform content across sections, (3) academic seminars on various topics, (4) professional or discipline-

linked seminars, (5) basic study skills seminars or remedial seminars, and (6) hybrids. These seminar types and their definitions are presented in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.1

Types of First-Year Seminars – Swing's Classification

Seminar Type	Description
College Transition Theme	The focus is on the academic topics that help college transition, academic success and student engagement in educational opportunities.
Special Academic Theme	The focus is on a specific interdisciplinary theme other than college transition.
Discipline-Based Theme	The focus is on a major or discipline and serves as a introduction to that academic department.
Remedial/Study Skills Theme	The focus is on basic study skills to equip high risk students of withdrawal or failure.

Note. Adapted into figurative description from *What type of seminar is best?* by R. L. Swing, 2002.

Hunter and Linder (2005) mentioned that seminars focusing on academic topics are on the march; however, extended orientation seminars or college survival materials are still the most widely used first-year seminar type (62 %) although a decrease in the number of institutions using it occurred. Another growing trend is to involve discipline specific topics into the extended orientation seminars that are already being used.

2.3.2. Components of first-year seminars.

Although first-year seminars vary in terms of their objectives, content and implementation due to the fact that they are institution-specific courses, in nature, which are designed to meet the needs and characteristics of both the institution and its students (Hunter & Linder, 2005), still they have some similar structures with regard to their objectives, content and implementation.

Table 2.2

Types of First-Year Seminars – Hunter and Linder's Classification

Seminar Type	Description
Extended Orientation Seminars	The focus is on strategies for academic success and college survival.
Academic Seminars with Generally Uniform Content Across Sections	The focus is on common academic themes which apply to all students and on such crucial academic skills as writing, reasoning and critical thinking.
Academic Seminars on Various Topics	The focus is on specific topics chosen by the faculty according to their academic and/or personal interest and expertise; thus, topics vary from section to section.
Professional or Discipline-Linked Seminars	The focus is on topics peculiar to a specific profession or academic discipline.
Basic Study Skills Seminars or Remedial Seminars	The focus is on basic study skills like note-taking, test taking and critical thinking skills for students who are lack of necessary academic skills for their college education.
Hybrids	This kind of seminars consists of elements from some or all of other seminar types.

Note. Adapted into figurative description from *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College* (p. 279-280) by M. Lee Upcraft, John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Associates, 2005, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2005 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc..

2.3.2.1. *Objectives of first-year seminars.*

The main aim of first-year seminars is to equip students with sufficient assistance for their social and intellectual development and for their university adjustment and to help them "become better assimilated to and engaged in" their university education (Hunter & Linder, 2005). Hunter and Linder (2005) indicate the most important goals of first-year seminars are to cultivate students' academic skills and to facilitate their transition to university. Other goals of first-year seminars can be listed as follows:

a. To acquaint new comers with the nature and value of university education,
b. To introduce requirements of general education and details of a specific program,
c. To familiarize students with critical thinking and academic writing skills,
d. To adjust students with the resources, facilities and organizations on campus,
e. To assist students develop a sense of belonging to the institution,
f. To foster students' personal development,
g. To guide students with their career planning,
h. To help students establish and strengthen closer relationships with faculty and staff,
i. To encourage students to develop support networks and friendships among their first-year classmates and with their upper-level peers (Braxton & Lee, 2005; Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005).

The findings of the 2003 National Survey on First-Year Seminars (Tobolowsky, 2005) indicated that the most common course objectives across all institutions (N = 629) and four seminar types were (1) to develop academic skills, (2) to provide orientation to campus resources and services, and (3) to encourage self-exploration and personal development. The study also stated that top two objectives were consistent with the findings from the four previous surveys (Tobolowsky, 2005).

2.3.2.2. *Content of first-year seminars.*

As well as general topics like study skills, transition to university, personal development, and so forth, institution-specific topics (i.e. campus resources, curriculum) constitute the scope of first-year seminars' content since first-year seminars endeavor not only the intellectual and social development of students but also students' perceptions of the community and culture inside and outside the campus, development

of a sense of belonging adjustment to them. A detailed list of topics covered in first-year seminars is given below:

a. Learning styles and study skills,
b. Time management,
c. Campus resources, facilities and organizations,
d. Career planning,
e. Diversity,
f. Wellness,
g. Student life on campus,
h. Transition to university,
i. Academic skills (i.e. critical reasoning, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, writing and library skills),
j. General and major requirements of institution's curriculum or a specific unit,
k. Academic advising and planning,
l. Personal development (i.e. self-concept and interpersonal skills)
m. Value and benefits of higher education (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Siegel, 2005).

According to the findings of the 2003 National Survey on First-Year Seminars (Tobolowsky, 2005), the most common course topics across all institutions (N = 629) and four seminar types were (1) study skills, (2) campus resources, (3) time management, (4) academic planning and advising, and (5) critical thinking. The study also stated *academic skills* and *time management* were two most frequently reported topic in all survey. Also, *introduction to campus resources* were among the most common topics in all surveys, except for the one conducted in 2000 (Tobolowsky, 2005).

2.3.2.3. *Implementation of first-year seminars.*

Detailed information about the implementation of first-year seminars regarding the credit, course hour, target group, class setting, instruction methods, instructors and teaching assistants of the course are given below:

a. Although there are some institutions offering first-year seminars as a non-credit-baring course, there is an increase in the number of institutions which offer academic credit for first-year seminars (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005). The first-year seminars can be offered as one- to four-credit courses; yet, one-credit seminars are the most common one (Barefoot et al, 2005; Hunter & Linder, 2005). According to the results obtained from the 2003 National Survey on First-Year Seminars (Tobolowsky, 2005), almost half of the institutions (49.5 %) offered one-credit seminars, and 31.2 % of the institutions had three-credits seminars.
b. One to three hours could be allocated for first-year seminars, and the studies reveal that the attainments of students is greater in two- or three-hour seminars than one-hour seminars (Barefoot et al., 2005; Hunter & Linder, 2005)
c. First-year seminars are mainly designed for all students in the first year of university; however, due to its flexible structure in fulfilling the needs of students, the entire seminar or some part of it could also be allocated for special populations like a specific-major-students, honors students, adult students, academically unprepared students, undecided students, and so on (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005).
d. First-year seminars are usually taught in small group settings with 18-25 students to foster student-student and student-instructor interaction (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005; Tobolowsky, 2005).

e. First-year seminars chiefly based on small discussions through which students – both freshmen and upper-level students – and their instructors transfer information and ideas (Hunter & Linder, 2005).
f. First-year seminars can be taught by faculty, student affairs personnel, administrators and other professional staff, but at this point, the most prominent issue is to train course instructors to teach first-year seminars (Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005).
g. Upper-level undergraduate students (2nd, 3rd or 4th grades) are also involved in the delivery of first-year seminars and they mainly act as facilitators of small-group discussions (Barefoot et al. 2005; Gordon, 1989; Hunter & Linder, 2005). While Gordon (1989) points to the mutual benefits of peer involvement for first-year students as they are exposed to successful role models and for peer advisors or counselors as they have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, Hunter and Linder (2005) emphasize involvement of peer instructors could positively affect students' satisfactions with instructional quality. Gordon (1989) also accents the need for the training of upper-class undergraduate co-teachers.

2.4. Models of First-Year Seminars

In this section, some outstanding first-year seminar models from abroad (chiefly from the USA context) and models from Turkish and Northern Cyprus context are presented.

2.4.1. First-year seminar models from abroad.

First-year seminar models from a two-year and a four-year institution from the USA and a three-year institution from the UK are presented respectively.

"UNIV 101" at University of South Carolina.

One of the best known first-year seminars, University 101 (UNIV 101) has been offered at University of South Carolina since 1972. In 2002, the course was ranked as number one among "Programs That Really Work" for first-year experience of freshmen by US *News and World Report* (Morris & Cutright, 2005). A three-hour-credit seminar, the course is required not only for first-year students but also for transfer students during their first semester at University of South Carolina (Morris & Cutright, 2005). The course aims to assist first-year students build academic and personal life skills, develop an understanding of campus services, resources and facilities, and learn the traditions and values important for the culture inside and outside the campus (Morris & Cutright, 2005). Also, undergraduate peer leaders from junior and senior students involve in the course as a co-instructor. In addition, reflective writing assignments, in which the students write about their experiences in adjusting to university, to assigned reading and to featured speakers (Jewler, 1989), are a core component of UNIV 101 course (Morris & Cutright, 2005).

"New Student Seminar" at LaGuardia Community College.

LaGuardia Community College is a two-year institution founded in 1971 in the USA, and it "was ranked as one of the top three large community colleges in the U.S. for its high academic standards and innovative teaching practices" (LGCC, 2013a). *New Student Seminar* is a required one-hour non-credit course offered by the Department of Counseling at LaGuardia Community College (Barefoot & Siegel, 2005; LGCC, 2013b). The course is taught by professionally trained counselors who have faculty status, and it aims to help its students' adjustment to the college and provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills for their success in college. The course provides information about the college and its policies and procedures, assists students with the

process of self and career exploration, and begins the process of educational and career planning. The course includes topics like adjusting to college life, college resources, test-taking skills, study skills, time management, career exploration, academic advising, and so forth (Barefoot & Siegel, 2005; LGCC, 2013b). The class size for the courses is up to 40 students, which is far from the ideal (Barefoot & Siegel, 2005).

"FYS 3100" at Richmond University.

FYS 3100, namely First Year Seminar for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) Programme, is a one-credit course offered by the Department of General Education at Richmond University in the UK. All incoming students are required to take this course (RU, 2013a). The aim of the course is to engage students as active learners, encourage reflection on goals and personal development, and develop core academic skills. The course is usually taught by outside speakers through a series of class sessions and workshops. The course introduces students to key topics related to living in London and the challenges of university life. The course content includes "a project based on a field trip in London, effective use of the resources available at the university, identifying strategies to aid learning, successful self-management, setting up and preparing information for an online portfolio, and completing a PDP (Personal Development Planning)" (RU, 2013a). In addition to this course, all new students are required to take one of the four-credit innovative new courses taught by faculty in the First Year Seminar (FYS) program in their first semester at Richmond University (RU, 2013b; RU, 2013c). These courses also provide a forum for students to engage in a series of activities aimed at developing transferable skills and ensuring academic success (RU, 2013b).

2.4.2. First-year seminar models from Turkish and Northern Cyprus context.

First-year seminar or orientation course models from five four-year institutions in Turkey and from a four-year institution in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are presented respectively.

"GE 100" and "GE 101" at Bilkent University.

Pioneer of first-year experience courses or seminars, GE 100 Orientation or Introduction to University Life course (GE 100) of Bilkent University has been offered for more than a decade. The aim of this one-credit course is to familiarize first year students with the academic and social environment of the university. The activities planned in the scope of GE 100 last four days at the beginning of fall semester in each academic year, usually in September. GE 100 is compulsory for all new comers and they have to participate in a number of activities so as to pass the course. GE 100 has a variety of activities with one- or two-points including speeches, seminars, workshops, concerts, cultural events, sports activities, departmental tours and detailed information about the course and the activities is available in the "orientation handbook" prepared for students. The students' status regarding the number of activities that they attend and of points that they collect is traced via the official student information system of Bilkent University, STARS-SRS.

Besides GE 100, Engineering Faculty offers another one-credit compulsory course for its first year students: GE 101 Engineering Orientation or Introduction to University Life for Engineering Students (GE101). GE 101 endeavors to reach the same goals as GE 100; but it has a more discipline-specific focus. Unlike GE 100, this course continues with one-hour lessons and one-hour seminars during the entire Fall Semester. The students are assessed according to several criteria: grade obtained from GE 100,

participation in GE 101 seminars, GE 101 assignments, presentation and group work, and attendance and participation during GE 101 (Bilkent University, 2013a; Bilkent University, 2013b; Bilkent University, 2013c).

"UYM 101" at Ankara University.

UYUM 101 Program or Adjustment to the University Life Program (UYM 101) has been offered since 2009-2010 Academic Year in Ankara University, which is among the pioneering state universities including such a program in its curriculum. UYM 101 aims to familiarize new students with the university itself and with their faculty and department, to ease their transition to university, to help their personal, social and academic development and to ensure them to feel the joy of being a student of Ankara University. UYM 101 is offered during the first week of each academic year, and all newcomers have to attend this program in order to finish their study at the university. In order to pass the program with success, the students are required to attend at least 80 % of varying activities organized by both the Rectorate and specific academic units such as Faculty, College and Conservatory (Ankara University, 2013).

"UYG 101" at Mersin University.

UYG 101 Introduction to University Life (UYG 101) has been offered since 2009-2010 Academic Year in Mersin University, which is another pioneering state university. The aim of UYG 101 is to introduce students the administrative, academic and social units and organizations of the university, to help students develop a sense of belonging, to ease their transition and minimize the problem that they might face and to help students get the utmost benefit from the academic and social environment of the university. UYG 101 is offered as one-credit course during the Spring Semester of each academic year. The students are required to register for the activities that they are

planning to attend via university's official student information system (ÖBS) and they should attend at least ten activities to pass the course. There are three core events that each student is obliged to participate in: Introduction of University, Introduction of Units and Departments, and Introduction of Basic Principles of Mersin University. Besides these compulsory events, the students are required to attend seven more elective activities to pass the course. The elective events are divided into five subtopics (namely Scientific and Occupational Events, Social and Cultural Events, Arts, Sports, and Social Responsibility Events), and the students should participate in at least one event in each subcategory (Mersin University, 2013a; Mersin University, 2013b; Mersin University, 2013c).

"Transition to University Life" at Ege University.

Ege University has been offering Transition to University Life (TUF) to all its first year students except for Medical students since 2010-2011 Academic Year. Through TUF, it has been aimed to inform students about the concept of higher education, the services, offices and units of the university, the national and international opportunities at university and the rules and regulations of the university and to encourage students to participate in sports, cultural and arts events. The students are required to attend minimum eight activities – two activities per event – during the scope of this compulsory one-semester-long course, and these activities could be Academic, Cultural, Sports or Student Clubs' events. The success of students is assessed according to several criteria: Event report, Presentation, Portfolio, Interview and Attendance (Ege University, 2013a; Ege University, 2013b; Ege University, 2013c).

"UNIV 101" and "ALIS 100" at Koç University.

UNIV 101 Introduction to Koç University Program (UNIV 101) and ALIS 100 Academic and Life Skills Program (ALIS 100) have been offered since 2011-2012 Academic Year at Koç University. UNIV 101 is a one-credit course that each new student has to take for the entire freshman year and it aims to help new-coming students make a successful transition to university life. UNIV 101 consists of three major programs: *Adaptation to University Program, Peer Support and Guidance Program* and *New Student Advisory Program*. In the scope of *Adaptation to University Program*, the new-coming students attend three-day activities held on campus with their mentors from upper-grades. In line with this short program, the students also attend *Peer Support and Guidance Program* which is a small class activity with eight to ten students and is run by a mentor from an upper-grade student. Moreover, the students are assigned an advisor from their own field of study, and in the scope of UNIV 101 program, they attend some activities with their advisors, obtain information about their undergraduate program and get academic advising (Koç University, 2012; Koç University, 2013a; Koç University, 2013b).

In addition to UNIV 101 program, first-year students have to attend ALIS 100 (i.e. Academic and Life Skills) program which is a one-credit course that aims to foster first-year students' awareness on the necessary knowledge and skills for their adaptation to university and success in life. The medium of instruction of the program is Turkish, and the program covers such topics as time management, presentation strategies, communication, team working skills and so forth through seminars, discussions and group works (Koç University, 2013a; Koç University, 2013b).

"GPC 100" at METU-NCC.

GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course is a curriculum element designed to assist new students make a successful transition to the academic and social life of Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC) and thereby foster a sense of belonging to the institution. The course is put into practice in the Fall Semester of 2011-2012 Academic Year for the first time. Being a one-credit course, GPC 100 course is compulsory for all the incoming students (METU-NCC, 2013). Further information on the course will be given in *Context of the Study* section in Chapter 3.

2.5. Studies on First-Year Seminars

A considerable amount of literature has been published on first-year experience courses or seminars and these studies mainly investigated the relationships between these first-year orientation programs and university or college students' persistence and their academic and social integration. Several studies reported that students' involvement with collegiate experience, interaction with peers and faculty and academic and social integration into the college generate a sense of belonging into the institution and lead them to endure their degree program and develop themselves academically and socially (Astin, 1984; Rice, 1989). Also, many referred to a significant relationship between academic and social integration and student retention (Astin, 1984; Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005; Hunter, 2006; Tinto, 1997). Moreover, some highlighted that students' integration or involvement into the university life, especially the academia, facilitates knowledge acquisition, skills development and learning (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1997). Although this study did not aim to explore such a relationship, laying out the relevant studies on these issues is crucial in regard to developing a thorough understanding of first-year seminars and their significance.

The research to date has tended to focus on the impact of first-year experience courses or seminars on retention. ***Retention*** was defined as "the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission to the university through graduation" (Berger & Lyon, 2005, p. 7). There is a large volume of published studies investigating the effectiveness of first-year experience courses and seminars on how well universities retain first-year students; however, previous research findings into the influence of first-year experience courses and seminars on retention were inconsistent and contradictory.

A number of studies found that first-year experience courses and seminars – either directly or indirectly – increased the likelihood of retention (e.g. Anselmo, 1997; Barefoot et al., 1998; Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000; Buchanan, 1993; Erickson & Stone, 2012; Fidler & Moore, 1996; Green, 1996; Hoff, Cook & Price, 1996; Jamelske, 2009; Lang, 2007; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfe, 1986;Porter & Swing, 2006; Tobolowsky, 2005;). On the other hand, data from a few sources identified that attending a first-year experience course or seminar did not make any difference on students' decision to continue their education (Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Purdie, 2007; Purdie & Rosser, 2011; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle & Keller-Wolff, 1999).

Pascarella, Terenzini and Wolfle (1986) conducted a study with freshman students at a medium-sized residential university in order to investigate the impact of an institutional intervention (i.e. orientation program) on students' persistence or withdrawal. Their study revealed that orientation program had an indirect impact on freshman year persistence through directly influencing students' social integration and their subsequent institutional commitment. Similarly, Braxton, Milem and Sullivan (2000) found that both social integration and subsequent institutional commitment positively influenced students' decision to stay at the university. On the other hand, a recent study conducted by Clark and Cundiff (2011) yielded that the first-year experience course offered at a moderate-sized university did not have an impact on retention rates.

In addition, several studies attempted to investigate the relationship between first-year experience courses and seminars and students' academic integration; yet, results of these studies were inconsistent as to the effectiveness of these orientation programs on academic integration. ***Academic integration*** is students' ability to adapt to academic and intellectual activities and the indicators used to assess academic integration are grade point average (GPA), hours studying per week, honors program participation, and so forth (Chapman & Pascarella, 1893).

Previous studies reported that students who attended a first-year experience course or seminar were more likely to have higher grade point averages (GPAs) than non-attendants (Anselmo, 1997; Green, 1996; Jamelske, 2009; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; McAdams & Foster, 1998; Odell, 1996; Tobolowski, 2005). On the other hand, a number of studies found no treatment effects of these orientation programs on GPA (Purdie, 2007; Purdie & Rosser, 2011; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle & Keller-Wolff, 1999) or found negative effects (Buchanan, 1993; Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Lang, 2007).

Maisto and Tammi (1991) used grade point average (GPA) scores as a measurement of academic integration and they compared GPA scores of first-year students who participated in the freshman seminar with the scores of non-participant students. Their study revealed that the students who attended freshman seminar earned significantly higher grades than the students who did not participated in the course. Likewise, Jamelske (2009) investigated the effect of a first-year experience program on GPA at a public university and found that participants of first-year experience program earned higher grades compared to the non-participants. On the contrary, in a recent study, Purdie and Rosser (2011) in which they investigated the impact of three transitional support programs (i.e. two types of living-learning communities and a first-year experience course) on first-year students' GPA found that the students who participated in the first-year experience course did not earn higher GPAs at their first-year; yet the participants of Freshman Interest Group did earn higher scores. Also, Lang (2007) investigated the influence of a first-year experience course on the academic

performance of first-year students and his study revealed that the control group who did not participated in the course attained a greater semester GPA than the students participated in the course.

Moreover, several studies revealed that first-year experience courses and seminars positively affected students' social integration (Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000; Lowe & Cook, 2003; Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfle, 1986). ***Social integration*** is students' ability to establish and maintain social relationships with peers and faculty and it is measured through such variables as the number of dates and friends a student has, participation in extracurricular activities, quality of friendship, non-classroom interactions with peers or faculty, and so on (Chapman & Pascarella, 1893). A relatively recent study conducted by Lowe and Cook (2003) revealed the importance of peers in helping first-year students adjust to the new environment.

Furthermore, there have been several studies investigating the effects of students' first-year experiences on their integration or persistence (e.g. Berger & Braxton, 1998; Liu & Liu, 2000). Although these studies were not directly related to first-year experience courses or seminars, they are important in the context of effectiveness of positive first-year experiences.

Berger and Braxton (1998) carried out a study to investigate the influence of organizational attributes on social integration and students' withdrawal. Their study drew attention to the importance of organizational attributes such as institutional communication, fairness in policy and rule enforcement, and participating in decision making in students' decisions to persist on social integration, subsequent institutional commitment and persistence. Their study revealed that all these three organizational attributes affect directly social integration and indirectly reenrollment decision. Also, they urged for creating environments to foster students' perceptions of the organizational attributes on campus (Berger & Braxton, 1998).

Liu and Liu (2000) pointed out that integration into and satisfaction with university life plays an important role in students' decision for retention and students' tendency to leave the university has an inverse relationship with the degree of academic and social integration into their institution. Their study revealed that social integration, academic performance and academic integration positively influenced students' satisfaction, and that satisfaction, academic performance and academic integration had a positive influence on students' decision to persist (Liu & Liu, 2000).

Based on the theories of Astin and Tinto and the research on retention and social and academic integration, universities included some forms of first-year experience courses or seminars which were designed to increase students' academic performance and their persistence through reinforcing their academic and social integration. Goodman and Pascarella' summary (2006) pointed out that attending a first-year seminar positively influenced persistence, degree attainments and retention and that first-year seminars had a positive impact on the increase in student-faculty interaction, co-curricular activity involvement and academic satisfaction.

2.6. Summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature on first-year seminars in terms of its historical and theoretical background. Also, the characteristics of first-year seminars and models from other universities abroad and in Turkey were reviewed. In addition, this chapter reviewed the studies related to the impact of first-year seminars on student retention, and their academic and social integration.

The reviewed literature indicated that the first seminar aiming to assist students' adapt to university occurred in the late 1880s at Boston University in the USA, and the first "for-credit" course was offered in 1911 at Reed College. Reviewing the relevant literature showed that University 101 offered by University of South Carolina has become the cornerstone of first-year seminars. However, the history of first-year

seminars in Turkish and Northern Cyprus context is quite new. The literature being reviewed indicated that the first orientation course in Turkey was offered by Bilkent University almost 15 years ago.

Reviewing literature showed that, among many student development and retention theories, Astin's *Theory of Involvement* and *Input-Environment-Output Model* and Tinto's *Student Departure Theory* had the greatest influence on the development of first-year seminars. Astin's theories highlighted the importance of students' involvement in academic and social experiences in university. According to his theories, the quality and quantity of the time and energy that the students spent on studying, participating in extracurricular activities, communicating with faculty and peers, and so forth have great influence on students' desire to retain and finish their program. Similar to Astin, Tinto argued that if the students achieve academic and social integration into the university life, they are more likely continue their study and complete their degree.

In the relevant literature, first-year seminars are mostly characterized as a credit-bearing course which aims to help first-year students' transition and adjustment to the university life. Types of first-year seminars vary in their goal and content; yet, the most common first-year seminar type is *extended orientation seminar* which chiefly focuses on strategies for students' academic success and adaptation to university. The literature also indicated that first-year seminars share some common characteristics in terms of their objectives, content and implementation in spite of being specific to the institution offering the course.

The reviewed literature indicated that first-year seminars are common mostly in the colleges and universities in the USA. Also, it was found that METU-NCC was the first higher education institution offering such a first-year orientation course or seminar in Northern Cyprus, and there were five more universities in Turkey including a similar course in their curriculum.

When reviewing the literature, it was found that the studies on first-year experience course or seminars mainly focus on the impact of these courses or seminars

on students' retention and their academic and social integration. Literature suggested that attending a first-year experience course or seminar mostly had a positive direct or indirect effect on students' decision to stay and maintain their study; yet, there are a few studies which yielded that these courses or seminars did not have any influence on students' persistence. Also, in the literature, first-year experience courses or seminars were found to have positive influence on students' academic success and led to an increase in students' GPA. However, some studies explored that attending such courses or seminars did not affect or negatively affected students' GPA. Moreover, reviewing literature showed that attending first-year experience courses or seminars had a positive influence on students' social integration.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To frame the overall research methodology of the study, in this chapter, the overall research design, research questions and the context of the study are presented; subjects of the study, data sources, instrumentation procedure, validity and reliability, data collection analyses procedures are explained; and the assumptions and limitations regarding the study are discussed.

3.1. Research Design

A survey design was utilized to evaluate the perceptions of students related to GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course through a self-constructed questionnaire which included both close-ended and open-ended items. Whereas close-ended questions limited the respondents to a list of alternatives and allowed to find out the distribution of subjects over them, open-ended items allowed the participant to reflect their unique unrestrained feelings, opinions and suggestions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The data obtained from these two types of items complemented and strengthened each other, and enabled to gain a broader and deeper understanding of subjects' perceptions of the course.

The study was conducted during the Fall Semester of 2011-2012 Academic Year at METU-NCC. The survey was administered online to all the first-year students taking GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester. The subjects of the study was comprised of N = 255 first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester.

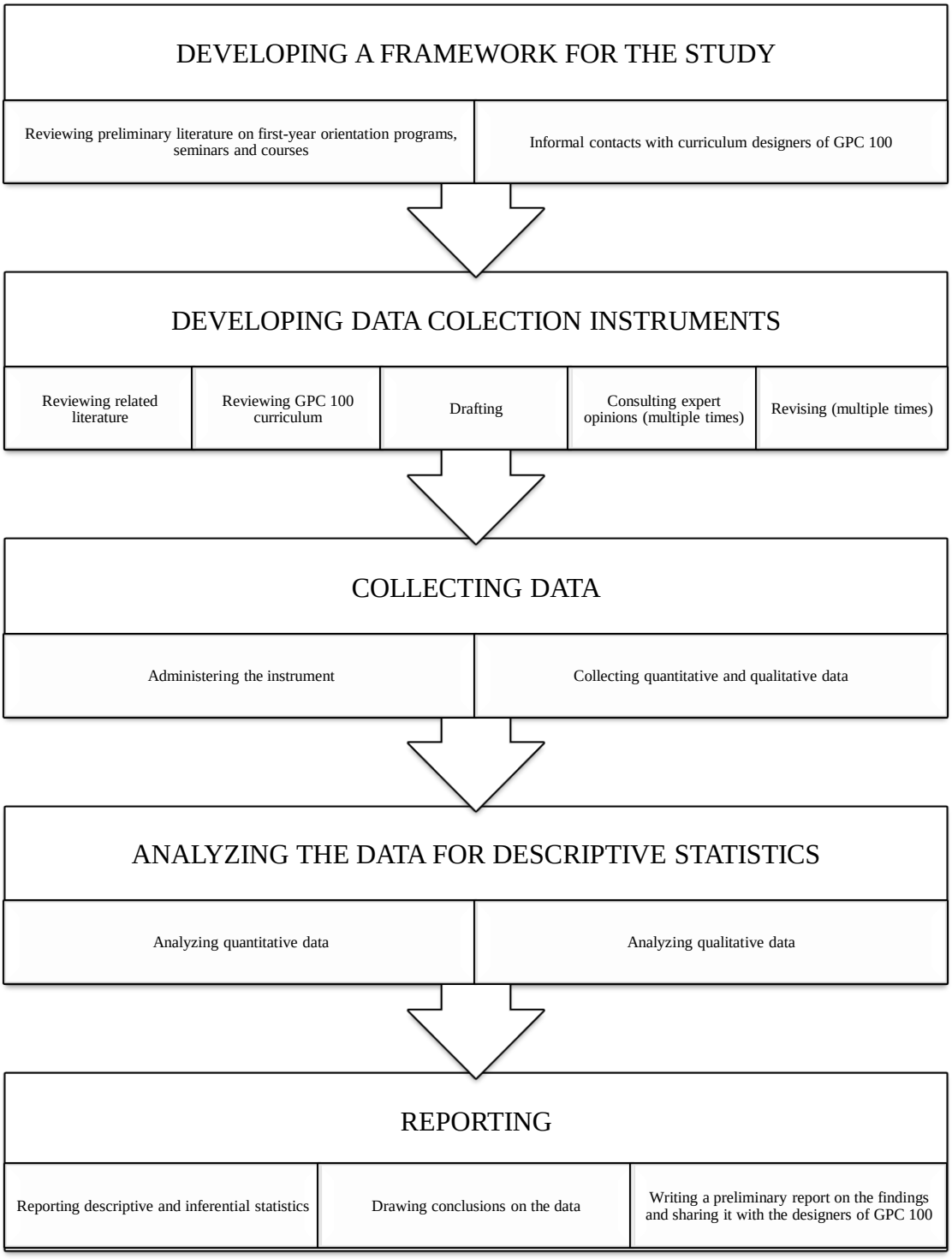

Figure 3.1 Overall Research Design of the Study

Figure 3.1 above displays the schematic representation of the successive stages followed throughout the study and the following paragraphs explain in detail the overall design of the study.

This study was carried out through the supports of METU-NCC. Almost two months before the course start date, the curriculum planners of GPC 100 course had requested a study on evaluating the course for its further development from the Department of Educational Sciences (EDS) at METU. After the discussions with the thesis advisor, the study was designed to evaluate the perceptions of first-year students taking GCP 100 course during 2011-2012 Academic Year at METU-NCC with regard to the overall interest of the students toward GPC 100 course and to the objectives, content and implementation of the course.

The study started with a preliminary review of the literature on first-year orientation programs, seminars and courses in order to obtain a thorough comprehension of the field and to develop a framework for the study. After identifying key words useful in the related topics, the library catalogue of METU and Bilkent University had been searched for books and journals, and the available documents were taken. Also, computerized databases such as Web of Science, PsycINFO, SocINDEX, and even ProQuest and search engines like Google and Yahoo! were searched systematically. Also, for modals, MS/PhD theses and dissertations were obtained from ULAKBIM Turkish National Databases and UMI Dissertation Abstracts International. Moreover, some of the documents that could not be reached, especially the articles from *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*, were ordered online. After examining the resources, the research questions and thesis proposal were developed.

During the fall semester of 2011-2012 Academic Year, the data collection instrument was developed by the researcher following a thorough review of literature and curriculum of GPC 100 course. The instrument was revised many times with the help of experts and necessary modifications were made. The study was administered in

9-21 January 2012. The data collected in the study was analyzed through descriptive statistics and a report including the preliminary findings was shared with the program designers of GPC 100 course in July 2012.

3.2. Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions and Table 3.1 below summarizes the sources of information (i.e. corresponding survey items) with regard to research questions being investigated.

1. What are the interest levels of first-year students toward GPC 100 course?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the objectives of GPC 100 course?
3. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the content of GPC 100 course?
4. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the implementation of GPC 100 course?
    a. What are the students' perceptions of allocated class time for the course?
    b. What are the students' perceptions of instructional methods used in the delivery of the course?
    c. What are the students' perceptions of peer guides assisted in the course?
5. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course by certain background variables?
    a. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to gender?
        i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?

ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?

b. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to area of study?
    i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
    ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
    iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?
v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

3.3. Context of the Study

With its quality education at international standards, universities in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) offer undergraduate and graduate programs which are internationally recognized. Although majority of the universities are private institutions, the tuitions fees are affordable and many scholarship opportunities are available at these universities. University campuses are equipped with a wide range of facilities for social, cultural and sports activities. Also, on- and off-campus housing options are available for students. As well as local universities, several higher education institutions from Turkey have campuses in Northern Cyprus.

Middle East Technical University (METU) found in 1956 is one of the most prominent universities in Turkey which serves more than 20.000 local and international students. One of the highest ranked universities in Turkey, nearly all incoming freshmen admitted to METU rank in the top 1 % of the applicants taking the National University Entrance Examination in Turkey. In 2000, METU located in Ankara has expanded its campus as a result of the agreement between the Governments of Republic of Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and established another campus in Northern Cyprus. Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC) has

been serving for Turkish and international students since 2003-2004 Academic Year, and currently, it is offering 14 undergraduate programs.

Table 3.1

Summary of Research Questions and Corresponding Sources of Information and Data Analyses and Reporting Procedures

Research Question	Corresponding Survey Items
1	II-6 & II-11 (Likert-scaled responses)
2	II-4 (Likert-scaled responses)
3	II-7 (Likert-scaled responses), II-8 & IV-1 (Short responses)
4a	II-2 (Likert-scaled responses), II-3 & IV-1 (Short responses)
4b	II-9 (Likert-scaled responses), II-10 & IV-1 (Short responses)
4c	III-1 (Likert-scaled responses), III-2 & IV-2 (Short responses)
5a-i	I-2 & II-6
5a-ii	I-2 & II-7
5a-iii	I-2 & II-2
5a-iv	I-2 & II-9
5a-v	I-2 & III-1
5b-i	I-5 & II-6
5b-ii	I-5 & II-7
5b-iii	I-5 & II-2
5b-iv	I-5 & II-9
5b-v	I-5 & III-1

Note. For the fifth research question, total mean scores of related Likert-scaled items (i.e. II-7, II-9 and III-1) were generated.

In 2011, METU-NCC initiated a new course, GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course, in order to assist new coming students make a successful transition to their academic and social life at METU-NCC and thereby foster a sense of belonging to the university.

The main objectives of GPC 100 course are as follows: (1) to promote engagement in the curricular and co-curricular life of the university, (2) to acquaint new students with METU-NCC programs of study, (3) to assist in introducing students to program faculty and upper class students, (4) to promote the development of essential academic and study skills, (5) to facilitate a smooth transition to life as a university student at METU-NCC, and (6) to encourage lifestyle choices that promote health and wellness. As cited in the course syllabus, the intended learning outcomes of GPC 100 course, namely the attainments of GPC 100 course, which the students are expected to achieve at the end of this course are as follows:

> As the result of successfully completing this course, each student will (1) gain knowledge of the institution and its resources as well how best to utilize these resources; (2) acquire an awareness and understanding of role of motivation in learning, strategies of learning, time & resource management and ways to improve these essential components of academic success; (3) develop an understanding of the importance of making life-style choices that affect health and wellness for life; (4) acquire accurate and current information about their field of study; (5) build relationships with upper class students and academic staff in their respective fields of study; (6) acquire an awareness and understanding of diversity; and (7) gain an understanding of the university adjustment process and the steps that can be taken to facilitate this adjustment process to insure an effective and successful transition to life as a university student.

The content of GPC 100 course was designed based on the opinions of the students, the needs of the institution and the review of the literature. Considering the student opinions, institutional needs and studies in the literature, the major themes regarding the course content was identified. Then, in order to specify and design the activities regarding these major themes, subcommittees consisted of faculty and field experts were formed according to their career and academic fields of study. A one-day workshop was held in 26 July 2011 and necessary changes were made in the content or structure of the activities. Also, the major themes and related activities were improved according to the recommendations of subcommittees in time (Z. E. Sun-Selışık,

personal communication, August 23, 2011). The course offerings for both Prep School students and departmental students are the same; however, the sequence of the topics being covered is different. The major topics to be covered during the course are (1) definitions and views about the concept of university and of METU-NCC; (2) information on the sports and recreational facilities usage, and social and cultural activities; (3) wellness and lifestyle; (4) introduction of the Library and Information & Communication Technologies Office (ICT) and their use; (5) academic issues and strategies for academic success; (6) information about the mental health on various psychiatric conditions, namely, clinical depression, extreme anxiety (including exam anxiety), sleep problems, and issues related to separation and loss; (7) information about nicotine, alcohol, and internet addictions; (8) information on academic programs about their curriculum, electives, internship procedures; (9) meetings with faculty members and senior students in an informal setting and (10) discussions about diversity, equality and discrimination.

GPC 100 course is implemented similarly to the first-year seminars found in literature in terms of its credit, allocated class time, instruction methods, instructors and peer involvement. GPC 100 course is a compulsory one-credit two-hour course that all the incoming students, whether they are studying at Prep School or their departments, have to take this course at their first semester at METU-NCC. Although the medium of instruction at METU-NCC is English, GPC 100 course is offered in both Turkish and English languages. Whereas GPC 100 course for Prep School students is conducted in Turkish, the departmental students receive this course in English. The course is scheduled between 17:30 and 19:30 every Wednesdays.

The course is delivered through a combination of group seminars/activities, small group reflection/discussion sessions, and group social and cultural activities. Each topic is offered by different instructors who are experts in their fields. Also, the third and fourth year students taking the course GPC 310 Developing Skills for Peer Guidance assume the roles of peer guides in assisting students and facilitating this

course. While the big group sessions (e.g. resources, facilities and activities on campus, wellness and life style, mental health, and diversity, equality and discrimination) are conducted by field experts, peer guides run the small group sessions (e.g. strategies for academic success). Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6 from the book *Learning to Learn* by Vanderstoep and Pintrich (2003) was followed for the four-week module covering academic strategies to *become a self-regulating learner* (Z. E. Sun-Selışık, personal communication, August 23, 2011).

Like in any other first-year seminar, some upper-class students are also involved in GPC 100 course as *peer guides*. A peer guide is a third or fourth grade METU-NCC student who takes *GPC 310 Developing Skills for Peer Guidance* (GPC 310) course offered by the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling. GPC 310 course is a three-credit elective course, and it aims to foster upper-class (i.e. third or fourth grade) students' development of leadership, communication and helping skills through providing them an opportunity to assist first year METU-NCC students in the delivery of the "GPC 100 First Year on Campus Seminar" course. Peer guides meet a required CGPA (i.e. cumulative grade point averages) of 2.00 and above, and uphold the following responsibilities: (1) facilitating small group discussions, (2) assisting in checking attendance and active participation, (3) untangling the troubles encountered in the application process, and (4) giving continuous feedback in the course evaluation in GPC 100 course.

3.4. Subjects of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the perceptions of first-year students in GPC 100 course regarding the students' overall interest toward the course and its objectives, content and implementation. The study did not use any sampling strategies because it aimed to collect information on the perceptions of all first-year students attending GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course in Fall 2011

semester at Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC). METU-NCC has been serving as Northern Cyprus base of Middle East Technical University (METU) which is one of the most prominent and competitive universities in Turkey. METU-NCC offers 14 undergraduate programs and all of the students enrolled in any of the programs at METU-NCC have to take GPC 100 course as a must course in their first semester, either at Prep School or in First Grade.

Consequently, all the first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course during Fall 2011 semester were reached through an online survey and the subjects of the study consisted of the first-year students who responded the survey. The number of first-year students enrolled in 2011-2012 Academic Year was N = 415, and 61.4 % of them responded the survey (N = 255). While a large number of first-year students (95.7 %) were native students from Turkey or Northern Cyprus, only a small proportion of them (4.3 %) were consisted of international students. The details on the target population and the subjects of the study have been summarized in Table 3.2. Also, the background characteristics of the students participated in the study are portrayed in detail below.

Table 3.2

Subjects of the Study

First-Year Students				
Native Students from Turkey or Northern Cyprus		International Students		Total
f	*%*	*f*	*%*	
397	95.7	18	4.3	415

Demographics of subjects.

Descriptive statistics analyses were performed to have background information about the subjects. This section portrays the profile of first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course in Fall 2011 semester in terms of their gender, age, high school background (i.e. state or private high school, and

the type of high school) and departments at METU-NCC (i.e. undergraduate program, grade level and Prep School level).

Gender.

As for the gender of subjects, males constituted 64.2 % of the subjects (*N* = 163) while females constituted 35.8 % of them (*N* = 91). The low number of female students reflects the gender distribution at Middle East Technical University (METU) and at higher education institutions in Turkey. For instance, Dayıoğlu and Türüt-Aşık (2007) indicated that 37.4 % of the undergraduate students and, more specifically, 28.29 % of first-year students at METU in 2002-2003 Academic Year were females. According to the statistics obtained from European Commission (EUROSTAT, 2013), the percentage of women among all students in tertiary education was between 41.4 % and 45.2 % in 2004-2011.

As for the gender distribution of subjects by their area of study, a great number of first-year students who enrolled in Engineering Sciences were males (*N* = 107, 84.9 %) and only 15.1 % of them (*N* = 19) were females. On the other hand, a relatively equal distribution of gender was observed in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES). While 54.4 % of first-year students who enrolled in SAES were males (*N* = 56), females constituted 55.6 % of them (*N* = 70).

Age.

The age of the subjects ranged from 17 to 41, and the mean score was *M* = 19.1. Descriptive statistics regarding subjects' age (mean, standard deviation, variance and range) can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Age in Fall 2011 (N = 252)

Statistics	
Mean	19.1
SD	1.91
Variance	3.66
Range	26.3

Table 3.4 below portrays a detailed distribution of subjects' age. Majority of the subjects were between 17 and 19 years old (*N* = 187, 74.2 %), and among the subjects, a large number of students were 18 years old (*N* = 104, 41.3 %).

Table 3.4

Frequency Distribution of Subjects' Age in Fall 2011 (N = 255)

Age	*f*	*%*
17-19	187	74.2
20-22	57	22.6
23 and above	8	3.2
Total	252	100

Missing = 3

High school background.

The subjects were asked about their high school background whether it was a public institution or a private one. The results indicated that most of the subjects (*N* = 202, 79.8 %) graduated from a public school and 51 subjects (20.2 %) were graduates of a private high school.

The subjects were also asked about the type of their high school. Most of the subjects (*N* = 115, 48.5 %) were graduates of an Anatolian High School. 91 subjects (38.4 %) graduated from a General High School and 13 subjects (5.5 %) from a

Vocational and Technical High School. Nine students (3.8 %) indicated that they were Science High School graduates and six students (2.5 %) were Anatolian Teacher's Training High School graduates. Two subjects (0.8 %) had a Social Sciences High School background and only one student (0.4 %) was a graduate of Multiple Programs High School. Table 3.5 shows the distribution of subjects' high school type.

Table 3.5

Distribution of Subjects' High School Type in Fall 2011 (N = 255)

High School Type	*f*	%
Anatolian High School	115	48.5
General High School	91	38.4
Vocational and Technical High School	13	5.5
Science High School	9	3.8
Anatolian Teacher's Training High School	6	2.5
Social Sciences High School	2	0.8
Multiple Programs High School	1	0.4
Total	237	100

Missing = 18

Departments at METU-NCC.

As for the undergraduate study at METU-NCC, the subjects were asked to indicate their undergraduate program. The results indicate that majority of subjects were registered at undergraduate programs in Engineering Sciences (*N* = 127, 50.2 %), and the number of subjects registered at undergraduate programs in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences was 126 (49.8 %). Most of the subjects were enrolled in the Department of Psychology (*N* = 36, 14.2 %), and none of the subjects were registered at Business Administration SUNY program (Joint Program with SUNY New Paltz University). The distribution of subjects' undergraduate program is shown in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6

Distribution of Subjects' Undergraduate Program in Fall 2011 (N = 255)

Undergraduate Program	*f*	%
Psychology (PSYC)	36	14.2
Civil Engineering (CEN)	32	12.6
Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE)	31	12.3
Guidance and Psychological Counseling (GPC)	29	11.5
Computer Engineering (CNG)	22	8.7
Mechanical Engineering (MECH)	21	8.3
Business Administration (BUS)	20	7.9
Political Science and International Relations (PSIR)	16	6.3
Chemical Engineering (CHME)	11	4.3
Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering (PNGE)	10	4.0
Economics (ECO)	9	3.6
Computer Education and Instructional Technology (CTE)	8	3.2
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	8	3.2
Business Administration (Joint Program) (SUNY)	0	0.0
Total	253	100

Missing = 2

The subjects were also asked about their current grade level at METU-NCC. Most of the subjects were Prep School students (*N* = 223, 88.8 %), and 28 subjects (11.2 %) were First Grade students. Additionally, the subjects studying at Prep School were answered the questions regarding their level at Prep School. Most of the Prep School students were at the Beginner level (*N* = 144, % = 64.7). While 66 students (29.5 %) were in Elementary classes, the number of students studying at the Intermediate level was 13 (5.8 %). Table 3.7 presents the distribution of subjects' grade who enrolled in GPC in Fall 2011 semester at METU-NCC.

Table 3.7

Distribution of Subjects' Grade at METU-NCC in Fall 2011 (N = 255)

Grade	*f*	*%*
First Grade	28	11.2
Prep School		
Beginner	144	64.7
Elementary	66	29.5
Intermediate	13	5.8
Total	251	100

Missing = 4

3.5. Instrumentation

As mentioned in the research design, the study was conducted through a survey questionnaire titled as *Evaluation Questionnaire for GPC 100 Course at METU-North Cyprus Campus* (EQ-GPC100), which was developed by the researcher under the guidance of two field experts in Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program, and of two curriculum designers of GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course in order to gather data on the perceptions and suggestions of first-year students taking GPC 100 course at METU-NCC on the content, objectives and implementation of the course. In this section, the instrument development process, and the content and organization of the instrument are described in detail below.

3.5.1. Development of the instrument.

The instrument used in this study, titled as *Evaluation Questionnaire for GPC 100 Course at METU-North Cyprus Campus* (EQ-GPC100), was developed by the researcher in order to investigate the perceptions of first-year students who attended GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course in their first semester at

Middle East Technical University-Northern Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC) during Fall Semester of 2011-2012 Academic Year.

Before developing the data collection instrument, EQ-GPC100, related literature on first-year orientation programs, seminars and courses (Barefoot et. al., 2005; Upcraft, Gardner & Associates, 1989; Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot & Associates, 2005), written documents on the scope of GPC 100 course obtained from program designers such as course proposal, syllabus and activity schedule, and some other instruments developed to evaluate freshmen experience or first-year initiatives (JNGI, 2010; North, 2007) were examined thoroughly. Also, the principles proposed by Johnson and Christensen (2008) on constructing questionnaires were taken into consideration. The first draft of the survey, which was mainly based on open-ended items, was constructed by the researcher in the light of the knowledge obtained on GPC 100 course and first-year seminars. Then, the first draft of the instrument was assessed by one expert from Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program (CI) at the Department of Educational Sciences (EDS) at METU and necessary changes such as expansion, addition or omission of some subjects and conversion of some open-ended items into close-ended items were made. After the revision, the survey was shared with another expert from CI at METU and with the designers of GPC 100 course for content validity, and according to their feedback, some additional alterations in the item stem or rating scales were done in the instrument.

EQ-GPC100 could not be piloted before it was conducted during the final weeks at METU-NCC, 9-21 January 2012, due to the time constrains; yet, the instrument was continuously revised by two experts from EDS and two course designers of GPC 100 course before the administration of EQ-GPC100 until the readability, understandability, and clarity of survey items was ensured.

3.5.2. Instrument.

The survey consists of 22 items, seven of which are related to the demographic information about students. Students' gender, age, high school background and departments at METU-NCC were asked so that a general understanding of the subject would be framed. Rest of the questionnaire items, seven of which are Likert-type five-point-scale items and six of which are open-ended questions, were developed to assess the perceptions of first-year students enrolled in GPC 100 course and to obtain more in-depth individualized responses on the objectives, content and implementation of GPC 100 course. Additionally, to understand students' overall interest toward GPC 100 course, one item was prepared to identify their interest level in GPC 100 course and another was prepared to determine if they would suggest such a course to other universities. The instruments was designed and conducted in Turkish and in English for local and international students (see Appendices A and B for complete questionnaires).

3.6. Validity and Reliability

The face validity and content validity of the data collection instrument were confirmed by two experts from the Department of Educational Sciences (EDS) at METU, who expertized in Curriculum and Instruction (CI), and two course designers of GPC 100 course. As for the content validity, the EDS experts and course designers checked whether the questionnaire items were relevant and representative of the perceptions first-year students with regard to their interest in GPC 100 course and the objectives, content and implementation of the course.

The analyses of internal reliability of all five-point scale Likert-type items measuring the subjects' (1) level of agreement and disagreement on the course objectives, and their ratings on (2) how useful the topics were, (3) how satisfactory the instructional methods and activities were, and (4) how frequent the peer guides

performed their duties were run through SPSS. The subscales reliability for the objectives targeted in GPC 100 course, the topics covered during the course, the instructional methods utilized and the peer guides involved are presented in Table 3.8 below.

Table 3.8

Results of Subscale Reliability

Subscale	Reliability
Agreement on objectives	.956
Usefulness of topics	.964
Satisfaction on instructional methods	.878
Frequency of peer guides' behaviors	.969

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

The administration of data collection instrument was done online with the help of the curriculum designers of GPC 100 course and the Information and Communication Technology Office (IT) of METU-NCC. In the scope of METU-NCC's course evaluation policy, the data were collected during 9-21 January 2012 through an online survey which first-year students accessed via their student account. The subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and the instrument by the curriculum designers and instructors of GPC 100 course. The instruments were prepared in both Turkish and in English, and as an institutional policy, Turkish version of the instrument was administered to Prep School students and English version of the instrument was administered to First-Grade and international students. The survey took approximately 30-40 minutes to be filled out. After the online evaluation system was closed, the data including students' responses to the questionnaire was sent to the researcher as an Excel file format by program designers.

3.8. Data Analysis

Since the data collection instrument, *Evaluation Questionnaire for GPC 100 Course at METU-North Cyprus Campus* (EQ-GPC100), comprised of both close-ended and open-ended items, the data gathered was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The quantitative data analysis of the study had been conducted through different programs (namely Microsoft Office Excel 2007 and SPSS PASW Statistics 18.0) at various stages. Primarily, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was analyzed to check the item reliability of EQ-GPC100 through SPSS. Then, the descriptive statistics analyses of the data obtained from the instrument were analyzed via Excel and SPSS. The frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation scores of related items were analyzed to describe the subjects' background and their perceptions, opinions and suggestions on GPC 100 course, and a report on the preliminary results of the study was shared with the curriculum designers of GPC 100 course in July 2012.

In addition, inferential statistics analyses of the data were performed through parametric statistical methods in SPSS in order to investigate the differences among certain variables. Before performing the parametric tests, frequencies, standard deviation scores, percentages and total mean scores of some variables (i.e. subjects' perceptions regarding the course content, instructional methods and peer guides) were generated. Also, preliminary assumption checks for the tests were performed before the tests, and the results for preliminary assumption checks are presented in related section (Section 4.5.1) in Chapter IV.

For the inferential statistics, an independent-samples *t* test was computed to understand if there were differences between gender and area of study with regard to subjects' interest in GPC 100 course and their perceptions on the content and implementation of the course (i.e. allocated class time, instructional methods and peer guides), and the alpha level was set to .05, which is the most commonly used

significance level in education, in order to decrease the probability of Type I error occurring. Besides, parametric tests were chosen to decrease the probability of committing a Type II error since parametric tests are more powerful than non-parametric tests (Sprinthall, 2007).

The qualitative data analysis of the study had been carried out by the researcher herself. The responses that the subjects provided for open-ended questions were divided into meaningful analytical units and these segments were coded into category names. The categories identified were analyzed via Excel and SPSS in order to provide statistics (i.e. frequencies and percentages) and graphical displays (i.e. tables). Major themes that emerged were listed in Appendix C. Also, some reflective notes on essential themes or quotes were recorded to share verbatims (i.e. direct quotations) (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). A sample of coding can be seen in Appendix D.

3.9. Assumptions

The conditions assumed to be true in this study were as follows:

1. The subjects surveyed in the study completed the questionnaire accurately and honestly.
2. The subjects did not interact with each other while completing the survey and answered the questions independently.
3. The organization of the instrument items and the order of the rating scales did not have any influence on subjects.

3.10. Limitations

As with almost any research in any discipline, this study had faced some unavoidable limitations related to reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, qualitative data analysis, lack of pilot study, versions of instrument.

First of all, administering a new self-constructed instrument could lead to a failure in the reliability and validity of the study. Another validity problem was that the analysis of the qualitative data was carried out by the researcher, which could lead to researcher bias and minimize the trustworthiness of the study. However, the patterns generated and the direct quotations used could promote the validity of the qualitative analysis.

Another limitation of the study could arise from the survey data collection method, namely Internet survey. Since the researchers do not have any control over the research setting, they cannot clarify the instructions or misunderstandings. Also, the accuracy of the subjects' identity and their responses cannot be assured. In addition, some subjects' having poor Internet connection or not having any Internet access at all could result in incomplete items, abandonment of the surveys and missing subjects, which could lead poor response rate (Bhaskaran & LeClaire, 2010; Reynolds, Woods & Baker, 2007; Sue & Ritter, 2007).

Also, the fact that the instrument was not piloted could lead to another limitation for the study. Any ambiguous statements regarding the survey items that could lead students to misunderstand were not identified through a pilot study and such statements were not corrected. Since the instrument was administered online, any clarifications or corrections were not done during the data collection procedure. Consequently, this might lead students to quit filling out the questionnaire or give responses that do not reflect the reality.

Moreover, administering English version of the questionnaire to native students could cause a limitation for the study. Although English version of the instrument was administered to First Grade students who were considered to have adequate language proficiency to study at their major, the students might have not understood statements or felt comfortable for giving responses in English as they might have thought that their grammar or vocabulary knowledge would not be enough to express their opinions and suggestions, which might have led low response rates for open-ended items.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Middle East Technical University-North Cyprus Campus (METU-NCC) developed GPC 100 First-Year On-Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course so as to assist first-year students in their transition to the academic and social life of university, similar to all first-year seminars or orientation programs. The first course was offered in Fall 2011 semester, and all new first-year students who enrolled whether in Prep School or in Faculty were required to take the course in their first semester of their study at METU-NCC. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the overall interest of first-year students who attended GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester toward the course and the perceptions of students' with regard to the objectives, content and implementation (i.e. the allocated class time, instructional methods utilized, and peer guides involved) of the course. This chapter presents the results with regard to the following research questions:

1. What are the interest levels of first-year students toward GPC 100 course?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the objectives of GPC 100 course?
3. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the content of GPC 100 course?
4. What are the perceptions of first-year students with regard to the implementation of GPC 100 course?
    a. What are the students' perceptions of allocated class time for the course?
    b. What are the students' perceptions of instructional methods used in the delivery of the course?

c. What are the students' perceptions of peer guides assisted in the course?

5. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course by certain background variables?
    a. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to gender?
        i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
        ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
        iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
        iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
        v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between female and male first-year students?
    b. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content and implementation of course according to area of study?
        i. What are the differences in students' interest levels in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

ii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of content covered in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

iii. What are the differences in students' perceptions of allocated class time for GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

iv. What are the differences in students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

v. What are the differences in students' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES)?

4.1. Subjects' Overall Interest toward GPC 100 Course

In the scope of first research question, the overall interest of first-year students attended GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester toward the course is presented below.

In order to have a better understanding of the students' interest, the subjects were asked to choose the best option reflecting their interest level in GPC 100 course from a five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging between "(5) = Extremely interested" and "(1) = Not interested at all". None of the students chose the option indicating that they were extremely interested in the course. Yet, a very small percentage responded as they were not at all interested in the course (N = 30, 14.0 %). More than 60 % of the

respondents (*N* = 135) stated that they were interested or very interested in the course. The descriptive results of subjects' interest levels in GPC 100 course can be viewed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Subjects' Interest Levels in GPC 100 Course (N = 255)

Scale	*f*	*%*
(5) Extremely interested	0	0
(4) Very interested	57	26.5
(3) Interested	78	36.3
(2) Slightly interested	50	23.3
(1) Not interested at all	30	14.0
Total	215	100

Missing = 40, *Mean* = 2.75, *SD* = 1.00

In addition to the previous item which directly sought for the interest of first-year students toward GPC 100 course, the subjects were asked to respond another closed-ended item which asked them whether to they would suggest other universities to include a course similar to GPC 100 course into their curriculum, which could assist in inferring subjects' interest toward the course in a roundabout way. Three-fourths of subjects (*N* = 181, 75.1 %) replied the item as "Yes" (*M* = 1.24, *SD* = 0.43). Only 24.9 % of them (*N* = 60) indicated that they would not suggest a similar course to other institutions.

Considering the responses of the subjects with regard to these two closed-ended questionnaire items, it could be assumed that the subjects had a positive interest toward GPC 100 course.

4.2. Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Objectives of GPC 100 Course

In the scope of second research questions, a closed-ended questionnaire item directly asking first-year students to evaluate how well 17 course objectives were accomplished through a five-point Likert-type agreement scale ranging from "(5) = Completely agree" to "(1) = Completely disagree" was analyzed. Table 4.2 below shows the results of frequencies, percentages and mean scores for each of the course objectives.

As it can be seen in Table 4.2, first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course most agreed that the course achieved informing students about the resources and facilities (Sports Center, student clubs, library and informatics) at METU-NCC (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.06) and about how students could benefit from these facilities and resources (*M* = 3.90, *SD* = 1.09), presenting most accurate information on undergraduate programs (*M* = 3.83, *SD* = 1.12), providing students with a chance to meet the faculty in their undergraduate study (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = 1.21) and presenting most current information on undergraduate programs (*M* = 3.69, *SD* = 1.21).

To be more specific, more than three-fifths of respondents completely or mostly agreed that the course was successful in *informing students about resources and facilities* (*N* = 160, 65.7 %) and *informing them about how they could benefit from these resources and facilities* (*N* = 156, 63.9 %). Also, more than half of the subjects indicated that they completely or mostly agreed that the course was successful in *presenting the most accurate* (*N* = 147, 60.8 %) and *the most current* (*N* = 138, 56.0 %) *information about undergraduate programs*. Moreover, slightly over three-fifths of the respondents completely or mostly agreed that the course was successful in *providing students changes to meet faculty from their undergraduate programs* (*N* = 146, 60.3 %). The results indicated that first-year students who attended GPC 100 course were mostly satisfied with the information provided about campus resources and facilities and about students' field of study.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Subjects' Perceptions With Regard to the Objectives of GPC 100 Course, Arranged from Highest to Lowest Mean Scores (N = 255)

Item	Objective	5		4		3		2		1		*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
		f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*			
1	Informing about the resources and facilities at METU-NCC	101	41.5	59	24.2	61	25.0	19	7.8	4	1.6	244	3.96	1.06
2	Informing about how students could benefit from these resources and facilities.	95	38.9	61	25.0	61	25.0	22	9.0	5	2.0	244	3.90	1.09
9	Presenting the most accurate information on undergraduate programs.	90	37.2	57	23.6	66	27.3	22	9.1	7	2.9	242	3.83	1.12
12	Providing chances to meet faculty from students' undergraduate program.	94	38.8	52	21.5	66	27.3	13	5.4	17	7.0	242	3.80	1.21
10	Presenting the most current information on undergraduate programs.	83	34.3	55	22.7	66	27.3	23	9.5	15	6.2	242	3.69	1.21
3	Presenting how students could achieve academic success.	74	30.3	67	27.5	63	25.8	29	11.9	11	4.5	244	3.67	1.16
15	Presenting the negative effects of addictions on students' life.	75	31.0	55	22.7	64	26.4	26	10.7	22	9.1	242	3.56	1.29
8	Presenting how students could create their personal goals.	68	28.0	57	23.5	74	30.5	28	11.5	16	6.6	243	3.55	1.20

5 = Complete agree, 4 = Mostly agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Slightly agree, 1 = Completely disagree

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Item	Objective	5		4		3		*2*		1		*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
		f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*			
17	Presenting ways to promote a higher quality healthier life.	70	28.9	52	21.5	68	28.1	36	14.9	16	6.6	242	3.51	1.24
13	Creating opportunities to meet faculty from students' undergraduate program.	79	32.6	48	19.8	60	24.8	26	10.7	29	12.0	242	3.50	1.36
4	Presenting different learning styles and strategies.	65	26.6	60	24.6	67	27.5	34	13.9	18	7.4	244	3.49	1.23
6	Presenting how to improve their management skills.	60	24.6	58	23.8	83	34.0	25	10.2	18	7.4	244	3.48	1.18
7	Presenting how students could students manage their study time effectively.	62	25.5	54	22.2	79	32.5	30	12.3	18	7.4	243	3.46	1.21
11	Providing chances to meet and establish relationships with upper class students from their undergraduate study.	71	29.3	57	23.6	49	20.2	34	14.0	31	12.8	242	3.42	1.37
5	Presenting strategies to improve their learning style.	62	25.4	52	21.3	76	31.1	29	11.9	25	10.2	244	3.40	1.27
16	Increasing students' awareness on their personal lifestyle.	56	23.2	55	22.8	60	24.9	41	17.0	29	12.0	241	3.28	1.32
14	Helping students adapt their university life easily.	52	21.5	45	18.6	67	27.7	41	16.9	37	15.3	242	3.14	1.35

5 = Complete agree, 4 = Mostly agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Slightly agree, 1 = Completely disagree

On the other hand, the students did not feel that GP 100 course well achieved presenting strategies for students to improve their learning styles (*M* = 3.40, *SD* = 1.27), increasing students' awareness of their personal lifestyle (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 1.32) and helping students adapt to their university life (*M* = 3.14, *SD* = 1.35), which are among the most crucial goals of first-year orientation programs.

More specifically, over two-fifths of respondents (*N* = 105, 43.0 %) agreed or slightly agreed and 10.2 % (*N* = 25) of them completely disagreed that GPC 100 course was successful in presenting *strategies for students to improve their learning styles*. Also, slightly more than two-fifths of those surveyed (*N* = 101, 41.9 %) agreed or slightly agreed and 12.0 % (*N* = 29) of them completely disagreed that GPC 100 course was successful in *increasing students' awareness of their personal lifestyle*. Furthermore, approximately half of the subjects who completed the questionnaire (*N* = 108, 44.6 %) agreed or slightly agreed and 15.3 % (*N* = 37) of them completely disagreed that GPC 100 course was successful in *helping students adapt to their university life*.

4.3. Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Content of GPC 100 Course

The online survey included one close-ended and one open-ended items asking about students' perceptions of the topics covered in GPC 100 course and their suggestions on the content of the course, respectively. The descriptive results of these questions are presented below.

The first question directly asked students to evaluate how useful the topics covered in GPC 100 course was through a five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from "(5) = Very useful" to "(1) = Not useful at all". The results indicated that most of the subjects found topics related to academic programs and issues and topic related to the resources, facilities and activities on campus useful. To be more precise, topics related to *academic programs* (*M* = 3.81, *SD* = 1.21) and *academic issues* like

scholarships, minor/double major programs, repeating or withdrawing a course, grading system, calculating point average, and so on (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = 1.17) were found to be very useful or useful by slightly over three-fifths of the respondents (*N* = 147, 60.7 % for both topics). Besides, more than half of the participants (*N* = 135, 55.8 %) indicated that they found topics related to *services provided by Library and Information and Communication Technologies (IT) Office and activities about how students could benefit from these services* (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = 1.20) such as online catalog search, borrowing book from the Library and so forth very useful or useful. Moreover, topics related to *social and cultural activities, sports and recreational facilities and student clubs on campus* (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = 1.19) were found to be very useful or useful by over half of the subjects (*N* = 135, 56.0 %).

Apart from these, the topics related to *diversity, equality and discrimination* were considered as very useful and useful by more than half of the participants. While 54.5 % of the subjects (*N* = 132) found *movie on diversity, equality and discrimination* (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 1.31) very useful and useful, 53.7 % of them (*N* = 130) indicated that *conference on diversity, equality and discrimination* (*M* = 3.48, *SD* = 1.25) was very useful and useful, which pointed out the importance of the way how topics covered during the course as well as the importance of topic itself.

On the other hand, the respondents indicated that they did not find such topics as lifestyle and wellness, addiction and university or higher education as useful as other topics, which shows similarity with the results regarding the least achieved goals of GPC 100 course and indicates that there was a problem either in the organization or the delivery of these topics. The results showed that more than two-fifths of the respondents (*N* = 110, 45.8 %) found *lifestyle and wellness* topic (*M* = 3.41, *SD* = 1.26) moderately or slightly useful and 7.5 % of them (*N* = 18) not useful at all. Likewise, 41.5 % (*N* = 100) of the subjects surveyed indicated that topics related to *nicotine, alcohol and internet addiction* (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 1.30) were moderately or slightly useful whereas 10.8 of them (*N* =26) did not find the topics useful at all. Similarly, slightly over two-

fifths of the respondents (*N* = 105, 43.4 %) and one-tenths of them (*N* = 26, 10.7 %) stated that the topic *What is university?* (*M* = 3.36, *SD* = 1.28) was moderately or slightly useful and not useful at all, respectively.

Additionally, comparing the results for the topics regarding the academic strategies (i.e. goal setting, motivation, resource management and learning strategies), *learning strategies* (*M* = 3.53, *SD* = 1.20) were found to be not useful as others. While more than half of the subjects surveyed (*N* = 126, 52.1 %) found the topic very useful or useful, many indicated that it was moderately or slightly useful (*N* = 99, 40.9 %) and was not useful at all (*N* = 17, 7.0 %).

The descriptive statistics for the results of rating scale indicating first-year students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of content of GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester are displayed in Table 4.3.

Correspondingly, the questionnaire included an open-ended item so as to gain an in-depth understanding of first-year students attending GPC 100 course on the course content, and the students were asked to reflect their suggestions on the topics that they thought should be included in GPC 100 course in addition to ones listed in previous closed-ended item. Unfortunately, the response rate for this item was highly low; of 255 subjects, only 13.3 % (*N* = 34) provided an answer for this question. Among these 34 subjects, approximately half of them (*f* = 18) did not suggest any additional topic; instead, they replied this item through the statements indicating "there is nothing to add", "the topics were enough" and "they were already too much" or through completely unrelated statements which might be an answer for other questionnaire items (mostly related to the implementation of the course).

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Students' Perceptions on the Content of GPC 100 Course, Arranged from the Highest to Lowest Mean Scores (N = 255)

Item	Topic	5		4		3		2		1		*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
		f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*			
8	Academic programs	98	40.5	49	20.2	59	24.4	24	9.9	12	5.0	242	3.81	1.21
10	Academic issues	91	37.6	56	23.1	63	26.0	20	8.3	12	5.0	242	3.80	1.17
3	Services by Library and *IT*	78	32.2	57	23.6	70	28.9	21	8.7	16	6.6	242	3.66	1.20
2	Activities and facilities on campus and student clubs	76	31.5	59	24.5	66	27.4	27	11.2	13	5.4	241	3.66	1.19
7b	Motivation	73	30.2	59	24.4	68	28.1	26	10.7	16	6.6	242	3.61	1.21
7a	Goal setting	71	29.3	60	24.8	66	27.3	31	12.8	14	5.8	242	3.59	1.20
7c	Resource management	71	29.3	57	23.6	67	27.7	32	13.2	15	6.2	242	3.57	1.21
6	Movie on *DES*	76	31.4	56	23.1	58	24.0	28	11.6	24	9.9	242	3.55	1.31
9a	Psychological issues	73	30.2	51	21.1	71	29.3	28	11.6	19	7.9	242	3.54	1.25
7d	Learning strategies	65	26.9	61	25.2	71	29.3	28	11.6	17	7.0	242	3.53	1.20
11	Knowledge literacy	68	28.1	52	21.5	74	30.6	28	11.6	20	8.3	242	3.50	1.24
5	Conference on *DES*	63	26.0	67	27.7	56	23.1	36	14.9	20	8.3	242	3.48	1.25
1	Lifestyle and wellness	65	27.1	47	19.6	68	28.3	42	17.5	18	7.5	240	3.41	1.26
9b	Addictions	61	25.3	55	22.8	66	27.0	34	14.1	26	10.8	241	3.38	1.30
4	What is a university?	59	24.4	52	21.5	73	30.2	32	13.2	26	10.7	242	3.36	1.28

5 = Very useful, 4 = useful, 3 = Moderately useful, 2 = Slightly useful, 1 = Not useful at all

IT = Information and Communication Technologies Office; DES = Diversity, Equality and Discrimination

Nevertheless, seven subjects mentioned the topics which were already in the topic list of the GPC 100 course, which indicates that these subjects wanted more focus and detailed information on these topics. In this context, the most outstanding topic was related to students' *Field of study* (*f* = 4). Also, other topics that needed more time and energy, as expressed by the respondents, were *Introducing academic staff* (*f* = 1), *Learning strategies* (*f* = 1) and *Time management* (*f* = 1).

Apart from these already existing topics, some respondents suggested new topics to be included in GPC 100 course. Some respondents commented that GPC 100 course should include topics regarding *the importance and benefits of learning English* (*f* = 2). Besides, some stated that there should be topics related to *the strategies for adaptation to dormitory life* (*f* = 2) and to *the life in Cyprus* (*f* = 2), as one might expect. Other responses to this question included *equality of human rights* (*f* = 1), *efficient energy use* (*f* = 1) and *Prep School system* (*f* = 1).

In addition to these two direct questions, the subjects had a chance to reflect their thoughts with regard to the content covered in GPC 100 course through another open-ended questionnaire item which aimed to gather further information about first-year students' opinions and suggestions on GPC 100 course. In response to this item, subjects who replied shared similar comments to the previous item which directly asked their opinions on the course content. One individual suggested that more time should be spent on *learning strategies* (*f = 1)*, and another expressed the need for more focus on *time management* throughout the course. Also, one of the respondents stated that *Prep School's system* (*f = 1)* should be included in the curriculum of this course for the students studying at Prep School. What is more, some respondents underlined the need for topics related to *homesickness* (*f = 2)* as exemplified below:

> There could be some topic related to family such as how to handle homesickness. I think this would be effective in motivating and helping students succeed in their courses. (Male, CEIT)

The results for the analyses of both open-ended questionnaire items asking for the subjects' suggestions on the topics covered in the scope of GPC 100 course can be viewed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

Overall Results of Subjects' Suggestions on the Topics Covered in GPC 100 Course

Codes	*f*
Nothing to add	8
Unrelated answers	5
Enough topics	4
Field of study	4
Importance and benefits of learning English	2
Adaptation to dormitory life	2
Life in Cyprus	2
Learning strategies	2
Prep School System	2
Time management	2
Homesickness	2
Efficient energy use	1
Equality of human rights	1
Introducing academic staff	1
Too many topics already	1

4.4. Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Implementation of GPC 100 Course

This section presents the results of subjects' perceptions on the implementation of GPC 100 course in Fall 2011 semester in terms of the class time allocated for the course, the instructional methods used in the delivery of the course and the peer guides involved in the course through separate sections.

Allocated class time.

GPC 100 course was a two-hour course which was scheduled at 17:30-19:30 every week. As for the perceptions of first-year students attending GPC 100 course with regard to the allocated class time for the course, the subjects were asked to answer one closed-ended and three open-ended questions which complemented each other. The findings on the rating scale and the answers given by the respondents to open-ended questions were combined to reveal first-year students perceptions regarding the allocated class time for GPC 100 course. The results for the analyses of these survey items are presented below.

In a close-ended item, the subjects were asked to choose the best option reflecting their opinion on the allocated course time for GPC 100 course through a rating scale ranging from "(5) = Too much" to "(1) = Too little". The results yielded that the allocated class time for GPC 100 course was found to be not appropriate more than half of the subjects (N =130, 53.0 %). While 25.7 % (N = 63) of the respondents chose the option "much" to rate their perception regarding the allocated course time, 27.3 % (N = 67) of them found it "too much". On the contrary, two-fifths of the subjects (N = 111, 45.3 %) expressed that the course hour allocated for GPC 100 course was "appropriate". Also, only four students (1.6 %) considered this amount of time as "little", and none of the subjects found it "too little". The descriptive statistics and the distribution of students' responses regarding the allocated class time for the GPC 100 course can be viewed in Table 4.5.

Concordantly, the subjects who replied the previous questionnaire item as "too much", "much", "little" or "too little" in the following open-ended item were also asked to reflect their opinion on how many hours this course should be in a week. Four subjects who responded the previous item with one of these four options (i.e. too much, much, little or too little) did not provide any suggestions on the class time; on the other hand, two of the subjects who thought the allocated class time was appropriate also

replied this item and said that GPC 100 course should be less than two hours a week. In total, more than half of the 255 subjects (*N* = 132, 51.8 %) provided their suggestions regarding the class time allocated for GPC 100 course.

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Subjects' Responses Regarding the Allocated Class Time for the GPC 100 Course (N = 255)

Scale	*f*	*%*
(5) Too much	67	27.3
(4) Much	63	25.7
(3) Appropriate	111	45.3
(2) Little	4	1.6
(1) Too little	0	0
Total	245	100

Missing = 10; *Mean* = 3.79, *SD* = .87

Surprisingly, some respondents (*N* = 11, 8.3 %) expressed that no time should be allocated for this course because "There is no need such a course", as one of the subjects uttered. On the other hand, the results indicated that over three-fourth of respondents (*N* = 102, 77.3 %) stated that the allocated class time should not be more than *one hour a week*. Most of the respondents (*N* = 77, 58.3 %) suggested that the course should be between 46-60 minutes a week. Besides, 4.6 % of the respondents (*N* = 6) suggested that one and a half hour could be allocated for GPC 100 course. Moreover, some respondents indicated (*N* = 5, 3.9 %) that the course should be carried out every two weeks instead of each week. Apart from these suggestions, some subjects (*N* = 8, 6.1 %) also stated that the allocated amount of class time might change each week instead of being fixed. The descriptive results indicating subjects' perceptions on the allocated class time and their suggestions regarding it has been shown in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.1 below.

Table 4.6

Contingency Table for Summarizing Subjects' Perceptions and Suggestions on the Allocated Class Time for GPC 100 Course (N = 132)

Codes	2		3		4		5		Total	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
No need such a course	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	2.3	8	6.1	11	8.3
Up to 30 minutes	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	4	3.0	5	3.8
31-45 minutes	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	4.5	14	10.6	20	15.2
46-60 minutes	1	0.8	1	0.8	41	31.1	34	25.8	77	58.3
61-75 minutes	1	0.8	0	0.0	3	2.3	1	0.8	5	3.8
76-90 minutes	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.8
1 hour every two weeks	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	2.3	0	0.0	3	2.3
1,5 hours every two weeks	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.8
2 hours every two weeks	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.8
Other	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	2.3	3	2.3	8	6.1
Total	3	2.3	2	1.5	61	46.2	66	50.0	132	100.0

2 = Little, 3 = Appropriate, 4 = Much, 5 = Too much

As well as these two questions, there were two more open-ended questionnaire items which asked subjects about their opinions and suggestions regarding the implementation of the course and the course itself. Qualitative findings of these two questions regarding the allocated class time are presented together as follows.

In response to these two open-ended questions regarding the allocated class time, the respondents expressed their beliefs on when GPC 100 course should be scheduled (f = 7) and how much time should be allocated for the course (f = 6). Analyses of these two qualitative data regarding the allocated class time yielded that the findings obtained from them corresponded to findings obtained from analyses of previous closed-ended and open-ended items.

Some respondents (f = 5) complained about scheduling of the course and stated that GPC 100 course should be scheduled at an earlier time, like at 16:00 (f = 1), instead of starting at 17:30. Also, some subjects commented that the course should be scheduled

every two weeks (f = 2). In addition to the suggestions on the scheduling of the course, some subjects (f = *6*) complained about the allocated time for GPC 100 course and provide their suggestions on that. While many individuals indicated that two hours was too long for the course and it should be shortened (f = 5), only one individual expressed that the allocated time for this course should be increased. The following comments shared by two of the respondents can illustrate why subjects asked for changes in the scheduling and timing of GPC 100 course:

> I believe that having this course at another time when the students have higher motivation will help students succeed more in this course. (Male, CEIT)

> The allocated time is too long for such a content, which is not only my idea, a lot of my friends think the same way. The students would be more enthusiastic to participate in the class if the course time were 1.5 hours every other week. (Male, EEE)

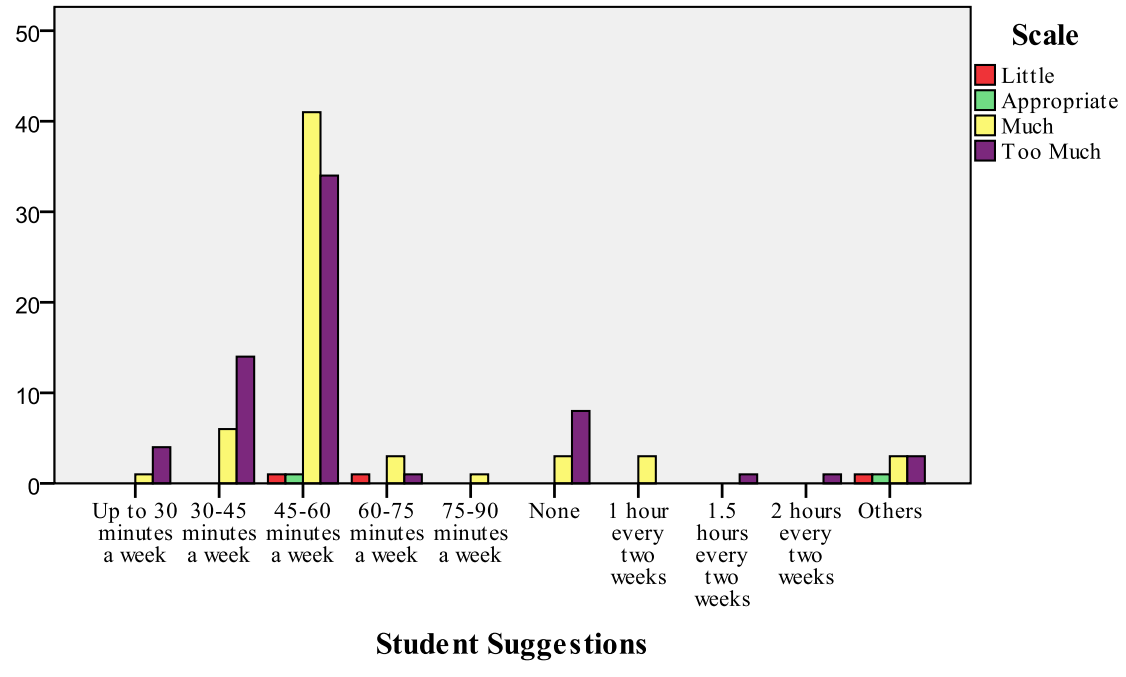

Figure 4.1 Subjects' Perceptions and Suggestions on the Allocated Class Time for GPC 100 Course

Table 4.7 below summarizes first-year students' responses to these two open-ended questions regarding their suggestions on the allocated class time for GPC 100 course.

Table 4.7

Summary of Subjects' Responses Regarding Their Suggestions on the Allocated Class Time

Codes	*f*
Scheduling	7
Course should be scheduled at an earlier time.	5
Course should be scheduled every two weeks.	2
Timing	6
Allocated class time should be decreased.	5
Allocated class time should be increased.	1

Instructional methods.

To find out how first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course perceive the instructional methods used in the delivery of the course, the online survey included one close-ended and two open-ended items aiming to gather information about subjects' perceptions on instructional methods utilized in the course and their suggestions on how the course should be implemented, respectively. The descriptive results for the findings obtained from the analyses of rating scale and quantitative data are presented below.

The subjects were, first, asked to rate the instructional methods used in the implementation of GPC 100 course through a five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from "(5) = Very satisfied" to "(1) = Not satisfied at all". As can be seen from Table 4.8 below, the subjects were satisfied mostly with the movies watched and the discussions carried out during the course.

Table 4.8

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Subjects' Perceptions on the Activities Carried Out in GPC 100 Course, Arranged from Highest to Lowest Mean Scores (N = 255)

Method	5		4		3		2		1		*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*			
M	97	40.2	71	29.5	40	16.6	17	7.1	16	6.6	242	3.90	1.20
D	90	37.2	66	27.3	54	22.3	18	7.4	14	5.8	241	3.83	1.18
S/C	66	27.4	71	29.5	56	23.2	27	11.2	21	8.7	242	3.56	1.24
GW	75	31.1	55	22.8	55	22.8	34	14.1	22	9.1	242	3.53	1.31
IW	69	28.6	56	23.2	63	26.1	33	13.7	20	8.3	242	3.50	1.27
PW	55	22.8	64	26.6	61	25.3	36	14.9	25	10.4	242	3.37	1.27

M = Movie, D = Discussion, S/C = Seminar or Conference, GW = Group Works, IW = Individual Works, PW = Pair Works

5 = Very satisfied, 4 = Satisfied, 3 = Moderately satisfied, 2 = Little satisfied, 1 = Not satisfied at all

The results yielded that approximately three-fourths of the subjects (*N* = 168, 69.7 %) were very satisfied or satisfied the movies that they watched while covering the topics. Only 6.6 % of the respondents (*N* = 16) indicated that they were not satisfied with movies at all. Also, more than three-fifths of the respondents (*N* = 156, 64.5 %) indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the discussions conducted during the course whereas only 5.8 % of the subjects (*N* = 14) chose the option "not satisfied at all. As for the way how in-class activities carried out, over half of the respondents (*N* = 130, 53.9 %) stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with group works; on the other hand, 49.4 % of the subjects (*N* = 119) were very satisfied or satisfied with pair works. Based on the respondents' ratings of the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course, it can be assumed that the subjects were more satisfied with activities carried out with crowded groups rather than individually or with a pair.

In addition to the previous closed-ended questionnaire item, the survey included one open-ended item which asked subjects to share their suggestions on how the implementation of GPC 100 course could be improved. Most of the subjects (N = 223, 87.5 %) did not provide any response for this item, and only 12.5 % of the respondents (N = 32) shared their comments regarding the implementation of the course, which was a small response rate. Five out of 32 respondents indicated that they had nothing to add, four individuals stated that the course was just perfect as it was, and another four of them expressed their negative feelings toward the course and said that the course should be removed from the curriculum at all. 19 of the 32 respondents shared their opinions and the main themes raised in the responses included topics had been covered in GPC 100 course, timing issues, activities carried out during the class and class size. The responses related to content and the allocated time were already presented in relevant sections. Apart from this open-ended questionnaire item, the subjects also had the opportunity to share their concerns, opinions and suggestions regarding the implementation of GPC 100 course by means of another open-ended item. The findings obtained from the analyses of both qualitative data are presented together below.

Regarding to the activities carried out during the class, some subjects suggested that there should be more seminars instead of conferences or in-class activities (f = 2). Also, some of the respondents commented that the students' involvement should be assured through the discussions or interactions (f = 2). Other responses regarding the activities were that seminars should be well-prepared (f = 1), the course could have been more interesting (f = 2), there could be some changes in the place where the lectures take place (f = 1) and outside activities could be added to the curriculum (f = 1).

In addition, regarding the length of the activities, the respondents commented that more time should be allocated for the upper class students (f = 1) so that they could share their experiences on the academic and social issues and for the academic staff (f = 1) so that the first year students could better know their programs. Moreover, one of the subjects suggested that the time allocated for the seminars should be shortened.

Moreover, considering the class size, one individual suggested that there should be fewer students in the seminars and another expressed that the classes could be more crowded.

Furthermore, in response to the questions asking for subject' opinions on the implementation of GPC 100 course, some respondents shared their opinions on course regulations. Some individuals indicated that the class attendance should not be mandatory (*f* = 4). Also, some commented that the course should only be offered to the problematic students and the students who do have any problems with the university or Cyprus should not be required to take the course (*f* = 2).

Peer guides.

In conjunction with the course goals, undergraduate peer mentors enrolled in GPC 310 Developing Skills for Peer Guidance were assigned to assist in GPC 100 course. To gain a deeper understanding of subjects' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course, both closed-ended and open-ended items were included in the questionnaire. The subjects were asked to rate the behaviors of their peer guides in a close-ended item, and through two open-ended questions, they were also asked to share their opinions on the positive aspects of having a peer guide in GPC 100 course and their suggestions regarding the involvement of peer guides in the course. The analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data are presented below.

The subjects were asked to evaluate the behaviors of peer guides who helped them during the GPC 100 course through a five-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from "(5) = Always" to "(1) = Never". As can be seen in Table 4.9 below, the subjects appreciated their peer guides' *being prepared for the topic of the week while the course was presented in the classroom (item 2)* (*M* = 4.76, *SD* = .66) most. While more than four-fifth of the respondents indicated that their peer guides were *always* prepared for

the course (*N* = 200, 83.3 %), 12.5 % of the respondents (*N* = 30) stated that they were *often* prepared. Another point appreciated most by the subjects was *the punctuality of peer guides (item 1)* (*M* = 4.75, *SD* = .69). Majority of subjects (*N* = 204, 85.0 %) stated that their peer guides *always* came on time to the class or meeting point for the activities, and 8.8 % of them (*N* = 21) indicated that they *often* came on time.

Table 4.9

Descriptive Statistics for the Results of Rating Scale Indicating Subjects' Perceptions With Regard to Behaviors of Their Peer Guides in GPC 100 Course (N = 255)

Item	5		4		3		2		1		*N*	*Mean*	*SD*
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*			
1	204	85.0	21	8.8	10	4.2	2	0.8	3	1.3	240	4.75	.69
2	200	83.3	30	12.5	6	2.5	0	0.0	4	1.7	240	4.76	.66
3	193	80.4	33	13.8	10	4.2	1	0.4	3	1.3	240	4.72	.68
4	195	81.3	31	12.9	9	3.8	1	0.4	4	1.7	240	4.72	.71
5	199	82.9	28	11.7	6	2.5	4	1.7	3	1.3	240	4.73	.71
6	194	80.8	30	12.5	11	4.6	1	0.4	4	1.7	240	4.70	.73
7	198	82.8	27	11.3	9	3.8	2	0.8	3	1.3	239	4.74	.69
8	185	77.7	35	14.7	12	5.0	2	0.8	4	1.7	238	4.66	.76
9	194	81.5	31	13.0	7	2.9	2	0.8	4	1.7	238	4.72	.72

5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, 1 = Never

Note. Complete item scales can be seen in Appendices A and B (in Turkish and English version of the survey instrument, respectively).

On the other hand, the aspect which was least appreciated by the subjects compared to the others was that *the peer guides encouraged students to participate in the activities carried out in the class (item 8)* (*M* = 4.66, *SD* = .76). More than three-fourths of the subjects (*N* = 185, 77.7 %) chose the option "always" and 14.7 % of them (*N* = 35) chose "often".

Complementary to the previous closed-ended questionnaire item, the survey included one open-ended item which aimed to find out first-year students' perceptions on the contributions that their peer guides made on them and their opinions on in what aspects having a peer guide has helped them. As with other open-ended questions in the survey, most of the subjects (N = 183, 71.8 %) did not share their opinions on this question; yet, only 72 subjects (28.2 %) answered this item. Of all the subjects provided a response for the question, most of them shared their contentment and said that everything that their peer guides had done was helpful for them (f =19). Also, some subjects replied this item as they mostly got benefit from their *peer guides' experiences* since they had already gone through the stages that first-year students were experiencing at that time (f = 19). The following comments that the respondents shared can illustrate the reasons behind subjects' contentment of their peer guides with regard to their sharing of experiences:

> Since she [the peer guide] was experienced in doing things for the campus and academic life, she shared them with us and we had a lot of information on them without experiencing them on our own. (Male, PSIR)

> His [the peer guide's] most helpful aspect was that he talked about his experiences so well that he shared a lot of useful information for the academic life and career which is waiting for us. (Male, EEE)

Moreover, some subject commented that their peer guides helped them most *get to know campus and academic life and adapt to them* (f = 18). As one of the respondents commented, the peer guide helped the student "in adapting the university life in various aspects like renting a flat, organizing my learning habits, using the library effectively, communicating with friends and roommates, and so on" (Male, CNG).

Furthermore, some respondents commented on *their peer guides' characteristics* (f = 9) and indicated that their being respectful and understanding towards them (f = 4), their being supportive and encouraging was very beneficial for them (f = 3) and taking

care of every student individually (*f* = 1) were beneficial for them. In addition, some respondents (*f* = 5) commented that the most helpful aspect of their peer guides was the counseling that they carried out. What is more, some respondents (*f* = 3) said that the peer guides were helpful in explaining the course and the classroom activities well.

Similar to the previous item, the survey included another open-ended question which aimed to give the subjects a chance to share their opinions and suggestions regarding the peer guides who had assisted them during GPC 100 course. As with other open-ended questionnaire items, the response rate for this question was also very low. A vast number of subjects (*N* = 228, 89.4 %) did not answer this item at all, and 11 subjects (4.3 %) replied this item as there was nothing that they want to share. Therefore, it can be considered that a great amount of subjects (*N* = 239, 97.3 %) did not provide any suggestions or opinions regarding their peer guides for this item. Only 16 subjects (6.3 %) shared their opinions and suggestions, and they mainly mentioned *their peer guides' individual characteristics* (*f* = 10) like how helpful, understanding and sincere he/she was, which corresponded to the results obtained from the analysis of previous item. Also, some subjects expressed their positive opinions on having peer guides during GPC 100 course because the peer guides had experienced beforehand what these students were experiencing at that time and they could share their experiences with them (*f* = 6) and communicate better (*f* = 4). Moreover, another important response to this question included the comments of subjects regarding *the peer guides assisted international students* (*f* = 2). In particular, two respondents, who were most probably foreign students, suggested that it would be beneficial to assign some upper-class students who are foreigners or who are efficient enough to communicate in English as peer guides for international students.

4.5. Difference Between Certain Variables

Independent-samples *t* tests were run to determine the effect of certain background variables (i.e. gender and area of study) on the dependent variables, namely first-year students' interest level in GPC 100 course and their perceptions on the content and implementation of the course (i.e. allocated class time, instructional methods and peer guides). In order to run t-tests, preliminary analyses were performed to check whether any of the assumptions on which independent-samples *t* test is based were violated.

4.5.1. Preliminary analysis for independent-samples *t* tests.

There are three assumptions which need to be satisfied in independent-samples *t* tests: (1) independence of observations, (2) normality and (3) homogeneity of variance (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2011).

The data were collected online in the scope of METU-NCC students' evaluation of their courses at the end of Fall 2011 semester. As an institutional policy, all students have to fill out these evaluation questionnaires through their student account, which might have led students to think that their responses would be traced and to take the survey serious. That's why, it was assumed that first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course filled out the instrument independently.

To check for the normality, Shapiro Wilk's *W* test, skewness, kurtosis, Normal Q-Q Plots and histograms of dependent variables (subjects' interest in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content covered, allocated class time, instructional methods utilized and peer guides involved) for each independent variable (i.e. subjects' gender and area of study) were examined. Ranging from .042 to .000, the Shapiro Wilk's *W* tests were found to be significant ($p < .05$) for all variables, and therefore, the distribution of the variables identified as not normal. On the other hand, skewness

(ranging from -.483 to +.450) and kurtosis (ranging from -1.603 to -.253) indices obtained for both groups (subjects' gender and area of study) with regard to their interest in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content, allocated class time and peer guides suggested that normality was a reasonable assumption. In addition, the visual inspection of Normal Q-Q plots and histograms about subjects' interest levels and their perceptions of the course content, allocated class time and peer guides with regard to their gender and area of study showed slight deviations from normality. Since skewness and kurtosis indices and visual inspection of graphics suggested that the variables were approximately normally distributed and the sample size was not small (N = 255), a parametric test (i.e. independent-samples t test) was chosen to determine whether there was statistically significant difference between subjects' interest in GPC 100 course and their perceptions of content, allocated class time and instructional methods utilized in the course according to their gender and area of study.

On the contrary, the skewness (ranging from -4.701 to -2.706) and kurtosis (ranging from 10.212 to 21.851) indices and visual inspection of histograms and Normal Q-Q Plots regarding the subjects' perceptions of peer guides according to their gender and area of study showed that the normality assumption for these variables was violated and the variables were negatively skewed. Nevertheless, independent-samples t test was also chosen to evaluate the differences between the subjects' perceptions of peer guides involved in GPC 100 course with regard to their gender and area of study because, as Green, Salkind and Akey (2000) suggested, the test would still yield reasonably accurate results with a moderate to large sample even if the normality assumption was violated.

The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was run for each independent-samples t test in order to check whether the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated. The results of each test were presented in the results of related t-tests.

4.5.2. Results for independent-samples *t* tests.

The results obtained from *t* tests are presented below with regard to each sub-research questions.

4.5.2.1. *Gender differences.*

This section presents the results obtained from independent-samples *t* tests which were performed to investigate the difference among first-year students' (i) interest in GPC 100 course, and their perception of the (ii) content covered, (iii) class time allocated, (iv) instructional methods utilized and (v) peer guides involved in GPC 100 course by gender.

Gender and interest.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether female first-year students were more interested in GPC 100 course than male first-year students. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance confirmed that the variances in interest levels of female and male first-year students were statistically equivalent (F (213) = .136, p = .713).

The results of test indicated that female first-year students (M = 2.78, SD = 1.00) were more interested in GPC 100 course than male first-year students (M = 2.74, SD = 1.00); yet, there was not a statistically significant difference in the interest levels between female and male students, t (213) = .247, p = .805. Table 4.10 below shows the results obtained from *t* test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.1).

Table 4.10

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Interest Levels in GPC 100 Course by Gender

	Gender				*t*	df
	Female		Male			
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Interest in course	2.78 (1.00)	76	2.74 (1.00)	139	.247*	213

Interest in course: Subjects' interest level in GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

Gender and content.

An independent-samples *t* test was run to investigate whether the perceptions of female first-year students regarding the content of GPC 100 course differed compared to the perceptions of male first-year student. As assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance, the variances in the perceptions of female and male first-year students regarding the course content were statistically equivalent (F (237) = .277, p = .599).

The results of test yielded that female first-year students' perceptions on the usefulness of course content (M = 3.56, SD = 1.01) was lower than male first-year students' perceptions (M = 3.58, SD = .99); but, the difference was not statistically significant, t (237) = -.157, p = .875. Table 4.11 below presents the results obtained from *t* test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.2).

Table 4.11

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Course Content by Gender

	Gender				*t*	df
	Female		Male			
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on content	3.56 (1.01)	83	3.58 (.99)	156	-.157*	237

Perceptions on content: Subjects' perceptions on the content of GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

Gender and allocated time.

An independent-samples *t* test was performed to examine the difference between the perceptions of female and male first-year students with regard to the allocated class time for GPC 100 course. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was found to be not violated for the present analysis (F (243) = .108, p = .743).

The test was found to be statistically significant, t (243) = 2.062, p = .040. The results suggested that female first-year students' perceptions of allocated class time (M = 3.94, SD = .90) was higher than male first-year students (M = 3.70, SD = .84). The effect size for this test was found to be small (Green, Salkind & Akey, 2000) and 26 % of the variance of the allocated class time variable was statistically accounted for by the subjects' gender. Table 4.12 below provides the results obtained from *t* test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.3).

Table 4.12

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Allocated Class Time for GPC 100 Course by Gender

	Gender				*t*	df
	Female		Male			
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on class time	3.94 (.90)	86	3.70 (.84)	159	2.062*	243

Perceptions on class time: Subjects' perceptions on the allocated class time for GPC 100 course

** p < .05*

Gender and instructional methods.

An independent-samples *t* test was employed to explore whether there was statistically significant difference between the female and male first-year student' perceptions of the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance suggested that the variances in the perceptions of female and male first-year students with regard to the instructional methods were statistically equivalent (F (239) = .003, p = .954).

The results of test showed that female first-year students' perceptions of instructional methods (M = 3.55, SD = .96) were lower than male first-year students' perceptions (M = 3.64, SD = .97); however, the test did not reach a statistically significant difference between female and male students' perceptions of instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course, t (239) = -.698, p = .486. Table 4.13 below shows the results obtained from t test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.4).

Table 4.13

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Instructional Methods Utilized in GPC 100 Course by Gender

	Gender					
	Female		Male		*T*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on instructional methods	3.55 (.96)	84	3.64 (.97)	157	-.698*	239

Perceptions on instructional methods: Subjects' perceptions on the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

Gender and peer guides.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to compare the mean difference in the perceptions' of peer guides assisted in GPC 100 course between female and male. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was found to be violated and the variances in the perceptions of female and male first-year students with respect to the peer guides were substantially different (F (236) = 4.113, p = .044).

The results of test revealed that female first-year students' perceptions on the behaviors of peer guides (M = 4.80, SD = .60) were higher than male first-year students' perceptions (M = 4.68, SD = .65); yet, the test was found to be statistically non-significant, t (174.447) = 1.384, p = .168. Table 4.14 below presents the results obtained from *t* test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.5).

Table 4.14

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Peer Guides Involved in GPC 100 Course by Gender

	Gender					
	Female		Male		*t*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on peer guides	4.80 (.60)	81	4.68 (.65)	157	.1.384*	174.447

Perceptions on peer guides: Subjects' perceptions on the behaviors of peer guides assisting in GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

4.5.2.2. *Area of study differences.*

This section presents the results obtained from independent-samples *t* tests which were performed to investigate the difference among first-year students' (i) interest in GPC 100 course, and their perception of the (ii) content covered, (iii) class time allocated, (iv) instructional methods utilized and (v) peer guides involved in GPC 100 course by area of study, which is Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and Engineering Sciences (ES).

Area of study and interest.

An independent-samples *t* test was run to evaluate whether first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) were more interested in GPC 100 course than first-year students who enrolled in Engineering Sciences (ES). As assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance, the variances in the interest level of first-year students who enrolled in SAES and ES were found to be substantially different (F (213) = 5.300, p = .022).

The results of test indicated that first-year students who enrolled in SAES (*M* = 2.83, *SD* = .93) were more interested in GPC 100 course than first-year students who enrolled in ES (*M* = 2.68, *SD* = 1.06); but, the test did not reach a statistically significant difference in the interest levels between first-year students who enrolled in SAES and ES, *t* (211.778) =1.079, *p* = .282. Table 4.15 below provides the results obtained from *t* test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.6).

Table 4.15

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Interest Levels in GPC 100 Course by Area of Study

	Area of Study					
	SAES		ES		*t*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Interest in course	2.83 (.93)	105	2.68 (1.06)	110	1.079*	211.778

SAES = Social, Administrative and Educational SciencesES = Engineering Sciences
Interest in course: Subjects' interest level in GPC 100 course
** p > .05*

Area of study and content.

An independent-samples *t* test was performed to investigate whether the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) regarding the content of GPC 100 course differed compared to the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in Engineering Sciences (ES). Levene's test of homogeneity of variance confirmed that the variances in perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES and ES regarding the course content were statistically equivalent (*F* (237) = .945, *p* = .332).

The results of test yielded that perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES regarding the usefulness of course content (M = 3.62, SD = 1.02) was higher than perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in ES (M = 3.53, SD = .97); however, the difference was found to be statistically non-significant, t (237) = .687, p = .493. Table 4.16 below shows the results obtained from t test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.7).

Table 4.16

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Course Content by Area of Study

	Area of Study					
	SAES		ES		*t*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on course content	3.62 (1.02)	119	3.53 (.97)	120	.687*	237

SAES = Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences; ES = Engineering Sciences
Perceptions on content: Subjects' perceptions on the content of GPC 100 course
** p > .05*

Area of study and allocated time.

An independent-samples t test was employed to examine the difference between the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES) with regard to the allocated class time for GPC 100 course. As assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance, the variances in the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES and in ES regarding the allocated class time were statistically equivalent (F (243) = .045, p = .833).

The results suggested that perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES regarding the allocated class time (M = 3.89, SD = .88) was higher than the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in ES (M = 3.68, SD = .84); yet, there was not a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES and ES with regard to the allocated class time, t (243) = 1.913, p = .057. Table 4.17 below presents the results obtained from t test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.8).

Table 4.17

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Allocated Class Time for GPC 100 Course by Area of Study

	Area of Study					
	SAES		ES		*T*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on class time	3.89 (.88)	122	3.68 (.84)	123	.1.913*	243

SAES = Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences; ES = Engineering Sciences

Perceptions on class time: Subjects' perceptions on the allocated class time for GPC 100 course

** p < .05*

Area of study and instructional methods.

An independent-samples t test was conducted to explore whether there was statistically significant difference between the perceptions first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and in Engineering Sciences (ES) with respect to the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course. Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was found to be not violated for the present analysis (F (239) = .374, p = .542).

The results of test showed that perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES with respect to the instructional methods (M = 3.62, SD = .96) were higher than the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in ES (M = 3.60, SD = 1.01); but, the difference was not statistically significant, t (239) = .182, p = .856. Table 4.18 below provides the results obtained from t test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.9).

Table 4.18

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Instructional Methods Utilized in GPC 100 Course by Area of Study

	Area of Study					
	SAES		ES		*t*	df
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on instructional methods	3.62 (.96)	120	2.60 (1.01)	121	.856*	239

SAES = Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences; ES = Engineering Sciences

Perceptions on instructional methods: Subjects' perceptions on the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

Area of study and peer guides.

An independent-samples t test was run to explore the mean difference in the perceptions' of peer guides assisted in GPC 100 course between first-year students who enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences (SAES) and Engineering Sciences (ES). Levene's test of homogeneity of variance suggested that the variances in the perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES and in ES with respect to the peer guides were substantially different (F (236) = 9.111, p = .003).

The results of test revealed that perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in SAES with regard to the behaviors of peer guides (M = 4.79, SD = .49) were higher than perceptions of first-year students who enrolled in ES (M = 4.65, SD = .74); however, the test did not reach a statistically significant difference, t (206.165) = 1.723, p = .086. Table 4.19 below shows the results obtained from t test, and a figurative representation of the analysis can be found in Appendix E (Figure E.10).

Table 4.19

Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Subjects' Perceptions Regarding the Peer Guides Involved in GPC 100 Course by Area of Study

	Area of Study				*t*	df
	SAES		ES			
	M (SD)	*N*	*M (SD)*	*N*		
Perceptions on peer guides	4.79 (.49)	118	4.65 (.74)	120	1.723*	206.165

SAES = Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences; ES = Engineering Sciences

Perceptions on peer guides: Subjects' perceptions on the behaviors of peer guides assisting in GPC 100 course

** p > .05*

4.6. Summary

In this section, the most outstanding results that the current study yielded are summarized with regard to the research questions.

1. The study yielded that majority of first-year students attending GPC 100 course were interested in GPC 100 course and indicated that they would recommend a similar course to other institutions.
2. The study revealed that, according to the first-year students' perceptions, the most well-achieved objectives of GPC 100 course were informing students

about campus resources and facilities and their usage, presenting most accurate and current information on students' undergraduate programs, and providing students with a chance to meet faculty from their undergraduate study. On the other hand, the less-achieved objectives were presenting strategies for student to improve their learning styles, increasing their awareness on personal life styles and helping them to adapt university life.

3. The study showed that the most useful topics perceived by the first-year students were academic programs, academic issues, services provided by Library and Information and Communication Technologies Office, and activities and facilities, student clubs on campus. On the other hand, topics related to lifestyle and wellness, addiction and higher education were not found to be as useful as other topics by students. Moreover, topics related to students' field of study, importance and benefits of learning English, adaptation to dormitory life, life in Cyprus, learning strategies, Prep School System, time management and homesickness were the most suggested topics by students.
4. The study showed that the students were mostly satisfied with the implementation of GPC 100 course – except for one dimension (i.e. allocated class time).
    a. With regard to the allocated class time, the study revealed that most of the first-year students found two-hour allocated class time for GPC 100 course not appropriate and suggested that it should be one hour. Also, the study revealed that the students were not satisfied with the scheduling of the course and suggested that it should be scheduled at an earlier time.
    b. With regard to the instructional methods, the study showed that the students are mostly satisfied with movies and discussions; but, they did not find pair works as satisfactory as other strategies.
    c. With regard to the peer guides, the most appreciated behaviors of peer guides by the students were their being prepared for the topic of the week

and their being punctual. On the other hand, the least achieved behavior of peer guides was their encouraging students to participate in class activities. The study also revealed that the students were mostly got benefit from their peer guides' experiences in getting to know the campus and academic life and adapting to them.

5. The study showed there were no statistically significant differences in groups – except for one – in respect to students' interest toward GPC 100 and their perceptions of the content and implementation of the course.
    a. The study revealed that, compared to male first-year students, female students were more interested in GPC 100 course, perceived the content less useful, were less satisfied with the instructional methods, and were more positive on the behaviors of peer guides although the differences were not found to be significant. On the other hand, the only statistically significant difference found was that female students found the allocated class time less appropriate than male students did.
    b. To compare students' interest toward the course and their perceptions on the content and implementation of the course according to area of study, the study yielded that Engineering students were less interested in the course, found the content less useful, perceived the allocated class time more appropriate, were less satisfied with instructional methods, and were less positive about the behaviors of peer guides than students from Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the results and the conclusions drawn from them regarding the interests of students toward GPC 100 course and the objectives, content and implementation of GPC 100 course. Following this section, it provides recommendations to the institution, METU-NCC, and to the researchers for future practice and research.

5.1. Discussions

As mentioned in the literature review, the first-year seminars which are known to be successful in increasing student retention and fostering their academic and social integration are ubiquitous in higher education institutions all around the world, and some forms of first-year seminars have been offered at a few universities in Turkey for more than a decade. Nevertheless, METU-NCC began offering a first-year experience course – namely, GPC 100 First-Year on Campus Seminar (GPC 100) course – in Fall 2011 semester for all first-year students at METU-NCC in order to assist students' transition to the intellectual and social life of the university. In line with the demands of the administrators of METU-NCC and curriculum designers of GPC 100 course, this thesis study was set out to evaluate the perceptions of the first-year students who took the course during Fall 2011 semester with regard to the objectives, content and implementation of the course. The conclusions drawn from this study are yielded and discussed in line with the students' overall interest toward GPC 100 course and with the

objectives, content and implementation of GPC 100 course based on a survey questionnaire including both quantitative and qualitative items. Following these sections, the discussions on the conclusions drawn from the inferential statistics analyses about the differences among *gender* and *area of study* with regard to the students' interest in GPC 100 course and their perceptions on the content and implementation (i.e. allocated class time, instructional methods and peer guides) of GPC 100 course are also presented.

5.1.1. Students' overall interest toward GPC 100 course.

Taken as a whole, the current study suggests that students' perceptions of the course were positive overall. Majority of students who took the class said that they had positive interests toward the course and they would recommend such a course to other universities, which can be assumed to be an important indicator of students' satisfaction with the course. This result is consistent with the results reported in the research conducted at Floyd College, Idaho State University and West Texas A and M University (Barefoot et. al., 1998) and the results obtained from Erickson and Stone's study (2012). In these institutions like in METU-NCC, the students think that they would suggest the first-year experience course or seminar that they attended to other prospective students or other institutions (Barefoot et. al., 1998; Erickson & Stone, 2012). It can therefore be assumed that GPC 100 course attracted students' interest and was beneficial for them as any other first-year experience courses or seminars offered by other institutions.

5.1.2. Objectives of GPC 100 course.

The study yielded that GPC 100 course was more successful in accomplishing informing students about the resources and facilities at METU-NCC and about how

students could benefit from them. Within the scope of the course, the students were introduced with the Library and Information and Communication Technologies Office at METU-NCC. Also, the students were informed about sports and recreational facilities (i.e. pool and fitness center). This result corroborates the findings of studies revealed the importance of knowledge on resources (Flaga, 2006; Schrader & Brown, 2008; Terenzini & Reason, 2005) and suggested that one of the principal goals of first-year experience courses or seminars is providing information on the facilities, support services and other resources (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993; Tobolowsky, 2005). Flaga (2006) argued that students feel more comfortable and move toward familiarity when they gain information and learn about campus environment. Also, it can be expected that first-year students who enrolled in GPC 100 course are more likely to use these resources and facilities with higher frequencies, which may increase students' involvement and foster their engagement in campus activities and lead them to develop a sense of commitment and belongingness to the university (Astin, 1984), to succeed at university (Kuh, 2005) and to persist in university (Tinto, 2003).

Another important finding of the study concerns the academic issues. The findings indicated that GPC 100 course was moderately successful in providing information about students' undergraduate programs and creating opportunities for them to meet faculty from their field of study. It can be assumed that getting to know the faculty and their expectations and developing academic awareness on the policies, procedures, requirements and challenges of their undergraduate program could generate a stronger sense of community (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993) and foster students' academic integration (Maisto & Tammi, 1991). Also, the above finding seems to be partially consistent with other research which found that first-year experience courses or seminars had a positive influence on informal or out-of-class contact with faculty (Maisto & Tammi, 1991; Pascarella, Terenzini & Wolfle, 1986) since meeting the faculty or other staff at the program could create an opportunity to establish such interactions with them and eventually lead to social integration of students. Thus, the

course objective of fostering students' academic integration can be concluded to be successful; yet, the course was weak in promoting students' social integration in this sense.

One unanticipated finding was that GPC 100 course was weak in assisting students in their adjustment to university life, which is consistent with the finding of Erickson and Stone's study (2012). In their study, the students were asked to rate to what extend the first-year experience program that they attended helped them to adjust to college life, and it got the least mean score among others, which is similar to the result obtained from current study. This result could be explained by different factors. A possible explanation could be that the students' expectations from GPC 100 course were higher with regard to this objective; yet, the course was not designed well-enough to promote it. Also, it is possible that the course did not clearly communicate its objective of helping students adjust to university life and create a sense of adjustment.

5.1.3. Content of GPC 100 course.

The findings of the study revealed that institution specific topics such as academic programs and academic issues (scholarships, minor/double majors, rules and regulations) were found to be most useful topics covered during GPC 100 course. Surprisingly, the most suggested topic obtained from the qualitative triangulation was *the field of study* although it had been covered during the course. This rather intriguing result may be explained by a number of different factors. It seems possible that this result might be due to the fact that not enough time, energy or effort was spent on this issue to appease students because only one course hour was allocated for the topic. Another possible explanation could be that the students had already gathered the information on the issue on their own or from the individuals who knew a great deal about it, such as friends or upper-grade students, since the topic was scheduled too late

to be covered (in December) and it did not provide them with an opportunity to reach that information.

The study yielded that the subjects did not find topics related to life style, wellness and addictions as useful as other issues. However, the finding of Porter and Swing's study (2006) indicated that health education, which was one of the five common components of first-year seminars offered at 45 four-year colleges and institutions, had a substantial impact on students' early intention to persist. Although very little was found in the literature on the use of cigarette, alcohol and drug in Turkey, the studies indicated that substance use and abuse in Turkey is increasing (Akpınar, Yoldaşcan & Saatçi, 2006; Deveci, Açık, Oğuzöncül & Deveci, 2010). Also, a recent study conducted in Northern Cyprus yielded that the number of individuals who had tried cigarette or alcohol was increasing in university life (Kolay Akfert, Çakıcı & Çakıcı, 2009). Since these issues are too important to be ignored, it is significant to address them within the scope of GPC 100 course as prevention studies; but, at this point, the reasons lying behind these negative evaluations should be considered and the problems whether in the content itself or in the implementation of this content should be well-investigated.

The study also revealed the students' need for such topics as *Cyprus*, *dormitory life* and *homesickness* that would help them to ease their adjustment. A possible explanation for students' request on such topics could be the fact that the location of METU-NCC. As the institution is located at another country, Turkish and international students are not familiar with the environment, they – most probably – live in dormitories, and they are away from their home country, family and friends. While in some ways these *non-native* students experience the same transition problems with students from Northern Cyprus, they could have some unique problems that must be addressed in GPC 100 course so as to meet their needs. Many of these students may experience homesickness or *friendsickness* and feel socially disconnected, which may

cause them not to fit their new environment and fulfill their social adjustment (Crissman Ishler, 2004; Paul & Brier, 2001).

Another important finding of the study was that the students were not satisfied with the way *learning strategies* handled during the course. Neither the students found the objective concerning the presentation of learning strategies to be as well-achieved as others nor they did find the topic concerning this issue as useful as other topics. Additionally, the quantitative triangulation revealed that the need for further information on learning strategies. When reviewing the literature, it was found poor academic performance in the first-year of college or university had a negative impact on students' attrition and degree completion (Cabrera, Burkum & La Nasa, 2005; Ishitani, 2006; Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn & Pascarella, 1996).

5.1.4. Implementation of GPC 100 course.

Although not explicitly enounced, the current study scrutinized the implementation of GPC 100 course from different dimensions such as allocated class time, the instruction methods and peer guides.

Allocated class time for GPC 100 course.

The study revealed that more than half of the students found the time allocated for GPC 100 course much or too much. Of these students who found two-hour class time much, most of them proposed that GPC 100 course should be a one-hour course. However, it has conclusively been shown that the more the class time, the higher the students' achievements (Barefoot et al., 2005; Hunter & Linder, 2005). The reason why the students suggested decreasing the allocated class time for GPC 100 course may be explained by the fact that they were not satisfied by the content and/or implementation of the course. Also, the study revealed that the students were not satisfied with the

scheduling of the course; they expressed that the course was scheduled too late. This could be another reason for why students offered change in the allocated time.

In addition, some students also reflected their negative attitudes on the course time by expressing that *there is no need for such a course* or *the course should be optional and offered only for students who have problems*. However, the literature indicates that orientation programs should be designed for all or a critical mass of first-year students in order to promote students' first-year experience (Barefoot et. al., 2005).

Instructional methods used in the delivery of GPC 100 course.

The findings revealed that the students were satisfied with class discussions most, which supports previous research conducted at Idaho State University (Barefoot et. al, 1998) and by at a private research university by Braxton, Milem & Sullivan (2000). The results of the Braxton, Milem & Sullivan's study (2000) found that class discussion, which is an active learning activity requiring students to think about the content and share their thoughts with classmates, had a positive influence on social integration and subsequent institutional commitment. Also, an indirect effect of class discussions on retention was found (Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000). Within the light of this study, it is assumed that the in-class discussions that first-year students participated in GPC 100 course improved or increased students' interactions with their peers (i.e. classmates) (Lowe & Cook, 2003), their social integration and their subsequent institutional commitment (Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000).

Peer guides assisted in GPC 100 course.

The results yielded that the students were satisfied with having a peer guide in GPC 100 course and considered it among the strengths of the course. Topkaya and Meydan (2013) found that the students mostly consulted their friends when they had

problems. Similarly, Koydemir, Erel, Yumurtacı and Şahin's study (2010) revealed that students sought for help form their peers while coping with their problems. These studies could hihglight the importance of having a guide, especially one from the Department of Psychological Guidance. Also, it can be assumed that GPC 100 course improved or increased peer connections with upper-classes, and indirectly, fostered students' satisfaction with the institution and retention.

5.1.5. Gender.

The results of the study indicated that there are several differences in female and male first-year students' interest toward GPC 100 course and their perceptions of the content and implementation of the course. Although no statistically significant difference was found, the results of the independent-samples *t* tests revealed that female first-year students who attended GPC 100 course were more interested in the course compared to the male students, and their perceptions on the behaviors of peer guides assisting in the course were also more positive compared to them. A possible explanation for this might be that female students enjoyed more interacting with their peer guides during GPC 100 course and got more benefit from them with regard to their undergraduate programs since the majority of the female students were enrolled in Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences and the peer guides also had similar undergraduate background, which might have fostered their academic and social integration and increased their interest in the course. The findings of the study are considerably consistent with those of Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) who found that social integration had a stronger direct influence on female persistence. Thus, it can be assumed that GPC 100 course had a positive impact on female students' social integration and indirectly influenced their persistence; however, the current study was unable to analyze the impact of the course on students' academic and social integration and on their persistence and further studies is required on this issue.

On the other hand, the study found a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of female and male students on the allocated class time; the results indicated that the perceptions of female students on the allocated class time were more negative. This indicates that the class-hour allocated for GPC 100 course was found to be much or too much by female students, which might be related to several issues that require further investigation. For instance, although female students were more interested in the course, they might have not find the content covered or instructional methods utilized in a fruitful way, which corresponds to other findings of the study. The results examining gender differences with regard to the perceptions of students on the content and instructional methods yielded that female students found course content and instructional methods less useful and less satisfactory, respectively, but both differences were statistically non-significant. Although it was not tested, this might also be triangulated with other findings that indicate that the students wanted to learn more about the life in Cyprus, strategies to handle homesickness or dormitory life, and they were expecting more interactive classes and outside activities.

An important issue raised by the current study to consider by course developers or implementers is that to class time should be allocated efficiently for all types of activities that may happen in or out of the class at the beginning of the semester. These findings also suggest that the content and implementation of GPC 100 course do not appeal to the needs and interests of all first-year students to some extent; therefore, improvements on the content and implementation of the course should be considered by course designers. Nevertheless, the results of this study fail to explain the occurrence of these differences. Thus, further research needs to be undertaken so that the differences by gender can be more clearly understood.

5.1.6. Area of study.

The study yielded that Engineering students who enrolled in GPC 100 course were less interested in the course although the results of the independent-samples *t* test did not show a significant difference. It may be less clear why first-year students from Engineering Sciences were less interested in GPC 100 course but it may have something to do with its being male-oriented or pure-science oriented, and the other area of study was more female- and practice-oriented and social in nature. A vast number of first-year students who enrolled in Engineering Sciences were male (N = 107, 84.2 %). Although it was not statistically tested, this finding seems to be coherent with the gender results obtained from relevant *t* test which yielded that male first-year students were less interested in GPC 100 course.

In addition, Engineering students' low interest in GPC 100 course might be related to their satisfaction with the content and implementation of the course, which accords with earlier findings of the study which revealed that Engineering students had negative perceptions on content, instructional methods and peer guides. The study yielded that Engineering students found the content covered in GPC 100 course less useful compared to the students from Social, Administrative and Educational Sciences. Since the content of the course was more social sciences-oriented, it might have not appealed to the needs and interests of Engineering students. Also, the findings revealed that Engineering students were less satisfied with the instructional methods utilized in the delivery of the course, which might indicate mismatches between learning styles of Engineering students and teaching styles of GPC 100 instructors. Fedler and Silverman (1988) indicated that most engineering students are visual and they learn much in situations where information is presented visually through pictures, diagrams, films, demonstrations, and so forth. However, teaching of GPC 100 course was predominantly verbal, which is a more appropriate teaching style for auditory learners. In addition, the study revealed that Engineering students' perceptions with regard to behaviors of the

peer guides who involved in GPC 100 course were less positive. Consequently, dissatisfaction of Engineering students with the content and implementation of GPC 100 course might have caused them to get discouraged about the course.

In a recent study conducted at a four-year higher education institution in Turkey, it was found that the level of dropout tendency was higher among Engineering students (Hüseyin Şimşek, 2013); therefore, these results need to be interpreted with caution. For an effective first-year seminar for Engineering students, topics, instructional methods and peer guides should be carefully planned according to the needs of students from Engineering Sciences. As the way how students receive and process information varies according to their discipline (Becher, 1994; Biglan, 1973; Kolb, 1981), learning styles of students from different disciplines should be taken into consideration in the process of course development in order to make the course more attractive and meaningful for students from all disciplines.

5.2. Implications

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice and research.

5.2.1. Recommendations for practice.

This study has a number of practical implications which need to be considered for the improvement of GPC 100 course and for similar first-year orientation courses or seminars aiming to assist first-year students' transition to university.

Based on the perceptions of first-year students, most of the course objectives were well achieved; however, there were certain objectives that the students did not agree that the course was successful in achieving. With this regard, the most outstanding finding was that the students did not believe that the course was successful in helping

students adapt university life. There is, therefore, a definite need for the clarification of course goals and objectives. A handbook or brochure should be prepared in order to inform students about the objectives and scope of the course, and should be shared with all new-coming students before they take the course. Also, such topics as homesickness, dormitory life and life in Cyprus should be included in the content of the course. Moreover, activities like tours in and around the campus should be held.

The findings of the study suggest that the students were not satisfied with all the topics covered and there were differences among gender and area of study with regard to course content. Therefore, the number of the topics addressing course objectives should be increased and the students should be given a choice to attend the topics appealing to their interests and needs, which might increase student satisfaction with course objectives and course content, and eventually, with the course itself.

The results of this study indicate that topics related to academic issues and programs were found to be more useful than other topics, and they were also among the most requested topics. Taken together, these findings support strong recommendations to place more emphasis on topics related to academic life, which might increase the satisfaction and interest of students and foster their academic integration. A reasonable approach to tackle this issue is that more time should be allocated for the introduction of students' undergraduate programs. Also, time frames should be set for faculty visits so that the students could have a good grasp of expectations of their discipline. Moreover, upper-grade students from every undergraduate study with higher GPA scores should be involved in GPC 100 course as they can be a role model for new-coming students and clarify students' questions about their discipline.

The results of this study have highlighted the need for improvement in health related topics such as addictions. A practical implication of this is that the topic should be covered by an expert through discussions of real-life events. In addition, movies on the negative effects of health problems and addictions should be included in the curriculum of the course in order to increase students' awareness on the issues.

The evidence from this study suggests that the students were not taking the advantage of learning strategies. Therefore, there should be some changes both in the content itself and in the way how it is implemented. The topic should be scheduled earlier in the curriculum so that the students could get the best benefit from it. Also, the content should be revised in a way that it will cover such practical skills as thinking critically, taking notes, learning a foreign language, studying math or science, and so forth. Moreover, experts from *Student Development and Counseling Center* should be involved in the implementation of the topic and arrange specific sessions on this issue during the semester.

When the perceptions, opinions and suggestions of first-year students regarding the allocated class time were analyzed, it was found that the students were not satisfied with the timing and scheduling of the course. Considering the students' negative attitudes toward scheduling of the course, it seems that the course should be scheduled at an earlier time like around 14:00, 15:00 or 16:00. Another implication of this is possibly that the course can be scheduled at different times suitable for each area of study.

Even though the study revealed that the students were highly satisfied with their peer guides, the utilization of peer guides still needs improvement. The peer guides who will assist in the course should continue to be trained for a better understanding of their roles in terms of helping new-coming students adjust to academic and social life at university, facilitating class activities, clarifying the issues, and so on. Also, there should be some international students assigned as peer guides for the new-coming international students so that they could communicate better and assist their specific needs. In addition, upper-grade students from other fields of studies with higher GPAs can be encouraged to involve in GPC 100 course so that they could serve as a role model for new-coming first-year students who enrolled in the same undergraduate program with them and assist their transition to university life.

The study also has implications for other institutions which offer or plan to offer such first-year experience course or seminar. First of all, a continuous assessment strategy should be utilized in order to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the course. In spite of being institution-specific, the survey instrument developed in this study might be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Also, faculty-student and peer-student interactions should be continue to be emphasized through the activities carried out throughout the program.

5.2.2. Recommendations for research.

Considering the results and limitations of current study, several implications for future research arise. To complement the findings of this study, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas.

Since the current study focused only on the experiences and perceptions of the first-year students enrolled in GPC 100, it did not seek for the impact of the course on students' academic and social integration. Thus, further research might investigate the effect of GPC 100 course on students' life such as on their academic achievements, institutional commitment, interactions with peers and faculty, or persistence. In-depth qualitative research (e.g. case study) might also be employed to identify the benefits that the students receive from the course, in general, and from peer guides. In addition, further research might consider delving into distinctions for students enrolling in 1st Grade level and Prep School. Both group students were attending the same course; yet, they might have different needs and expectations. Hence, it would be interesting to compare experiences their experiences in GPC 100 course. Moreover, a longitudinal study might be conducted to investigate the short and long term outcomes of the course on first-year students with regard to their success or engagement with university.

The current study was limited to gathering the perceptions of only one group of stakeholders, *first-year students* who enrolled in GPC 100 course; hence, further

research might aim to evaluate the value of GPC 100 course through reaching other stakeholders such as course instructors, faculty and peer guides. Focused group interviews with these stakeholders might be conducted to gain insight into the benefits, strengths and weaknesses of the program.

As this was the first year of GPC 100 course, the influence of the course on the institution in terms of students' engagement, success and persistence might be investigated through comparison among GPC 100 course attendants and non-attendants. Further research might compare more recent cohorts of first-year students who attended GPC 100 course with 2010 and earlier cohorts of students who did not attend such a course at METU-NCC.

Since the first-year orientation programs vary in Turkey in terms of their implementation strategies, multi-campus studies investigating and comparing the program results of similar first-year orientation courses might be conducted, which may yield important findings for developing and sustaining such curricular programs. In this scope, a nationwide data collection instrument (e.g. survey instrument) might be developed.

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APPENDIX A

ODTÜ KUZEY KIBRIS KAMPUSU GPC 100 DERSİNİ DEĞERLENDİRME ANKETİ

Bir tez araştırması kapsamında hazırlanan bu anket ile ODTÜ Kuzey Kıbrıs Kampusu'nda verilmekte olan GPC 100 dersine dair bu dersi alan öğrencilerin görüşlerinin alınması ve onların görüşleri doğrultusunda dersin değerlendirilmesinin yapılması amaçlanmıştır.

Anket üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde öğrencilerin genel durumunu yansıtmakta kullanılacak demografik bilgilerin toplanması amaçlanmıştır. İkinci bölümde sizden GPC 100 dersini değerlendirmeniz, üçüncü bölümde ise bu derste size yardımcı olan akran rehberinizin davranışlarını değerlendirmeniz beklenmektedir.

Araştırmama katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederim.

Emine Kutlu
Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi
Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Anabilim Dalı
Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi

I) DEMOGRAFİK BİLGİLER:

1) Yaşınız: ……

2) Cinsiyetiniz:

☐ Kadın ☐ Erkek

3) Sınıfınız:

☐ 1. Sınıf ☐ Hazırlık

4) Hazırlık öğrencisi iseniz kurunuz:

☐ Beginner ☐ Elementary ☐ Intermediate

5) Programınız:

……

6) Mezun olduğunuz lise:

☐ Devlet ☐ Özel

7) Mezun olduğunuz lise türü:

☐ Genel Lise
☐ Fen Lisesi
☐ Sosyal Bilimler Lisesi
☐ Anadolu Lisesi
☐ Anadolu Öğretmen Lisesi
☐ Güzel Sanatlar ve Spor Lisesi
☐ Meslek ve Teknik Lisesi
☐ Çok Programlı Lise
☐ Diğer: ……

II) GPC 100 DERSİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ:

1) GPC 100 dersine devam durumunuzu en iyi yansıtan seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

☐ % 100 - % 76 devam ☐ % 75 - % 51 devam
☐ % 50 - % 26 devam ☐ %25 - % 0 devam

2) GPC 100 dersi için ayrılan zamana (haftada 2 saat) dair değerlendirmenizi en iyi ifade eden seçeneği işaretleyiniz. Ders için ayrılan zamanı …

☐ (5) çok fazla buluyorum.
☐ (4) fazla buluyorum.
☐ (3) uygun buluyorum.
☐ (2) az buluyorum.
☐ (1) çok az buluyorum.

3) 2. soruya cevabınız "Çok fazla", "Fazla", "Az" veya "Çok az" yönünde ise, ne kadar olmasını önerirsiniz?

Haftada …… saat

4) Aşağıda GPC 100 dersinin kazanımları (size kattıkları) ile ilgili verilen ifadelerden görüşlerinizi en iyi yansıtan seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

	(5) Tamamen katılıyorum.	(4) Çoğunlukla katılıyorum.	(3) Katılıyorum.	(2) Kısmen katılıyorum.	(1) Tamamen katılmıyorum.
1. ODTÜ-KKK'deki kaynaklar / olanaklar (Spor Merkezi, öğrenci toplulukları, kütüphane ve bilişim) hakkında bilgi edindim.					
2. ODTÜ-KKK'deki kaynaklardan / olanaklardan nasıl faydalanabileceğim konusunda bilgi edindim.					
3. Akademik başarıya nasıl ulaşabileceğim hakkında bilgi edindim.					
4. Farklı öğrenme yöntemleri ve stratejileri hakkında bilgi edindim.					
5. Kendi öğrenme yöntemimi nasıl geliştirebileceğimi öğrendim.					
6. Zaman yönetimi hakkında bilgi edindim.					
7. Kendi çalışma zamanımı en verimli nasıl yönetebileceğim hakkında bilgi edindim.					
8. Hedeflerimi nasıl belirleyebileceğim konusunda bilgi edindim.					
9. Programım hakkında en doğru bilgileri aldım.					
10. Programım hakkında en güncel bilgileri aldım.					
11. Programımdaki üst sınıf öğrencileriyle tanışma ve kaynaşma fırsatı yakaladım.					

12. Programımdaki öğretim elemanlarıyla tanışma fırsatı yakaladım.					
13. Programımdaki öğretim elemanlarıyla iletişime geçme fırsatı yakaladım.					
14. GPC 100 dersi üniversite hayatıma daha kolay uyum sağlamama yardımcı oldu.					
15. Hayatımı olumsuz yönde etkileyebilecek bağımlılıklar (nikotin, alkol, internet) hakkında bilgilendim.					
16. Kendi yaşam biçimim hakkında farkındalığım arttı.					
17. Daha kaliteli ve sağlıklı bir yaşam için yaşamımda hangi alanlarda (fiziksel, duygusal, sosyal, mesleki, entelektüel, spiritüel) değişiklik yapabileceğim konusunda bilgi edindim.					

5) GPC 100 dersine karşı tutumunuzu en iyi yansıtan ifadeyi işaretleyiniz.

☐ (5) Çok olumlu
☐ (4) Oldukça olumlu
☐ (3) Olumlu
☐ (2) Biraz olumlu
☐ (1) Hiç olumlu değil

6) GPC 100 dersindeki ilgi düzeyinizi en iyi ifade eden seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

☐ Derse karşı çok ilgiliyim.
☐ Derse karşı oldukça ilgiliyim.
☐ Derse karşı ilgiliyim.
☐ Derse karşı biraz ilgiliyim.
☐ Derse karşı ilgisizim / ilgim yok.

7) Aşağıda verilen ve bu derste işlenen konular hakkındaki görüşlerinizi en iyi anlatan ifadeyi işaretleyiniz.

	(5) Çok faydalı buldum	(4) Faydalı buldum.	(3) Orta derecede faydalı buldum.	(2) Biraz faydalı buldum.	(1) Hiç aydalı bulmadım
1. Yaşam biçimimiz ve iyilik hali					
2. Katıl, eğlen ve öğren: Sosyal ve kültürel faaliyetler, spor ve rekreasyon tesislerinin kullanımı ve topluluklar hakkında bilgilendirme					
3. Bilgiye buluşma yeriniz: Kütüphane ve Bilişim Teknolojileri Müdürlüğü'nce sunulan hizmetler hakkında bilgilendirme					
4. Üniversite nedir?					
5. Farklılık, eşitlik ve ayrımcılıkla mücadele					
6. Akademik başarı için stratejiler					
a) Hedef belirleme					
b) Motivasyon					
c) Kaynak yönetimi (zaman yönetimi, çalışma ortamı ve üniversitedeki yardım kaynakları)					
d) Öğrenme stratejileri					
7. Akademik programlarla tanışma					

8. Ruh sağlığı					
a) Psikolojik sorunlar ve bunlarla başa çıkma yöntemleri					
b) Bağımlılık (nikotin, alkol ve internet)					
9. Akademik konular: Burs olanakları, yandal/çift anadal programları, ders tekrarı, dersten geri çekilme, notlandırma sistemi ve ortalamanın hesaplanması					
10. Bilgiyle buluşma yeriniz: Bilgi okuryazarlığına yönelik online eğitim programı					

8) Yukarıda belirtilen konulara ek olarak GPC 100 dersine dahil edilmesini uygun gördüğünüz konuları belirtiniz.

9) GPC 100 dersinde uygulanmış olan ve aşağıda belirtilen etkinliklere dair memnuniyetinizi en iyi yansıtan ifadeyi işaretleyiniz.

	(5) Çok memnunum.	(4) Memnunum.	(3) Orta düzeyde memnunum.	(2) Biraz memnunum.	(1) Hiç memnun değilim.
1. Tartışma					
2. Seminer / Konferans					

3. Film gösterimi					
4. Bireysel uygulamalar					
5. İkili çalışmalar					
6. Grup çalışmaları					

10) GPC 100 dersinin nasıl işlenilmesi gerektiği ile ilgili görüş ve önerilerinizi yazınız.

11) GPC 100 dersini farklı üniversitelerde de verilmesini önerir misiniz?

☐ Evet

☐ Hayır

III) AKRAN REHBERLERİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ:

1) Aşağıda akran rehberinizin GPC 100 dersi içerisindeki davranışlarıyla ilgili verilmiş olan ifadelere dair sizin duygu ve düşüncelerinizi en iyi yansıtan seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

	(5) Her zaman	(4) Genellikle	(3) Bazen	(2) Nadiren	(1) Hiçbir zaman
1. Ders kapsamındaki etkinlikler için buluşma noktalarına veya sınıfa zamanında geldi.					
2. Dersin sınıf içinde yürütüldüğü haftalarda, o haftanın konusuna yönelik hazırlıklıydı.					
3. Sınıf içi etkinlik uygulamaları öncesinde etkinliğin amacının ne olduğuna yönelik açıklamalar yaptı.					

4. Sınıf içi etkinlik uygulamalarının nasıl yapılacağı konusunda açıklama yaptı.					
5. Sınıf içi etkinlik uygulamalarında anlamadığım bir nokta olduğunda anlamam için yardımcı oldu.					
6. Sınıf içi etkinlik uygulamalarını tamamlamam için yeterli süre tanıdı.					
7. Sınıf içi etkinlik uygulamalarında görüşlerimi paylaştığımda görüşlerime saygılıydı.					
8. Sınıf içindeki uygulamalara katılmam konusunda beni cesaretlendirdi.					
9. Ders kapsamındaki etkinlikler esnasında benimle kurduğu iletişim olumluydu.					

2) Akran rehberinizin olmasının en olumlu gördüğünüz nedenlerini yazınız.

IV) EKLEMEK İSTEDİĞİNİZ GÖRÜŞ VE ÖNERİLER

1) GPC 100 dersi ve ile ilgili yukarıda sorulmayan fakat sizin eklemek istediğiniz görüş ve önerilerinizi lütfen yazınız.

2) GPC 100 dersindeki akran rehberlerle ilgili yukarıda sorulmayan fakat sizin eklemek istediğiniz görüş ve önerilerinizi lütfen yazınız.

Anket burada bitmiştir.
Araştırmama katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederim.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GPC 100 COURSE AT METU NORTH CYPRUS CAMPUS

This questionnaire has been prepared within the scope of a thesis study. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather the opinions of students taking the GPC 100 course offered at METU-NCC and to evaluate GPC 100 course accordingly.

The survey consists of three parts. The first section contains items about demographic information, the second section includes items related to the GPC 100 course itself, and the third section includes items related to the peer guide who has helped you during the course, respectively.

Thank you for your contribution in advance.

Emine Kutlu
Middle East Technical University
Master's Student of
Curriculum and Instruction

I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1) Age: …….

2) Gender:

☐ Female ☐ Male

3) Grade:

☐ 1st Grade ☐ Prep Class

4) If you are studying at Prep School, tick which level you are:

☐ Beginner ☐ Elementary ☐ Intermediate

5) Your field of study at METU-NCC: …….

6) High school that you graduated from:

☐ State ☐ Private

7) Type of high school that you graduated from:

☐ General High School
☐ Science High School
☐ Social Sciences
☐ Anatolian High School
☐ Anatolian Teacher's Training High School
☐ Fine Arts and Sports High School
☐ Vocational and Technical High School
☐ Multiple Programs High School
☐ Others, please write: ……

II. EVALUATION OF GPC 100 COURSE

1) Choose the best option that reflects your attendance on GPC 100 course.

☐ % 100 - % 76 attendance ☐ % 75 - % 51 attendance
☐ % 50 - % 26 attendance ☐ %25 - % 0 attendance

2) Choose the best option that reflects your opinion. For the GPC 100 course two hours a week is allocated. I think this amount of time is …

☐ (5) too much.
☐ (4) much.
☐ (3) appropriate.
☐ (2) little.
☐ (1) too little.

3) If your answer for Question 2 is "Too much", "Much", "Little" or "Too little", how much time should be allocated to the GPC 100 course per week?

……. hours a week

4) The attainments of GPC 100 course are given below. Choose the best option reflecting your opinions on them.

	(5) Completely agree.	(4) Mostly agree.	(3) Agree.	(2) Slightly agree.	(1) Completely disagree.
1. I was informed about the resources and facilities (Sports Center, student clubs, library and informatics) at METU-NCC.					
2. I was informed about how I could benefit from the resources and facilities at METU-NCC.					
3. I was informed about how I could be successful academically.					
4. I was informed about different learning styles and strategies.					
5. I have learned how I could improve my own learning style.					
6. I was informed about how to improve time management skills.					
7. I was informed about how I could manage my study time effectively.					
8. I was informed about how I could create personal goals.					
9. I got the most <u>accurate</u> information on my field of study.					
10. I got the most <u>current</u> information on my field of study.					
11. I have had a chance to meet and establish relationships with the upper class students from my field of study.					
12. I have had a chance to meet the academic staff in my field of study.					
13. I have had an opportunity to meet with the academic staff in my field of study.					
14. The GPC 100 course has helped me adapt to my university life easily.					

15. I learned about addictions (nicotine, alcohol, and internet) that may negatively influence my life.					
16. My awareness of my personal lifestyle has increased.					
17. I learned about areas (physical, emotional, social, occupational, intellectual, or spiritual) in which I can make changes to promote a higher quality, healthier life.					

5) Choose the best expression that reflects your attitude about GPC 100 course.
- ☐ (5) Extremely positive
- ☐ (4) Mostly positive
- ☐ (3) Positive
- ☐ (2) Slightly positive
- ☐ (1) Not positive at all

6) Choose the best option that reflects your level of interest in GPC 100 course.
- ☐ (5) I was extremely interested in the course.
- ☐ (4) I was very interested in the course.
- ☐ (3) I was interested in the course.
- ☐ (2) I was slightly interested in the course.
- ☐ (1) I was not interested at all in the course.

7) The topics covered in the GPC 100 course are given below. Choose the best expression that reflects your opinions on these topics.

	(5) I found it very useful	(4) I found it useful.	(3) I found it moderately useful.	(2) I found it slightly useful.	(1) I did not find it useful at all.
1. Life style and wellness					
2. Join us, have fun and learn: Information on social and cultural activities, sports and recreational facilities usage, and clubs					

3. Meeting place with knowledge: Information about the services provided by Library and Information and Communication Technologies Office					
4. What is a university?					
5. Diversity, equality and tackling discrimination					
6. Strategies for academic success					
a) Goal setting					
b) Motivation					
c) Resource management (time management, study environment, and aid (help) resources at the university					
d) Learning strategies					
7. Getting acquainted with academic programs					
8. Mental health					
a) Psychological issues and strategies to cope with them					
b) Addiction (nicotine, alcohol, and internet)					
9. Academic issues: Scholarships, minor / double major programs, repeating or withdrawing a course, grading system and calculating point average					
10. Meeting place with knowledge: Online education on knowledge literacy					

8) Write the topics that you think should be included in GPC 100 course in addition to those listed above.

9) The activities applied in the GPC 100 course are listed below. Choose the description that best reflects your satisfaction with these activities.

	(5) Very satisfied.	(4) Satisfied.	(3) Moderately satisfied.	(2) Little satisfied.	(1) Not satisfied at all.
1. Discussion					
2. Seminar / Conference					
3. Movies					
4. Individual works					
5. Pair works					
6. Group works					

10) Write your opinions or suggestions about how the GPC 100 course implementation may be improved.

11) Do you think that the GPC 100 course should be offered by other universities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

III. EVALUATION OF PEER GUIDES

1) Some descriptions of the behaviors of peer guides in the GPC 100 course are given below. Choose the option that best reflects your feelings and opinions regarding peer guide behaviors.

	(5) Always	(4) Often	(3) Sometimes	(2) Rarely	(1) Never
1. He / she came on time to the class or meeting point for activities.					
2. He / she was prepared for the topic of the week when the course was presented in the classroom.					
3. He / she explained what the goals were before in-class activities.					
4. He / she explained how in-class activities would be applied.					
5. He / she helped me understand the issues that I could not understand during the in-class activities.					
6. He / she gave me enough time to complete in-class activities.					
7. He / she was respectful to my thoughts when I shared them during the in-class activities.					

8.	He / she encouraged me to participate in the activities carried out in the class.					
9.	He / she established a positive communication style during the activities of the course.					

2) Write the most positive aspects of having a peer guide.

IV. OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS THAT YOU WANT TO SHARE

1) What additional suggestions may you offer regarding the GPC 100 course?

2) What additional suggestions may you offer regarding the use of peer guides in this course?

The questionnaire ends here.
Thank you for your contribution on my research.

APPENDIX C

MAJOR THEMES FROM QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSES

Item 2.3. Suggestions on the allocated class time	
Codes	***f***
46-60 minutes	77
31-45 minutes	20
No need such a course	11
Other	8
Up to 30 minutes	5
61-75 minutes	5
1 hour every two weeks	3
76-90 minutes	1
1,5 hours every two weeks	1
2 hours every two weeks	1

Item 2.8. Suggestions on the topics	
Codes	***f***
Nothing to add	8
Unrelated answers	5
Enough topics	4
Field of study	4
Importance and benefits of learning English	2
Adaptation to dormitory life	2
The life in Cyprus	2
Efficient energy use	1
Equality of human rights	1
Introducing academic staff	1
Time management	1
Learning strategies	1

Too many topics already	1
Prep School System	1

Item 2.10. Suggestions on the implementation of GPC 100 course	
Codes	***f***
Implementation	10
More seminars instead of conferences/class activities	2
More student involvement through discussions or dialogues	2
Change the place of courses	1
More outside activities	1
Sharings of upper-class students' experiences	1
Spending more time with the academic staff	1
Well-prepared seminars	1
Make it more interesting	1
Nothing to add	5
It is OK like this	4
It should be removed.	4
Timing and scheduling	3
Shorten the time	1
Change the time of the lesson	1
Increase the allocated class time	1
Content	2
Add Prep School System into the curriculum	1
Time management	1

Item 3.2. Suggestions on the peer guides	
Codes	***f***
Sharing his or her experiences	19
Everything he or she did	19
Helping us getting know the campus and academic life, and adapting them	18
Counseling	5
Being respectful and understanding toward us	4
Being supportive and encouraging	3

Explaining the course and class activities	3
Taking care of us individually	1

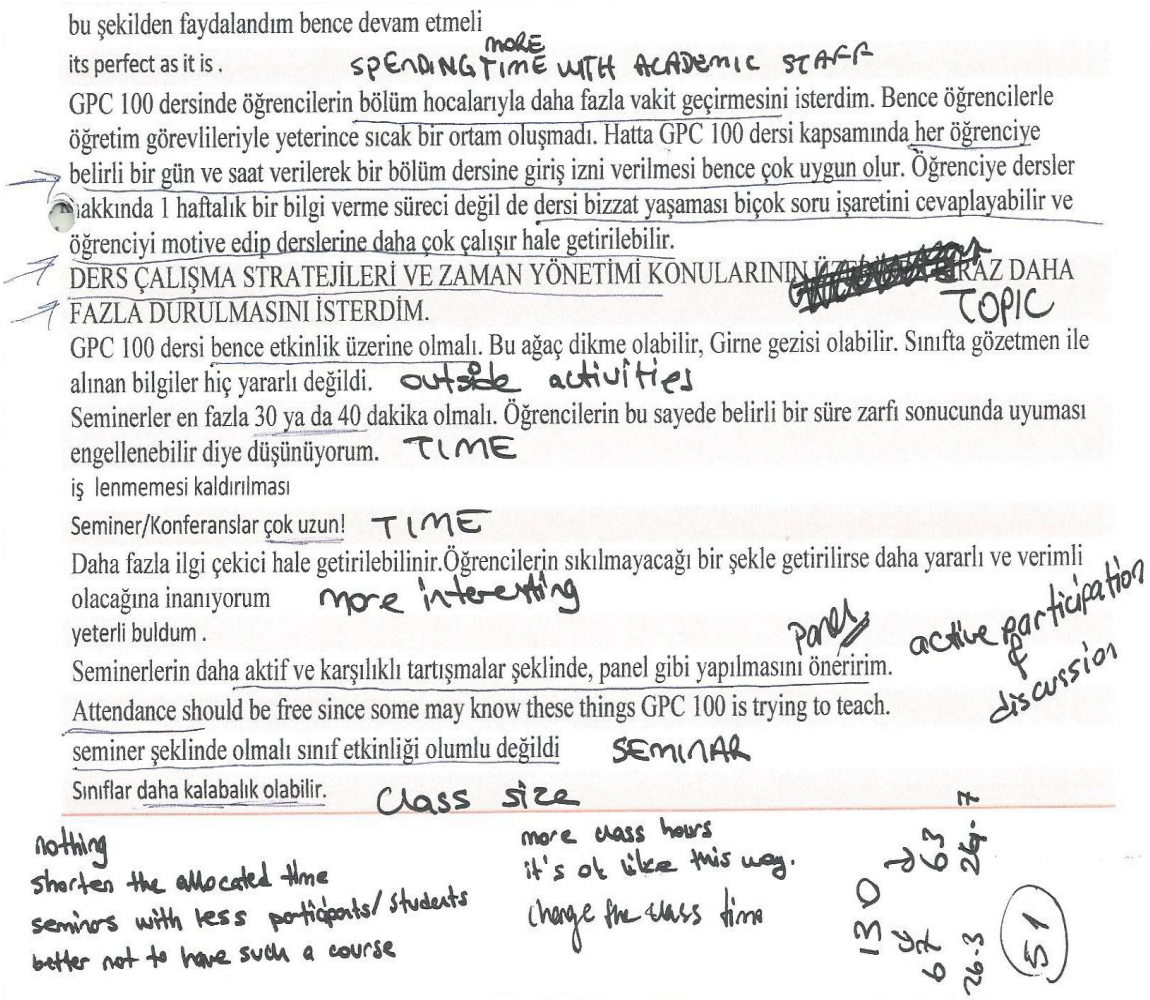
Item 4.1. Opinions and suggestions on the course	
Codes	***f***
Nothing to add	11
Planning (Scheduling)	6
Scheduled at an earlier time	4
Scheduled every two weeks	2
Implementation	6
Attendance should be free	4
Should be offered to problematic students	2
Content	5
Homesickness	2
Learning strategies	1
Prep School System	1
Time management	1
Timing (Decrease allocated class time)	4
It is OK like this	3
No need such a course	3

Item 4.2. Opinions and suggestions on the peer guides	
Codes	***f***
Nothing to add	11
Peer guides' characteristics	10
Sharings of their experiences	6
Easy to communicate with them	4
International student or someone with better English	2

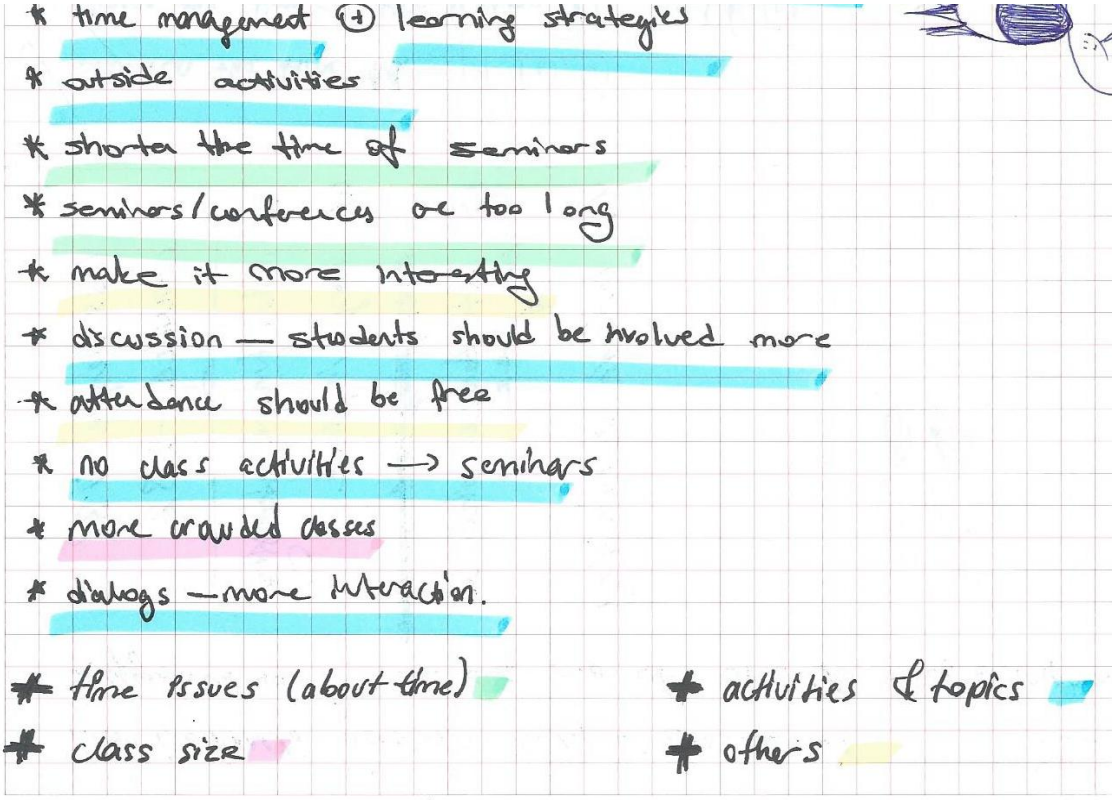
APPENDIX D

SAMPLE CODING FOR QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

C.1. Preliminary Coding (Answers for Questionnaire Item # 2.10)



C.2. Final Coding (Answers for Questionnaire Item # 2.10)



APPENDIX E

BOX PLOTS FOR T-TESTS

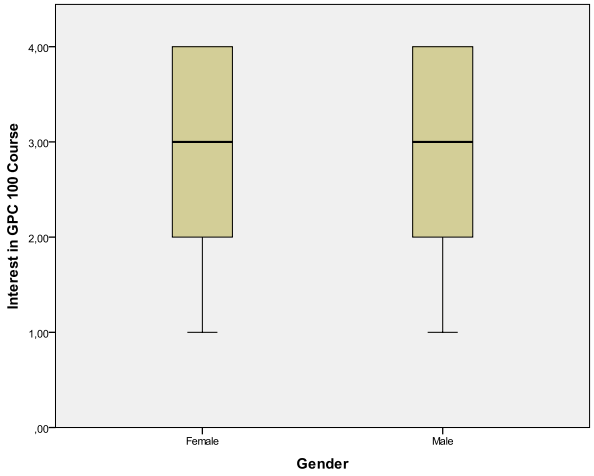


Figure E.1 Gender differences regarding subjects' interest in GPC 100 course

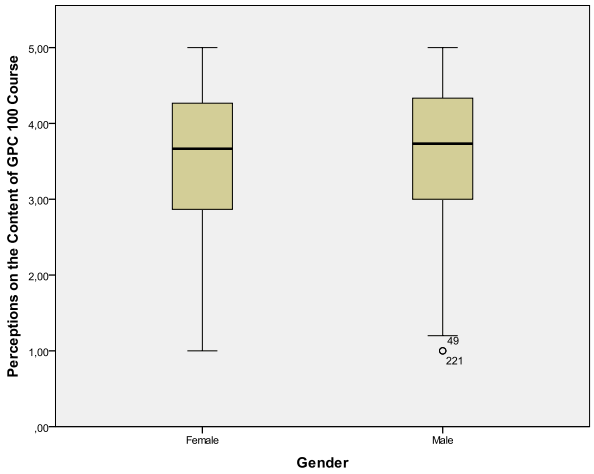


Figure E.2 Gender differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the content of GPC 100 course

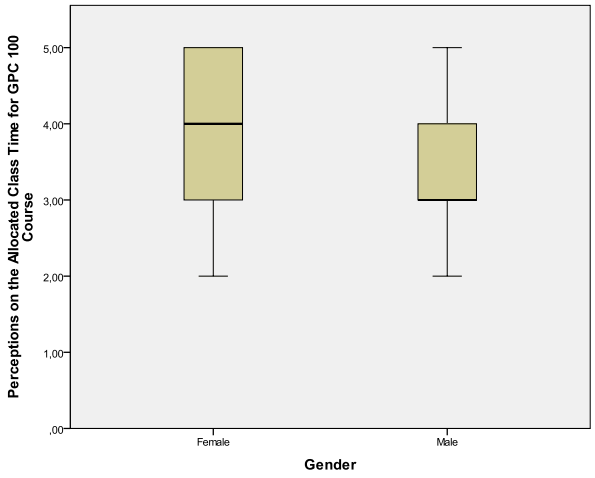


Figure E.3 Gender differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the allocated class time for GPC 100 course

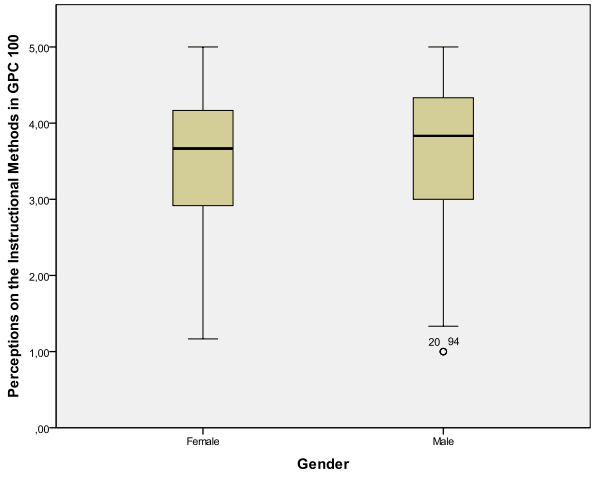


Figure E.4 Gender differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course

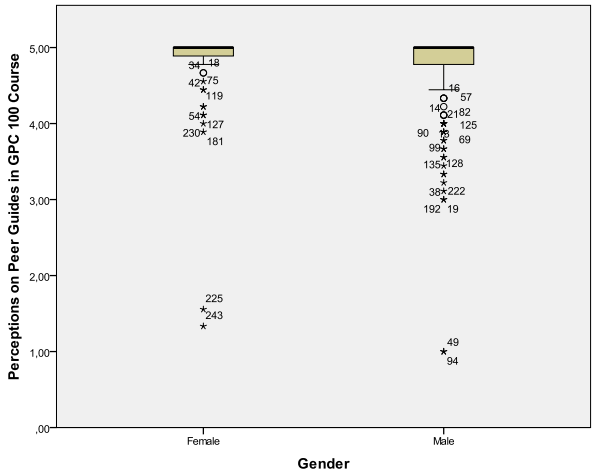


Figure E.5 Gender differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the peer guides assisting in GPC 100 course

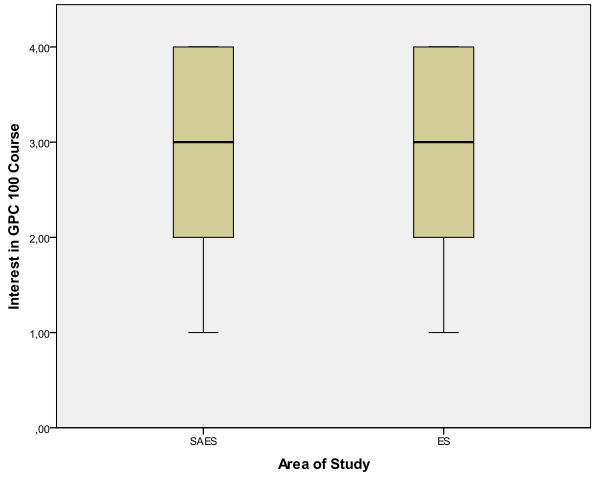


Figure E.6 Area of study differences regarding subjects' interest in GPC 100 course

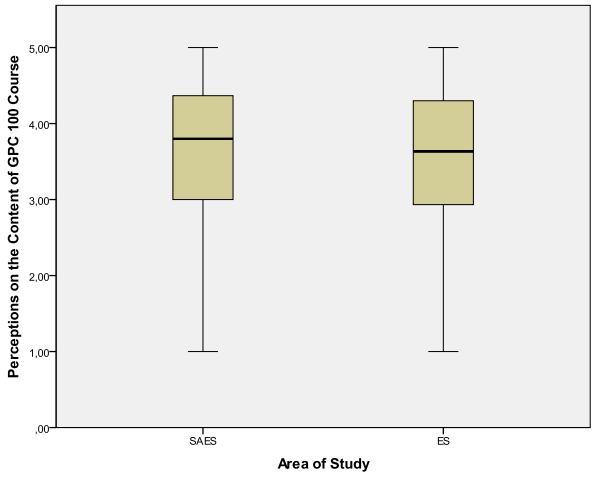


Figure E.7 Area of study differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the content of GPC 100 course

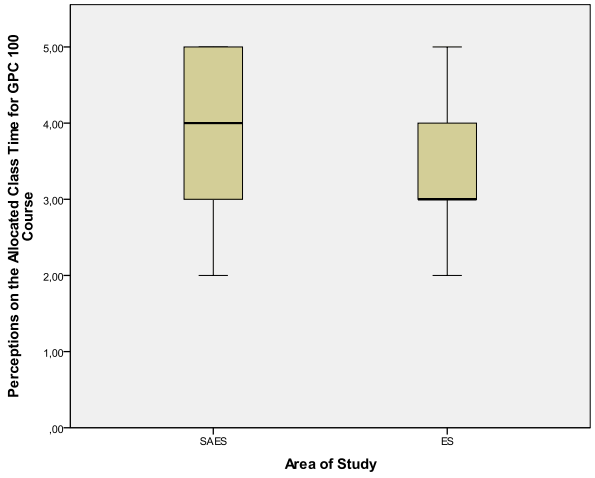


Figure E.8 Area of study differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the allocated class time for GPC 100 course

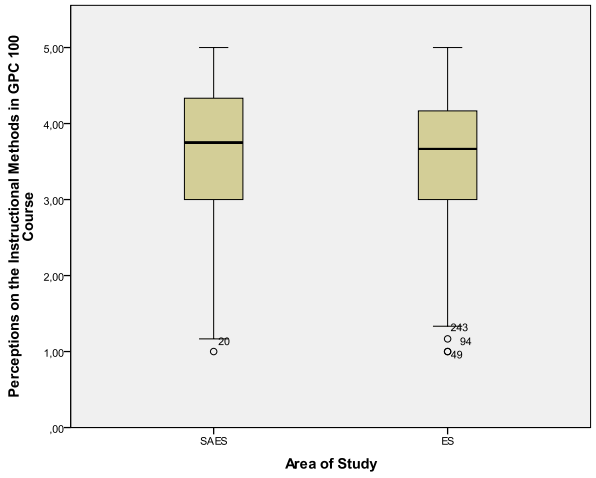


Figure E.9 Area of study differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the instructional methods utilized in GPC 100 course

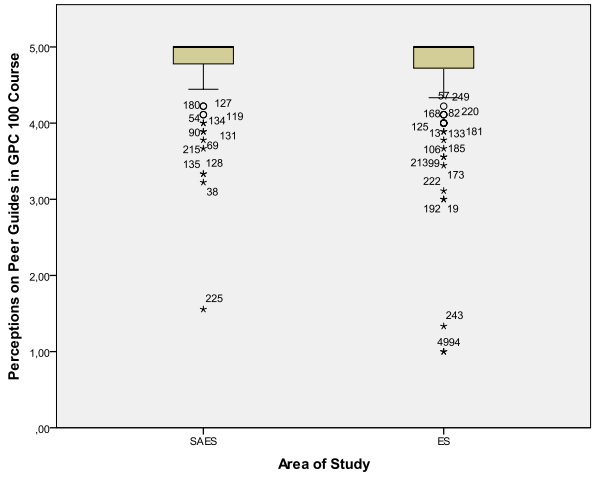


Figure E.10 Area of study differences regarding subjects' perceptions on the peer guides assisting in GPC 100 course

APPENDIX F

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ■

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : KUTLU
Adı : EMİNE
Bölümü : EĞİTİM PROGRAMLARI ve ÖĞRETİM

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON FIRST-YEAR ON-CAMPUS SEMINAR COURSE AT METU-NCC

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ■ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ■
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ :