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Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Graduate Education in Türkiye[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the graduate education of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts (GCA) department from the perspective of students and academicians. A two-stage, qualitative research design was adopted for data collection in this research. In the first stage of the research, official information about GCA master's programs was accessed and reported by scanning secondary sources. In the second stage, interviews were conducted with a total of 45 people, including 27 graduate students studying in GCA departments and 18 academicians working in GCA departments. Descriptive analysis and content analysis were applied to the data obtained from the interviews. In addition, the results of the analysis were compared with the secondary data in the first phase of the research. The results of the research were grouped under eight themes (Application and Admission Requirements, Reasons for Preferring Education, Practical Courses, Quality of Education, Thesis Advisor Determination Process, Expectations, Problems, Gains). One of the striking results of the study was that the interviewees have a positive attitude towards the use of interviews in admission requirements. On the other hand, they also give rise to certain suspicions, such as the possibility of favouritism. Another important issue was the expectation for practical courses. The research identified 'lack of knowledge in the academician's field' and 'problems related to insufficient curriculum content' as the most significant issues, whilst 'academic and analytical skills' and 'research and communication skills' were identified as the most significant gains; these are important areas that require attention.

Keywords: Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Graduate Education, Student, Academician, State Universities, Türkiye.

JEL Codes: A23, I21, I23, I26

[1]This study is based on Udaycan Sütçü's master's thesis entitled "Evaluation of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Master's Degree Programmes in the Perspective of Students and Academics".

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are regarded as the central actors in social, economic, political, legal, and societal development, as well as in enhancing living standards at the international level. (Bayhan & Bayhan, 2025). In this context, it is essential to constantly evaluate education in all disciplines and improve its quality. Although the field of gastronomy has been prominent for many years, it has started to attract great interest in Türkiye in recent years for various reasons. In the last 10-15 years, gastronomy and culinary arts education has gained significant momentum. The lack of trained academicians in the field is emphasized as one of the most important problems in Gastronomy departments, which are usually opened within tourism faculties and whose number exceeds 80. However, academicians with the necessary competence are needed to improve these programs that train food and beverage professionals in the tourism sector. In order to fill this gap, graduate programs have gained momentum and many gastronomy and culinary arts graduate programs have emerged in Türkiye in a short time. There are many uncertainties about the education provided in these programs.

In the studies on Gastronomy and Culinary Arts (GCA) undergraduate education in Türkiye, it can be seen that many topics related to the department have been examined and suggestions have been made regarding the problems identified under these headings. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the newer GCA graduate programs. From this point of view, this study aims to evaluate the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts graduate programs in Türkiye from the perspective of students and academicians. Toward this end, it is aimed to obtain in-depth information about the master's degree education provided in the GCA department, application conditions, the reasons for choosing the program, expectations from the program, problems experienced in the process, thesis supervision, and thesis subject.

2. Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Education in Türkiye

Globally, gastronomy education was first provided through special courses based on cookery. In 1784, professional trainings started in England, in 1820 in America and in 1895 in France with Le Cordon Bleu. Gastronomy education was first offered at Cornell University in 1922. In 1996, master's degree programs were opened at Boston, Adelaide and Bologna Universities, focusing on gastronomy in terms of nutrition and culture, and the doctoral program opened at New York University in the same year continued this development process (Santich, 2004).

There are studies examining the concept of gastronomy and the development of different eating cultures and flavors. Culinary education in Türkiye first started in the 1960s at the non-formal and secondary education level. During this period, education was provided in Anatolian Hotel Management and Tourism Vocational High Schools. While the aforementioned institutions provided education services in secondary education until 2005-2006, after these years, Girls' Vocational High Schools, Vocational Trade High Schools, Multi-Program and Open Education Vocational High Schools started to provide culinary education on the condition of meeting the necessary conditions (Kurnaz, Akyurt Kurnaz & Kılıç, 2014). As of 1980, culinary education has moved to the associate degree level. This education program profile was generally accepted as cookery education and focuses more on the practical part of the kitchen (Görkem & Sevim, 2016). In 2003, gastronomy education moved to the undergraduate level for the first time. Yeditepe University, a foundation university, opened this program. State universities have started to offer this education since 2010 (Ekincek, Özgür Göde, Önçel, Yolal, 2017). In the 2024-2025 academic year, GCA department undergraduate education is given in 114 universities, 37 of which are foundation universities and 77 of which are state universities (YÖK, February 2025). Although 15 years have passed since the beginning of undergraduate gastronomy education in Türkiye, it is seen that more than half of the students are not satisfied with the education they receive (Güdek & Boylu 2017). This negative impression is explained by various reasons such as inadequacy of workshops, equipment and materials, budget problems in material supply, instructor competencies and the fact that they are mainly graduated from other departments (Girgin & Demir 2023, Düzgün, Yılmaz & Olcay 2023). In short, it is seen that the complaints focus on physical capacity and budget problems and academic competencies. At this point, graduate education comes into play. The first GCA master's degree program in Türkiye started at Gazi University in 2018. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the total number of GCA master's degree programs in foundation and public universities reached 42 (Demir 2024, YÖK, December 2024). This exploratory research was needed because there is no research on the rapidly increasing number of graduate education programs in a short period of time. This is because it is possible that an education module that has not yet fully solved the problems of undergraduate education may also have various problems in postgraduate education. On the other hand, expectations and wishes differ when it comes to graduate education. In general, various studies have been conducted on expectations from graduate education. Ottekin Demirbolat (2005) states that student expectations are focused on practice-based, peer-evaluation based, project and group work based, critical learning and analysis based, elective course options, away from classical methods, respect and participation based course

environments. In a study on the evaluation of the service quality of postgraduate education in the UK from the students' perspective, the four main service quality factors most important to students were classified in terms of "academic service", "entertainment (campus facilities, etc.)", "industry links (career opportunities)" and "cost of education" (Angell, Heffernan, & Megicks, 2008). Industry links, in other words career opportunities, are the area where quality is low. In an Egyptian study, the presence of competent academic and administrative staff, campus facilities, prestige of the institution, accessibility of information, as well as factors such as learning environment, study hours and class time were mentioned as other concepts that students pay attention to when measuring service quality (Khalaf & Khourshed 2017). As can be seen, graduate education differs from undergraduate education and expectations also change. These expectations may also differ according to the student's purpose of choosing graduate education.

Although it is assumed in this study that the demand for master's programs is related to the lack of qualified academics as stated in studies on undergraduate education, the reason why graduate education is preferred by students can be explained by different reasons. The reasons for the increase in interest in graduate education in Türkiye in the last 20 years have been identified as job opportunity and economic contribution, individual utilitarianism, personal development, academic career, professional development, opportunity to establish social relationships, gaining social status, and transition to a different sector (Nas, Peyman & Arat 2017). As a result of the research, it will be possible to evaluate the reasons for the preference of GCA graduate education.

3. Method

This research, which has a qualitative design, consists of two stages. In the first stage, an inventory of GCA graduate programs was compiled by reviewing secondary sources. In the second stage, interview technique was used to evaluate GCA graduate education from the perspective of students and academicians. The research questions were formulated based on studies examining graduate education (Dilci, 2019; Serin & Ergin-Kocatürk, 2019; Kurtoğlu Erden & Seferoğlu, 2021). Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were preferred as sampling methods. Semi-structured online and face-to-face interviews were conducted between February 2 and April 20, 2024 with current and former GCA graduate students and with academicians who had participated in GCA graduate education. Within the scope of the research, 26 universities were identified as of the date of the research and the aim was to interview at least one faculty member and one student from each university (this number increased to 31 as of 2025). However, 5 universities did not participate. In total, 45 interviews (27 students, 18 academics) were conducted.

The profiles of students and academics that are likely to enable evaluation are given in Table 1 and Table 2, but the universities are not specified to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Table 1. Participant Information (Student)

Code	Age	Sex	Undergraduate Graduation	Academic Status	Duration (min)
S1	27	M	GCA	Student	19,22
S2	27	M	GCA	Student	35,14
S3	24	M	GCA	Student	31,52
S4	35	F	GCA	Student	13,24
S5	25	F	GCA	Student	23,25
S6	26	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	45,13
S7	25	M	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	29,31
S8	24	F	GCA	Student	16,29
S9	25	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	*
S10	24	F	GCA	Student	21,5
S11	26	M	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	8,11
S12	26	F	GCA	Student	19,32
S13	29	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	21,56
S14	27	M	GCA	Student	18,35
S15	27	M	GCA	Student	18,1

Code	Age	Sex	Undergraduate Graduation	Academic Status	Duration (min)
S16	26	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	33,01
S17	41	F	GCA	Student	25,05
S18	24	F	GCA	Student	23,21
S19	29	M	GCA	Student	35,42
S20	23	M	GCA	Student	34,22
S21	24	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	22,33
S22	27	M	GCA	Student	29,34
S23	23	F	GCA	Student	17,29
S24	32	F	GCA	Student	28,46
S25	25	F	GCA	Student, Research Assistant	37,31
S26	25	F	GCA	Student	19,54
S27	33	F	Other	Student	15,5

** Due to a technical failure, the entire conversation couldn't be recorded.*

Since the interviews were conducted with two different participant groups, they are presented in two different tables. Among these interviews, responses from six participants were collected in written format due to technical problems. Among the students, only one person received out-of-field education. The number of those who served in the academic staff with student status is eight. In the profile of the academics participating in the study, senior academics and administrators were deliberately selected due to the potential to obtain more detailed information.

After ethics committee approval, audio and video recordings were taken on a voluntary basis while collecting data. A series of measures were taken to ensure validity and reliability in the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013; Creswell, 2003). Audio and video recordings were taken during the interviews and the recordings were backed up. The data obtained as a result of the interviews were analyzed by three different people, and then common themes were identified by bringing the analyses together. While creating the transcripts after the interview, irrelevant discourses were reviewed and eliminated. The fact that the researcher who collected the data spent a long time in the field and evaluated the bias with researcher notes was also carried out in terms of validity. Descriptive analysis and content analysis methods were used to analyze the data.

Table 2. Participant Information (Academician)

Code	Sex	Academic Status	Management Status	Duration (min)
A1	M	Associate Professor	None	33.15
A2	M	Associate Professor	Department Head	13.42
A3	M	Associate Professor	Deputy Department Head	Written
A4	M	Associate Professor	Department Head	Written
A5	M	Doctor Faculty Member	None	15.56
A6	F	Professor	Department Head	Written
A7	M	Associate Professor	Deputy Department Head	Written
A8	M	Associate Professor	Department Head	42.28
A9	F	Professor	Department Head	43.13
A10	F	Professor	Department Head	36.31
A11	M	Associate Professor	Department Head	Written
A12	M	Professor	None	35.51
A13	F	Doctor Faculty Member	None	30.35

Code	Sex	Academic Status	Management Status	Duration (min)
A14	F	Professor	Department Head	33.44
A15	F	Associate Professor	None	37.00
A16	M	Associate Professor	None	24.33
A17	M	Associate Professor	None	Written
A18	F	Doctor Faculty Member	None	36.24

3.1. Ethical Considerations

Approval from the ethics committee at Anadolu University was received (dated 04.12.2023 and numbered 650306). Additionally, participants were informed before the interview and consent was obtained.

3.2. Researcher Note

This study was conducted by researchers who have received GCA postgraduate education and who are teaching in the field. The researchers decided on such a research topic as a result of their individual observations in the natural environment in which they are located, and they show a certain bias in different directions due to their natural position. In order to overcome this bias, the research design was examined from three perspectives: secondary source review, academician opinion and student opinion. In addition, triangulation method was applied in the analysis of the data and two different analysis techniques were used.

4. Results

Research findings are reported in two sections. In the first section, the data obtained from the secondary literature review are presented. In the second part, the themes generated in line with the information obtained from the interviews are presented.

4.1. Secondary Source Review Findings

Secondary source scanning was carried out on the official websites of the universities, on the official information package (Bologna) systems of the universities and on the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) database. The information obtained as a result of this scanning was compiled into a table.

Table 3 presents the application and admission requirements of 26 universities offering master's degrees in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts and the years in which they started education. In 10 of these universities, no information on the year of the start of education was found as a result of secondary source search. According to this table, all of the universities in the list have the requirement of ALES exam for students. The base scores required in this exam vary between 55 and 65. In addition, 16 of the universities do not require a foreign language score, while 10 of them require one. It is observed that 7 of the universities do not require a graduation score. While the remaining 19 universities require a graduation score, 2 of them have specifically declared a base score. Another parameter is the department of the undergraduate degree of the student to be admitted to the master's program. In this context, it is seen that 18 universities accept students regardless of department. It is seen that three universities accept only Gastronomy and Culinary Arts department graduates, that is, graduates within the field, while two universities accept students from all departments in the Faculty of Tourism. One university accepts students only from the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts and Food and Beverage Services departments, and one university accepts students from the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts department and other departments considered equivalent. The last column of Table 3 includes the special exam parameter for admission, and it is understood that 10 universities do not conduct any special exam, five universities conduct both written and oral special exams, and 10 universities conduct only written exams. The findings indicate that universities are autonomous and consider different criteria for admission to graduate education, except for the minimum requirements of the Council of Higher Education.

The next question in the secondary literature review was whether the academicians, which also constitute the starting point of the research, have received education in the field of gastronomy. According to the information given in Table 4, it is seen that only 11 of the 129 academic staff have graduated from the field of GCA. This finding confirms the criticisms brought to undergraduate education.

In order to evaluate and interpret the interviews conducted in the second stage of the research more accurately, the graduate course programs were examined in this section. Elective courses and compulsory courses in graduate education were identified. Since the compulsory courses are the same in all universities, only elective courses are grouped under categories and given in Table 5. In addition, "Academic Gain" in the categories given below was used to classify the courses in graduate education that are

not related to the gastronomy department but rather aimed at achieving academic gains.

Table 5 shows the numerical distribution of elective courses in the curricula according to 8 main categories. This shows in which category each university offers more elective course alternatives. Here again, it is noticeable that there are imbalances in course options among universities. The lack of elective courses emphasized in Ottekin Demirbolat's (2005) study is also seen in the table. The low number of courses on gastronomy only in some universities, the scarcity of field experts in the literature and the presence of academics with different competencies support the findings of Khalaf & Khourshed (2017).

4.2. Interview Findings

The data obtained from the participants were analyzed by descriptive analysis and content analysis method and 8 themes were identified. The themes and codes were explained and stated under each theme heading and evaluations were made by including the quotations obtained from the participants about each code. The determined themes are respectively "application and admission requirements, reasons for preferring education, practical courses, quality of education, thesis advisor determination process, expectations, problems, gains". At this point, certain sub-themes were identified for each theme. The sub-themes determined for the theme of application and admission requirements are as follows: "Interview, written science exam, foreign language, recruitment outside the field". These sub-themes are evaluated one by one in the rest of the study.

4.2.1. Application and admission requirements

Although the application and admission requirements for master's education are similar to other master's departments at certain points, there may be different practices for the relevant department. Since universities in Türkiye are affiliated to a central institution, some parameters have been standardized and applied in every department. In this context, the application and admission requirements for the master's degree in GCA are evaluated under this heading.

Interview Practice: One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was related to the interview practice. While it was determined that the majority of the opinions regarding the interview practice were negative, positive opinions were also received. In line with the data obtained from the interviews, it is understood that there is not a complete consensus about the interview practice. On the other hand, it can be understood that there is a consensus on the idea that the interview practice will cause some suspicions like favoritism and nepotism. Again, when the data obtained is analyzed, it is anticipated that a consensus can be reached on the implementation of the interview practice if some conditions related to the interview practice are met. However, when the findings obtained during the secondary source review are examined, it is understood that only six universities out of 26 universities that provide graduate education in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts department use the interview practice.

Written Science Examination Practice: Another theme that emerged as a result of the interviews was related to the written science exam. While it was determined that the majority of the opinions regarding the written science exam were positive, negative opinions were also received. In line with the data obtained from the interviews, it can be understood that there is a consensus about the written science exam practice for the realization of this practice. However, based on the findings obtained during the secondary literature review, it is understood that 15 universities out of 26 universities offering master's degrees in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts use the written science exam practice. As a result of the content analysis, the number of students who stated that they wanted an interview was six, the number of students who stated that they did not want an interview was 12, and the number of students who stated that they wanted both applications was nine. As a result of the content analysis, it was understood that academics abstained.

Table 3. Universities' Start Years and Application and Admission Requirements

University	Academic Year	ALES[1]	YDS[2]	Undergraduate GPA	Undergraduate Field	Exam Format
Necmettin Erbakan	2016-2017	65	None	Not Required	GCA	Written
Sivas Cumhuriyet	2021-2022	55	None	Required, 55	Mixed	Written, Oral
Balıkesir	2016-2017	60	40	Required	Mixed	Written
Kütahya Dumlupınar	2021-2022	55	None	Not Required	Mixed	None
Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler	None	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written
Selçuk	None	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written

University	Academic Year	ALES[1]	YDS[2]	Undergraduate GPA	Undergraduate Field	Exam Format
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli	2018-2019	60	None	Required, 70	GCA	None
Çanakkale 18 Mart	2019-2020	55	40	Not Required	Tourism	None
Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey	None	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written
Pamukkale	None	55	None	Not Required	GCA and Equivalent	None
Anadolu	None	55	55	Required	Mixed	None
Mehmet Akif Ersoy	2020-2021	55	Present	Required	Mixed	None
Adnan Menderes	None	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written
Gaziantep	2011-2012	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written, Oral
Kocaeli	None	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written
Dokuz Eylül	2018-2019	55	50	Required	Mixed	None
Akdeniz	None	55	None	Not Required	Mixed	Written
Afyon Kocatepe	2019-2020	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written
İzmir Katip Çelebi	2021-2022	60	None	Required	GCA and Equivalent	Written, Oral
Mersin	2015-2016	55	None	Required	Mixed	Written, Oral
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal	None	55	Present	Required	Mixed	Written
Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat	2021-2022	55	Present	Required	GCA, Tourism	Written, Oral
Mardin Artuklu	2019-2020	55	None	Required	Mixed	None
Eskişehir Osmangazi	2019-2020	55	55	Required	GCA	None
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli	2017-2018	50	50	Not Required	Mixed	None
Atatürk	None	55	None	Not Required	*	*

(October, 2023)
**No data was found.*
GCA: Gastronomy and Culinary Arts
[1]ALES: Minimum score required from the Academic Personnel and Graduate Education Entrance Examination
[2]YDS: Minimum Score Requirement from Foreign Language Exam

Foreign Language Requirement: When the quotations about the foreign language requirement as a condition of admission and the data obtained from the interviews are examined, it is understood that there is a consensus on the foreign language requirement. In addition, when we look at the data obtained as a result of the secondary source review, it can be seen that only 10 out of 26 universities require a foreign language requirement. At this point, A8 said the following about the foreign language requirement: "*We do not set a foreign language requirement. We tried to put a foreign language requirement twice, and in both of those times, only one person could apply, and that was in September. Not in the interim period, but at the end of summer, like August, when normal recruitment takes place. This led to a situation where we would be left behind from graduate education after a certain point, so we completely removed the foreign language requirement.*" When we look at this statement, it is understood that although it is desired to have a foreign language requirement in the interviews, this requirement may make it difficult for students to be accepted to the department during the transition to graduate education. It appears that students gravitate towards universities that do not require a foreign language requirement or require it as an option, and that the demandability of universities that require a foreign language requirement decreases. In the content analysis, 24 of the students stated that they did not require a foreign language, which supports this finding. This situation explains the fact that more than half of the universities that offer master's degrees in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts do not require a language requirement.

Accepting Out-of-Field Students: While it was determined that the majority of the opinions regarding the admission of out-of-field students were negative, positive opinions were also received. At this point, differences were found in the opinions of academics and students. While academics approached the admission of out-of-field students positively at a certain level, the attitude of the students was negative. At this point, it should not be forgotten that almost all of the students interviewed were in the

field. When we look at the data obtained as a result of the secondary source review, it is understood that 18 of the universities that provide master's degree education in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts accept students from different departments. Therefore, it is seen that the decision makers in this regard are academicians. In this context, it can be understood that academics have a positive approach to accepting students from different departments.

4.2.2. Reasons for preferring education

Another theme that emerged as a result of the interviews was related to the reasons for preference. When the reasons for preference are examined, it is understood that the vast majority prefer academic career as predicted before. 23 students stated the reason for preference as academic career. Academic career is one of the reasons for preference stated by Nas, Peyman and Arat (2017), but it is noteworthy that the rate is so high. In addition, the explanations made by academics support the reason stated by the students. In addition, reasons such as the expectation of a better status and salary, not wanting to work in the private sector, personal development, and promotion in the profession were also listed. Academics also made explanations in parallel with the views of the students. In this context, it can be said that postgraduate education in gastronomy and culinary arts is preferred for academician candidates, not for those actively working in the sector. Although it is possible to earn high salaries by working in the gastronomy sector in Türkiye, most employees are underpaid. On the other hand, the difficulty of working conditions can be a deterrent. When we look at the course groups given in secondary sources, it can be said that there are courses far from sectoral knowledge and practice. At this point, the issue of practical courses has also come to the fore.

4.2.3. Practical courses

While students are more likely to say that there should be practicum courses (11 students), academics are more likely to oppose this idea (13 academics). For example, A1 said, "*I don't think it should be. Because, as I said, people outside the field can also come to master's programs in many universities. People in different professions, different age groups can also come. According to which level will you do the practice course?*". The majority of academics expressed the opinion that there should not be a practice course in postgraduate education because it is perceived as more sector-oriented. Students approached the issue from a different perspective. S7 stated "*Kitchen laboratory. Kitchen applications. I think a graduate student should not only write articles but also enter the kitchen and work to extract new data. This would increase the variety of products a lot.*" The participant drew attention to the fact that practical applications can also be research and science centered.

4.2.4. Quality of education

When the opinions about the quality of the graduate education in the Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts were examined, it was seen that the students were generally satisfied. While 17 students stated that they were satisfied, 7 students stated that they were not satisfied. Especially the teaching process was criticized for dissatisfaction. While S2 drew attention to the excess of homework, he said, *"Professors see the student as if he is Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan [a prolific Turkish writer]. Like a writing machine. In this context, it often creates problems. Because it is like this, a person cannot be inspired all the time."* Especially from the perspective of students, it can be seen that the quality of education is evaluated based on more subjective reasons, while from the perspective of academics, it is understood that the quality of education is handled from a more rational point of view. Nevertheless, positive opinions are more common. S3 expresses the quality of the university as a facilitator in achieving the career he wants, which is in line with Angell, Heffernan and Megicks' (2008) inference of career opportunities. Academics, on the other hand, mentioned issues such as "*academic service*", "*entertainment, campus facilities, and education costs*" in the same study. Academics associated the quality of education and the problems related to quality with qualitative and quantitative reasons such as the newness of the department, physical deficiencies, and lack of academicians.

Table 4. Number of Academic Staff of Universities

University	Professor	Associate Professor	Doctor Faculty Member	GCA Graduate[1]
Necmettin Erbakan	1	5	0	0
Sivas Cumhuriyet	1	4	2	0
Balıkesir	4	2	3	0
Kütahya Dumlupınar	0	2	2	1
Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler	3	2	0	0

University	Professor	Associate Professor	Doctor Faculty Member	GCA Graduate[1]
Selçuk	1	2	1	0
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli	2	3	0	1
Çanakkale 18 Mart	1	2	1	0
Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey	1	0	3	0
Pamukkale	1	1	1	0
Anadolu	2	2	4	0
Mehmet Akif Ersoy	0	3	2	2
Gaziantep	1	2	5	1
Kocaeli	0	2	2	0
Dokuz Eylül	1	1	1	0
Akdeniz	1	1	2	1
Afyon Kocatepe	1	2	2	0
İzmir Katip Çelebi	3	1	2	0
Mersin	*	*	*	*
Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal	0	2	2	2
Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat	0	4	1	0
Mardin Artuklu	1	1	3	2
Eskişehir Osmangazi	2	1	4	1
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli	3	3	2	0
Atatürk	1	2	3	0

(October, 2023)
**Data not available*
[1]: The graduation parameter of the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts department is considered to cover all levels of higher education.

4.2.5. Thesis advisor determination process

The choice of thesis advisor, which is another important issue in graduate education, is the other question of the research. When the quotations regarding the process of determining the thesis topic and thesis advisor in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts department graduate education and the data obtained from the interviews are evaluated, it can be seen that this process is standardized at a certain level among universities. In the data obtained from the interviews, it can be understood that the opinions of the students converge on the view that students should determine the thesis advisor and thesis topic. It was stated that the process of determining the advisor should take place after the education period. There are differences in practice. In some universities, the thesis advisor can be assigned immediately after the student enrolls. In some of them, the appointment is made after the student takes a semester course. In Türkiye, as stated in Article 8 of the regulation published in the official gazette in 2016 by the Council of Higher Education, *"In the master's program with thesis, the head of the department of the institute recommends a thesis advisor for each student from the staff of his/her own university to the institute until the end of the first semester at the latest; and the thesis topic determined by the student together with the advisor to the institute until the end of the second semester at the latest."* (Official Gazette, Issue 29690, April 20, 2016). During the period given for the student to determine the topic together with the advisor, there are "seminar" courses for the student and the advisor to meet regularly, to make preliminary studies on the thesis topic and to prepare for the thesis topic. In this context, in many universities, advisor appointments are made in the interim period. Based on this regulation, it is not possible for students to request that the thesis advisor be selected at the end of the first year. Academics stated that thesis advisors can be easily changed if deemed necessary.

4.2.6. Expectations

Especially from the student interviews, it can be interpreted that the expectations from the departments are high. Accordingly, various issues where expectations were or were not met were emphasized. For example, S8 stated, *"I can say that my expectations have actually been met so far. Because I had a really good exchange of ideas with my professors. Apart from that, my expectations were in the following direction. How to write an academic study? First of all, I think it is expected to give a solid foundation for this. Then, while this study is being carried out, there may be expectations to provide information on techniques and programs that will make the research both more efficient and facilitate the work of the researcher. Because the process of producing a scientific study is a difficult and long process. Apart from that, I had expectations that the individual would be prepared for this in this master's degree process with an education that would contribute to the academy and become a self-confident scientist. It is going well for the time being."* S1, on the other hand, stated that *"I could have worked abroad, in Qatar, Dubai, Arab countries with high salaries, I could have earned money. But I don't do that. I keep a house here, I pay rent, I pay bills. I do all of this with the aim of learning something. As a student, I do everything that falls on me. I do the preparation. While I am waiting for them to teach me something, the fact that they do nothing disappoints me in general."* He emphasized his financial losses and stated that his expectations were not met.

4.2.7. Problems

In order to improve GCA graduate programs, it is important to identify the problems correctly. At this point, the problems in education were categorized and grouped under themes.

As seen in Table 6, two problems stand out in GCA graduate education: academic qualifications and educational content. The most emphasized problem by both students and academics was related to qualifications of academic staff. The most emphasized issue is that GCA is new and therefore academics who have not received GCA education are providing instruction. A5's statements about the problems related to graduate education are as follows: "*I have been an academician for 9.5 years. In other words, I am actually one of the new academics in this field, in the field of gastronomy. But even in our time, there was no gastronomy department, there was tourism. We were always divided into branches: accommodation, travel, food and beverage back then. So I think we are not very conscious in terms of awareness. That's why the gastronomy departments in the existing tourism faculties are trying to hold on somehow, but I think no faculty, no department is doing something perfectly right now.*" Problems related to the content of education are in a sense related to the quality of academics. In departments, academics generally teach courses that are appropriate for their field of study. This suggestion stated by students and academics also coincides with the course classifications in the secondary source survey. Physical problems such as lack of a library, lack of a special classroom for graduate students, or communication problems such as not being able to reach an advisor were less frequently mentioned.

When the data obtained from the interviews are analyzed, the problems stated by the students are shaped on the basis of academics, while the problems stated by academics are understood as more inclusive systemic problems. Based on the data obtained, the problems related to graduate education were categorized.

4.2.8. Gains

When the quotations regarding the outcomes of the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts master's degree education and the data obtained from the interviews are evaluated, it is seen that the outcomes are varied in nature and can be grouped under some titles. In addition, in the light of the data obtained from the interviews, it is understood that many students gave positive feedback on the educational outcomes. Within the framework of the data obtained, the achievements obtained from master's degree education are classified under five different headings.

Table 5. Distribution of Elective Courses of Universities by Categories

University	Food	Tourism	Business	Gastronomy	Marketing	Economics	Academic Achievement	Nutrition
Necmettin Erbakan	7	2	3	5	0	0	0	0
Sivas Cumhuriyet	1	2	1	5	1	0	1	1
Balıkesir	0	0	3	8	1	1	2	1
Dumlupınar	4	1	6	11	1	2	0	0
Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

University	Food	Tourism	Business	Gastronomy	Marketing	Economics	Academic Achievement	Nutrition
Selçuk	2	7	6	8	1	0	0	0
Hacı Bektaş Veli	0	1	3	5	0	0	1	0
Çanakkale 18 Mart	1	2	2	9	0	1	0	0
Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey	5	2	8	20	0	0	0	2
Pamukkale	1	0	3	6	0	0	0	1
Anadolu	1	3	1	12	1	0	0	0
Mehmet Akif Ersoy	1	1	2	10	1	0	1	0
Adnan Menderes	0	0	6	11	1	0	0	0
Gaziantep	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kocaeli	4	0	1	11	0	0	0	1
Dokuz Eylül	1	0	0	6	0	1	0	0
Akdeniz	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	0
Kocatepe	3	1	5	16	1	1	0	1
Katip Çelebi	2	0	3	19	1	0	1	0
Mersin	5	2	3	8	1	0	3	1
Abant İzzet Baysal	5	1	1	17	2	1	1	1
Alaaddin Keykubat	1	0	2	12	0	1	0	1
Mardin Artuklu	2	0	3	8	1	0	2	1
Osmangazi	2	0	5	7	1	3	1	0
Hacı Bayram Veli	0	1	6	12	0	0	0	0
Atatürk	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

(October, 2023)
**No data available*

Despite the many criticisms mentioned in the other themes and the issues identified as problems, the students were very positive about the academic achievements and the development of their analytical skills. Improving themselves in research and communication skills was another achievement emphasized by the students. Academics also mentioned the gains in terms of gaining scientific expertise, professional and multidisciplinary perspective.

Table 6. Problems Related to Graduate Education in the Department of GCA

Issues	Quotes	Frequency of Occurrence
Lack of Knowledge in the Academician's Field	A16, S13, S18, A8, A9, A10, A12, A16, A17, A18, S1, S6, S7, S10, S16, S18, S24	17
Problems Related to Insufficient Curriculum Content	A13, A15, S7, A11, A13, A17, S9, S11, S20, S21, S24, S27	12
Lack of Resources and Physical Facilities	S2, S3, S5, S17, S8, S16	6
Communication and Consultancy Problems	S5, S12, S17, A6, S2, S4	6
Lack of Experience and Awareness in Academicians	A5, A16, A2, A4, A15	5
Educational Environment and Classroom Capacity	S21, A14, S1	3

Issues	Quotes	Frequency of Occurrence
Multidisciplinary Approach and Adaptation Issues	A18, A12, A16	3
Academic and Administrative Problems	A14, S26	2

Table 7. Gains Related to the Master's Degree in GCA

Achievements	Quotes	Frequency of Occurrence
Academic and Analytical Skills	A15, S3, A2, A3, A7, A11, A14, S6, S7, S9, S10, S11, S13, S16, S21, S23	16
Research and Communication Skills	S5, S20, A10, A13, A16, S3, S9, S14, S20, S21, S23, S25, S26, S19	14
Expertise and Professionalism	A5, A13, A3, A15, A18, S12, S18, S24, S25	9
Personal Development and Self-Confidence	S8, S11, A15, S4, S17, S24, S26, S27, S19	9
Multidisciplinary Perspective and Applied Knowledge	A13, A5	2

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The GCA departments in Türkiye are still relatively new. For this reason, it is very difficult to talk about a certain standard among universities in terms of its foundations, objectives and methods. However, the high interest in the department and the increase in quotas every year have created a need for GCA graduate academicians in the department. Consequently, this demand triggered the start of GCA graduate education programs. It is necessary to supply departments in order to meet the demand. Conversely, offering master's and doctoral programs in a field that still faces unresolved challenges at the undergraduate level raises concerns regarding education quality. With this study, an exploratory examination of gastronomy and culinary arts postgraduate education has been carried out, providing a comprehensive evaluation of many parameters related to education.

It is seen that some of the themes that emerged as a result of the research are concepts that are generally encountered in graduate education. For example, the parameter of thesis advisor and thesis topic is a common topic for many departments. In addition, topics such as the reasons for choosing education, expectations and practical courses differed in gastronomy. Considering all these, it can be said that the problems and achievements related to education are largely tied to the qualifications of departmental academic staff. It is thought that the continuous renewal of the staff can minimize individual-based problems. However, the socio-economic structure of Türkiye and the fact that the private sector has not yet reached the desired level of qualification cause graduate students to prefer education to escape from the private sector. In addition, the desire to have a regular job with high income can also be effective in students' preferences. This situation results in the desire to do science being put on the back burner. It is anticipated that this may decrease the quality of academic staff. In the interviews, it was clearly stated by many academics that there is a decline in the profile of students applying for graduate education. If the qualifications for admission are met, it is usual for students from outside the field to receive master's education in the department. However, the fact that GCA departments are still very new, the small number of academicians who hold GCA degrees and the fact that graduates from various fields are still being recruited is noteworthy. However, the evaluations of GCA graduate education by both academics and students have been generally positive.

The most important achievement of the research was that almost all of the interviewees evaluated the subject together with its positive and negative aspects. Receiving answers with high self-criticism content from both academics and students strengthened the belief that more accurate results were reached in the research. Problems can be addressed with easy-to-implement suggestions. Some of these suggestions may include organizing the content of education in line with research, prioritizing in-field students in the recruitment of academic staff, adding a scientific-based practice course to the elective course pool, and establishing a regular and effective communication network. The improvements to be made will also contribute to a more professionalized education system in the field of tourism. When the research results are generally evaluated, the study contributes to the field by providing recommendations on how postgraduate gastronomy education should ideally be structured. In practice, the study

identified shortcomings in the education system and developed recommendations for addressing them.

Ethical Approval

Ethics committee approval was received from the Ethic Committee of Anadolu University (Decision No: 650306).

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Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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