

25 Elul, 5772
September 12, 2012

To:
Ms. Yael Elbocher
Coordinator for QA
Quality Assessment Division (QAD)
Council for Higher Education
Jerusalem

**Response to the report of to the CHE Evaluation Committee for
Sociology and Anthropology Studies at Bar-Ilan University**

Dear Ms. Yael Elbocher,

Enclosed please find our response to the report by the Committee for the Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Study Programs regarding the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar Ilan University (August 2012).

The Committee based its report on the initial self-evaluation document (Quality Evaluation Report) that the department prepared in December 2010 and on a supplementary document to update the material that was submitted in April 2012. In addition, the Committee conducted an on-site visit on May 6, 2012. Members of the Committee met with university officials, department members, students and graduates.

At the outset we wish to commend and thank the members of the Committee for a very thorough analysis of the Department and of our strengths and our weaknesses. We appreciate their time and effort, and we believe that the Committee has provided us with a very insightful and carefully thought out report. We ourselves found the self-evaluation process to be very beneficial and enlightening, as we prepared the self-evaluation document and discussed the issues about which we were asked to report. Indeed it is easily seen that the Committee cited the department positively for recognizing where they stand and what they need to do to further achieve their goals of providing a first rate level of higher education in sociology and anthropology.

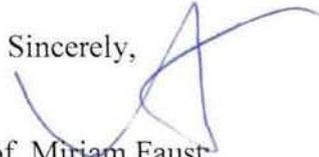
The Department was asked to respond to the report at this stage by noting only those points and facts that are incorrect. It is to the credit of the Committee that we feel that the report generally reflects the department's situation, and we have only some relatively minor comments.

1. The report states on p. 6 that the department feels forced by the university to lower their admission standards in order to maintain a high intake of students. This is also related to recommendation number 4 on page 13—that the Department should set the criteria for enrollment. While we do feel pressured to ensure that our enrollment level is high, in fact, the chair has no complaint to the university about a unilateral establishment of admission requirements. The Rector has made it clear in meetings that he has held with all Department chairs that he supports higher standards in general and does not support lowering standards just to ensure more students. The Department in fact raised the standards for the undergraduate program quite recently in order to ensure a higher level of students, even at the expense of admitting fewer students. In any case, the fact is that the requirements are determined by the Department in conjunction with the university and not by the university alone.

2. The report states on page 7 (last paragraph) that the "new MA program in organizational counseling has no pretense of being an academic undertaking..." The chair's response to this comment is: "I must say (with a bit of a smile) that at the very least it must be admitted that we do make a pretense. More seriously, we have worked very hard to create a program that combines applied skills with an academic orientation that is very much grounded in sociology. It is for this reason that we employ research oriented lecturers who have significant academic achievements to their credit. In their lectures they constantly seek to have their students think about the organizational milieu from a sociological perspective. For example, our faculty members employ the work of theoreticians like Giddens and Bourdieu to think about problem solving and interventions in organizations, but this is just one example of many. The very important practicum that is a required course is geared to having students analyze and develop theories from their data—it is not simply an applied "learn how to" course. All this is in addition to the course on sociological theories and the course on the sociological analysis of Israeli society. We can understand an evaluation by an external Committee (that is not constrained by the need to manage a program within the number of credits required for a degree at our university) for a need to do even more, but we feel that recognition should be given to what we are doing considering the scope of the program".

Aside from these comments, I would add that we look forward to working with the department as well as with university officials to address the substantive issues and recommendations raised in the report.

We thank the CHE committee for helpful recommendations and hope to continue to improve the quality of the Department.

Sincerely,

Prof. Miriam Faust
Vice Rector
In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:
Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector
Prof. Zemira Mevarech, Dean, Faculty of Social Studies
Prof. Ephraim Tabory, Head, Department of sociology and anthropology