

Hebrew University

The Department Psychology at Hebrew University is to be commended for the direct responses to the 2009 recommendations and suggestions of the committee appointed by the Council for Higher Education to evaluate the department, and for actions taken to implement some of the recommendations. The committee's aim was to offer a sincere attempt to support and improve a thriving department, and in this spirit, made a number of recommendations that have been addressed by concrete changes or by concerted deliberation about how to do so. We recognize that a number of the recommendations made also require resources or regulatory clarifications beyond the school's control.

Overall, the committee offered strong support for the department's plan to move to the Givat Ram campus from Mount Scopus and to be considered a life science, and recommended that these plans be implemented. The department indicates that the university has approved the move, a building has been allocated to the department, and an implementation committee appointed to plan the move. That committee has submitted its report and it is being reviewed and debated. Hence, this process is proceeding apace.

A. Faculty and Faculty Hires

The committee recommended that new faculty hires be made, two in clinical psychology and one in cognitive development. The department indicates it has in fact made a faculty hire in clinical psychology and has made another in neurocognitive psychology. It has also successfully recruited a new faculty member in developmental psychology.

B. The BA Program

1. *The committee recommended that the department work to find a way to increase students experience in writing, thinking critically and speaking about class material by including exercise (discussion) sections in its large core courses.* The department indicates full agreement with the recommendation but budgetary constraints have slowed progress.

2. *The committee also recommended that the department establish a mechanism to ensure course sequencing such that advanced courses are more challenging than introductory ones,* and the department indicates that this has been implemented and is monitored by the Teaching committee.

3. *Based on student concerns, the committee also recommended that the department establish a course in introductory psychology covering the discipline as a whole so that students better understand the sweep of the field early on, can refine their interests and can make more informed choices about subsequent coursework and potential interest in pursuing graduate work.* The department indicates that recent faculty losses have prevented implementation.

4. *Also based on student concerns, the committee recommended that a system for advising undergraduates be established focused both on program offerings and possibilities for advanced study and career paths available.* The department indicates that

it now better disseminates information about the department to its BA students but that a system for advising students has not been implemented.

C. The MA Program

The committee agreed with the department's decision to keep the number of MA students admitted to the department small to ensure adequate supervision and training, and the department did not comment further on this in the report.

1. *The committee recommended that all MA theses be empirically based and supervised by core (full-time) faculty with active empirical research programs, and the department indicates that virtually all MA theses are empirically based and that theses are supervised by faculty members with active empirical research programs.*

2. (a-f) *The committee further recommended that the clinical programs be brought up to international standards by several means. These include reducing the number of courses in each clinical area (i.e., psychopathology, assessment, and intervention), emphasizing clinical science and evidence-based practice in course content, requiring at least one course in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), making an effort to ensure that adjuncts (and part-time faculty) hired reflect the mission of the program, and doing whatever possible to arrange that students have the option of doing their practicum at a site offering evidence-based practice training (e.g., CBT). Although no direct actions have been taken on these recommendations, the department notes that the CHE organized a special committee that has submitted its recommendations and future changes will be depend on what new guidelines are issued by the Ministry of Health. They note, though, that clinical courses are taught by the clinical faculty, not by adjuncts, and that the clinical faculty meet to review syllabi for required courses each year.*

(g) *The committee also suggested that the department proceed with its plan (as stated to the committee) to develop an in-house clinic to provide research and training and to serve the community. The department indicates that this cannot be implemented due to the structure of the university, i.e., it has a counseling services clinic to serve students (the department's faculty have a good working relationship with this clinic). No in-house clinic exists to serve the broader community and train clinical students on-site.*

3. *The committee suggested as well that the department consider consolidating two of its MA programs into one program with an overlapping core and two distinct tracts. The department notes that these programs do share some core courses, but believes the disadvantages of implementing a merger outweigh the advantages. In particular, they argue that such a change can lead fewer students to pursue a neuropsychology or rehabilitation residency despite the great need for well trained psychologists in the latter field. They also note that the separate licensing requirements of the Ministry of Health for these two area make a merger problematic.*

4. *The committee also endorsed the planned consolidation of the research track of the neuropsychology program with the program in cognitive psychology, and the department indicates that this has been implemented.*

D. The PhD Program

The committee recommended that the department proceed with their plans to emphasize PhD-level training, to focus in MA program admissions mainly on students who wish to complete the PhD programs, and to emphasize direct-to-PhD admissions as well. Although the committee assumes the department probably remains committed to these goals, no direct comment on the matter was offered in the implementation report.

E. Infrastructure and Research

As noted, the committee endorsed the department plan to move to the Givat Ram campus from Mt. Scopus, and the department indicates (as mentioned above) that considerable progress has been made toward this end in conjunction with the university administration.

F. Alumni

The committee recommended that the department reach out to its alumni and to stay in touch regularly with them (such as through an alumni association), which can foster loyalty to the institution and help with fundraising. The department indicates that they can see the benefits in doing this, but do not have the funding to pursue it.