

Av 18, 5777
August 10, 2017

To:
Ms. Molly Abramson
Coordinator
Quality Assessment Division (QAD)
Council for Higher Education
Jerusalem

**Response to the Report of the Committee for Evaluating the
Quality of Economics department at Bar-Ilan University**

Dear Ms. Molly Abramson,
Enclosed please find the Response to the Report of the Committee for Evaluating the Quality of Economics department at Bar-Ilan University. The response was written by the Chair of the Department, Prof. Arthur Fishman. It was approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and me.

| | <u>Committee Recommendation</u> | <u>Steps toward implementation (including time table)</u> |
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| 1 | The department must immediately draft a strategic plan to determine its desired profile and vision, as well as a specific recruiting plan with respect to size and composition. | We could not be more in agreement with the committee's recommendation. Currently there is a sharp imbalance in the core fields of the department's researchers, with the bulk of the faculty specializing in game theory, decision theory and economic theory, and a critical lack of empirical researchers. In addition, the size of the department has shrunk drastically due to retirement and resignations, on the one hand, and hiring freeze on the other. Thus our hiring strategy for the coming years is to hire only excellent empirical researchers, as far as the administration will enable. The department is currently trying to appoint Dr Naomi Freidman, whose field is labor economics and economics of education, as an assistant professor for the coming academic year. Naomi has spent the year at the department, is very well liked and respected, and our success in this endeavor depends solely on whether the "Appointment Committee" will approve her appointment. It is important to note that the position which is available for Dr Friedman is not new and simply replaces the position of Dr Rafael Franck, who resigned last year, as well as that of Prof Hillel Rappaport who resigned and as such does not represent an additional "taken" for the department. For the following year (2019-2020) we have Jorge Alé Chilet in the "pipeline"; Jorge is an excellent empirical IO researcher and we are partially funding his post doc at the prestigious Wharton School at Upenn next year. Next year we will try to appoint him as an assistant professor for the academic year 2019-2020. We are also supporting Dr Efrat Shust as a post doc for the coming academic year with the intention of appointing her as assistant professor in 2019-2020. Her field is accounting and empirical finance. We are also supporting |

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| | | Dr Nathan Goldstein's post doc at Berkely next year with the intention of appointing him as assistant professor in 2019-2020. Nathan is one of our most promising PhD's and his field is empirical macroeconomics, a critical field in which we currently have no young faculty. Unfortunately, at the present these plans are in doubt as the administration is unwilling to provide a prognosis of how many positions, if any, will be available even next year, let alone further in the future. |
| 2 | The size and composition of the department must be commensurate with the strategic plan as approved by the administration | As in point 1, our strategic plan depends on the administration's support. Given recent events, at present it is difficult to be optimistic. |
| 3 | Both the recruiting and the promotion policies, at the university level, need to be adjusted to the accepted norms in the field of economics. | Again, we could not be more in agreement with the committee. At present, we are hobbled not only by uncertainty regarding available positions, but not less by the appointment committee's antiquated insistence that new PhD's have published papers, a requirement which is completely oblivious to the realities of the economics profession and which is not in effect in any other major university in Israel (except Ariel University). This means that even if the administration opens up slots for hiring, we may be unable to if the appointment committee persists in its current policy. |
| 4 | The current mismatch between faculty and PhD candidates' research areas should be addressed in the strategic plan. | See 1 and 2 above. |
| 5 | The rank of instructor should be abolished. | We agree, but may be forced to do so if the appointment committee persists in requiring publications from new PhD's. |
| 6 | The department should not reduce the admission threshold further. | We agree and will not. |
| 7 | The department should offer more courses taught in English and | This year we offered an advanced course in Excel for undergraduate students. We plan to continue in this vein next year. |

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| | more data and computation courses. | |
| 8 | The department should articulate and implement an internationalization policy. | The department has concluded a student exchange agreement with the University of Lille1. This project was spearheaded by Prof Elise Brezis. |
| 9 | In cases in which adjunct faculty members teach introductory core courses, they should not be allowed to also serve as TAs in these courses. | We agree and this practice is discontinued. |

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

Sincerely,



Prof. Amnon Albeck
Vice Rector
In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:
Prof. Miriam Faust, Rector
Prof. Joseph Deutsch, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
Prof. Arthur Fishman, Chair, Department of Economics