



**Committee for the Evaluation of  
Social Work and Human Services Study Programs**

**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev:  
The Charlotte B. & Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work  
Evaluation Report**

**March 2016**

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## **Chapter 1- Background**

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Social Work and Human Services during the academic year of 2015.

Following the decision of the CHE, Vice Chair of the Council of Higher Education on behalf of the Minister of Education, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- **Prof. Allan Borowski**- School of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University ,Melbourne, Australia (Ageing; Retirement; Migration; Cohesion; Delinquency) Committee Chair
- **Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak** - School of Social Work & Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California, USA (social work and management)
- **Prof. Ram Cnaan** - School of Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania, USA (faith based social services, social policy)
- **Prof. David Biegel** - Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, USA (family as a unit, family welfare)
- **Prof. Zahava Solomon**- School of Social Work, Tel-Aviv University, Israel (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and secondary PTSD)
- **Prof. Sven Hesse**-School of Social work, Stockholm University, Sweden (poverty and children and their families in an international perspective as well as International social work)

**Ms. Alex Buslovich Bilik** was the coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:<sup>1</sup>

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Social Work and Human Services and to conduct on-site visits at those institutions.
2. Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the evaluated academic units and study programs, including the Committee's findings and recommendations.
3. Submit to the CHE a general report regarding the examined field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of October 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **Chapter 2-Committee Procedures**

The Committee held its first meetings on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Social Work and Human Services Study programs in Israel.

In March 2015, the Committee held its visits of evaluation, and visited The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Hai Academic College, Haifa University, Ariel University, Emek Yizrael Academic College, Ashqelon Academic college, Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University, Sapir Academic College and Bar Ilan University. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report deals with the School of Social Work at Ben Gurion University. The Committee's visit to Ben Gurion University took place on Sunday March 22<sup>nd</sup> ,2015.

The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The Committee thanks the management of Ben Gurion University and the School of Social Work for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

## **Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Social Work Study Program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

### **1. Executive Summary**

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev was established in 1969. The university is comprised of several faculties, including the Natural Sciences, Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Medical School, Community Health Professions, Business and Management, Middle East Studies, and Politics and Government. The university is also home to several research institutes including the Institutes for Applied Research, the Institute for Desert Research and the Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute. Beginning in the 1970s, the university began offering PhD and MD degrees, and now provides education for 19,500 students, with a rapid increase in enrollments over the past 15 years

The Charlotte B & Jack J Spitzer Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev is one of the oldest schools of social work in Israel. It was established to train social workers in the southern part of Israel. The Department views itself as committed to the southern periphery and members of the Department emphasized their experience and tribulations during the “Tzhuk Eitan” operation.

In the self-evaluation report the Department lists three elements in its mission. Overall, its mission is “to provide our students with generic and multi-modal training that includes theoretical knowledge and practical skills in both micro- and macro-level social work.” For the BSW (Bachelor of Social Work) program, it states that “the emphasis is on the development of high caliber social work skills of a generalist and eclectic nature, and the cultivation of cultural sensitivity and social activism.” For the MA program, the “aim is to train the leadership cadre in social and welfare agencies in the Negev and all of Israel.” To this end, the focus of the Department’s professional educational programs is education and training in order to work with marginalized and at-risk populations.

The Committee is concerned about the future of the Department. The Committee believes that the Department is now at a critical juncture, not least because it is overstretched relative to the resources available to meet its commitments to a burgeoning student population. This situation has major implications for the programs it delivers. The following elaborates on this assessment.

### **2. Organizational Structure**

The Department of Social Work in Ben-Gurion University is part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is one of 21 departments within the Faculty. It is the largest department within this large Faculty. The Department was established in 1982. It started offering a BA in social work program and later, in 1992, it added

the MA program. In 2000 it started to offer a PhD program. The Department contributes to the university's mission through leadership in social and community involvement projects in the Negev. The Department's BA program serves about 250 students, the two MA programs (regular and retraining/*hasava*) serve about 185 students, and a doctoral program serves about 50 students.

The BA program requires 120 credits to earn a degree. These come from the introductory courses in the social sciences (36 credits), theoretical and practical courses in social work (44 credits), field training (16 credits), and basic research and evaluation (12 credits). One specialization is offered as well in social work with youth established in 2013-14.

The MA program is comprised of five clusters, namely, mental health, families and children, community and social change, generalist social work, and a specialization in art therapy. Each cluster has a thesis or non-thesis track, and most students continue to work during their training. Both the BA and MA programs offer some modules which require students to be involved in an actual research experience. Students in the MA research track and the PhD programs typically do research on a topic related to their supervisor's research interests.

The 4-6 year PhD program is flexible in terms of the needs of each individual student, and requires the submission of a dissertation proposal within two semesters of registration. This is followed by the submission of the dissertation within four years after registration. Additionally, a personal study program is required entailing 6-10 credits as recommended by the student's supervisor and approved by the student's doctoral committee. The student's research proposal is reviewed by a panel. Doctoral students without a background in social work must enroll in up to two courses in the basic foundations of social work.

The Department aspires to develop new specialization tracks in the BA and MA programs, recruit a faculty member in the field of aging, develop an aging track in the MA program, and increase the quality and volume of the Department's research output.

The Department enjoys independence in running its affairs and curriculum as long as these are done within the budgetary and guidelines set by the university. Hiring, however, is controlled by the Faculty and the university's top leadership.

The Department is run by a chair who is selected by the Department's faculty members for a period of two years. The Committee understands that the incoming chair is a senior lecturer and that the appointment of such a relatively "junior" faculty member is at least partly the result of the tensions among senior faculty resulting in the absence of other acceptable senior faculty as candidates for this role. The Committee regards it as both unfair to the senior lecturer concerned (from a career path progression perspective) and inappropriate for other than senior faculty members to assume this role.

The organizational structure is logical and one that is common in many other social work programs in Israel. However, the faculty members meet too infrequently and it is clear that making decisions is tense and difficult.

One of the stated goals of the Department is "To strengthen the Department's status in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences." It is further stated that this can be achieved through "Expanding the number of tracks, specializations and study programs in the Department as well as the number of students so that, in the long run, the Department can become a "School" within or outside the Faculty." This indicates the Department's desire to be larger and independent. The Department also would like the university administration to better support it in recruiting donors.

There are some notable weaknesses in the Department of Social Work and its programs. The first is the inadequate resourcing of the Department which affects teaching, research and, thus, the ability to compete with other Israeli programs.

Further, in the BA program, there appears to be excessive focus on micro-level practice to the *relative* neglect of both community work and policy practice. On the face of it this seems rather curious given the intent of the BA program to be a generic one. (Note that some Committee members believe that practice method specialization should take place at the BA degree level while others believe this should occur at the Master's degree level.) Further, the class sizes are much too large. Not unlike other schools of social work in Israel, it is hard to recruit field supervisors due to the low level of remuneration arising from the inadequate budgetary allocation by the university (or MALAG in the first place) for this key element of professional social work education.

In the MA program, there is a shortage of both academic staff and elective courses for the students. In the PhD program, there is insufficient financial support for doctoral students and no integrated, comprehensive course(s) on research skills. Finally, there is a relatively small number faculty members available for and proficient in thesis supervision.

Grades achieved by the BA students are very high, suggesting considerable grade inflation, a lack of rigor in student assessment, or both. The MA program has the same problem.

Ben-Gurion University, in common with other Israeli universities, is just beginning to articulate and assess the learning outcomes of its various programs of study.

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

The Committee is very concerned with the management of the PhD program and recommends that admissions be placed on hold until a serious examination and redesign of the PhD program is carried out. (This is elaborated upon below.)

**Advisable changes:**

The Department suffers from internal tensions, a situation which needs to be addressed in order to create a more harmonious and collegiate working environment.

Another matter that needs to be addressed with some priority is the inequitable distribution of the administrative workload. The Committee believes that tenure-track faculty should not carry major administrative duties.

**Desirable changes recommended:**

The Department should assess its connection and relationships with the other departments in the Faculty of Humanities Social Sciences. The synergies arising from alliances with other departments in the Faculty should prove to be beneficial to the Department of Social Work.

**3. Mission and Goals**

The Charlotte B & Jack J Spitzer Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev provides its students with the education and training for working with marginalized and at-risk populations in order to promote their quality of life.

The self-study explains that: "From its inception, the Department has nurtured within its students an active engagement in the life of the surrounding community, and multicultural sensitivity, competence and skills." Based on the Committee's discussion with students, it seems that community involvement and community work (CO) are both in decline.

The self-study reports a strategic plan that was implemented by the Department. However, there is no indication that any action was actually taken to implement the plan. The move by the IDF to have most of its bases in the Negev mentioned by the plan is one such opportunity that does not appear to have been acted upon by the Department.

The Department leads social and community involvement projects internationally, nationally and locally. The Department is known for its very impressive international links and for its involvement in national forums addressing major social issues, and it has taken the lead in heightening awareness of crucial social

problems and the need for legislative reform, e.g., food insecurity, poverty and the abuse of women.

Both faculty members and the self-study report emphasized the Department's role in serving the southern periphery of Israel. Given the proliferation of social work programs in the region (existing BA programs in social work as well as approved MA programs and others awaiting approval) that also claim to serve the periphery, such as those of Ashkelon and Sapir Colleges, the Committee recommends that the Department of Social Work undertake a careful review of its mission and identity.

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

The Department should assess and carefully articulate its mission and identity in light of other social work programs in the region that similarly seek to serve Israel's southern periphery.

#### **Advisable changes:**

The Department should adjust the curriculum (and faculty requirements accordingly) in order to ensure that community work (and perhaps policy practice too) enjoys a more prominent place in the professional training that it offers.

### **4. Study Programs**

Both the BA and the MA-retraining programs (*hasava*) require the use of field placements and field supervisors. Given that many of the students come from afar, the Department needs to hire field supervisors in many cities and regional councils. The remuneration for field supervisors offered by the Department of Social Work is below the national average. Furthermore, with the opening of additional social work programs in Israel's colleges and retraining/*hasava* programs in the major universities, the Department has found it difficult to recruit and retain high-quality field supervisors.

The MA in social work program (and the retraining MA program) is large and more than two thirds of the students complete the program without writing a thesis (123 out of 183 students). Many MA students complained that they were interested in writing a thesis but could not find a supervisor. This was a source of stress and considerable dissatisfaction among many MA students.

The Committee was advised by MA students and read in the self-study that there are too few elective courses in the MA program. Most students come to campus once or twice a week while the existing elective courses are spread out over the week and are scheduled at inconvenient times for many MA students.

The Committee has some serious concerns about the quality of the doctoral program. Despite the low number of faculty members, the Department has doubled the number of doctoral students over recent years. In its meeting with a large group of doctoral students the Committee was discouraged to learn that none of them planned to pursue an academic career, few had any publications or were even in the process of writing for publication, and that they simply did not know one another. While all of the students praised their individual supervisors they also reported that they do not have any ongoing joint course(s) or a research seminar. Given that not all faculty members supervise doctoral students, it was clear that active faculty members are supervising a large number of doctoral students and are unable to give them the personal attention they require. Nor are they able to help develop their students' academic careers.

The Committee was especially concerned to learn that the PhD program has no mandatory course content. Students are not required to take any statistics or research methods courses (neither quantitative nor qualitative) unless their instructors recommend it or they wish to do so and most do not.

Further, the dearth of TA opportunities for PhD students means that, relative to PhD graduates of other universities where such opportunities exist, the Department's PhD graduates are disadvantaged in the marketplace. This is also an issue in other Israeli universities.

While the Department reports that it takes issues of diversity seriously and that discussions on cultural diversity are included in all courses, the Department did not explicate what theory they use and the level of coverage. The Committee was advised that there are discussions on Arabs, Haredim (the ultra-orthodox), and so forth. However, there is no *dedicated* course content at either the BA or MA level on social work practice in diverse societies. (Such a course may, for instance, draw on cutting-edge developments in race theory. Thus, Critical Race/Feminist Theory emphasizes the important of intersectionality which emphasizes that each minority group is diverse and composed of different sub-groups that have different characteristics and needs. Some such sub-groups are more and some are less oppressed. For example, the experience of being a Haredi woman with four children cannot be understood in terms of being a young unmarried Haredi man.)

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

The Committee recommends that no new students be admitted to the PhD program until a major review of the program is completed. The Committee believes that the PhD program needs to be revamped. It needs to be a smaller program with some core courses/seminars that all students are required to participate in. (The Committee's observation based on its site visits is that Israeli doctoral programs

commonly require that PhD students take four courses.) Given the large number of doctoral students who do not plan to embark on an academic career (or, even if interested, will not succeed in securing an academic position, a situation explicitly acknowledged by senior academics during the Committee's meeting with them), some coursework should be required in order to help prepare students for leadership roles outside of the academy. Examples of such courses include one on leadership and another on the management of complex organizations. (Courses such as these would also be of benefit to those PhD students who, after completion of their studies, do secure an academic position!) The Department also needs to issue a handbook for PhD students that outlines procedures and all other matters related to the PhD program and candidature.

The Department needs to invest in formal supervision training and ongoing support for thesis supervisors in order to enhance its supervision capacity and thereby permit a more equitable spread of the thesis supervision load across its small faculty.

Grade inflation needs to be addressed in order for grades to meaningfully serve as indicators of students' academic performance. While the Department is by no means unique in this regard (the Committee has observed this phenomenon across Israel's tertiary education institutions), students' grades are at very great risk of becoming meaningless in the absence of a concerted effort to address grade inflation.

The Department needs to ensure that Masters theses are not examined by any faculty member involved in the supervision of the thesis and, where there is a large disparity in grades, that an independent third party (perhaps external to the Department) is assigned the role of arbiter or third examiner. (Indeed, it is common practice elsewhere for at least one of the two examiners to be external to the Department altogether.) Such an arrangement would also help obviate tensions between staff over the assignment of grades to Masters theses.

### **Advisable changes:**

The Department should reduce the number of MA students and advise applicants/first year students in writing and verbally that most students will *not* be able to write a thesis due to the lack of supervision capacity within the Department.

The Department should revamp curriculum content of cultural diversity to include most current theories and avoid grouping minority groups as if they were homogenous. Indeed, the Department should introduce a dedicated course on social work practice in diverse societies at both the BA and MA levels.

The Department should increase field supervisors' remuneration so that it is comparable to that offered by other social work programs in Israel.

The Department should develop a mandatory PhD seminar that will help students with writing dissertation proposals, provide linkages to advanced fellow doctoral students, and encourage academic publication. It also needs to provide mandatory courses on data analysis and advanced research methods and courses that will prepare graduates for future leadership roles (e.g., courses on leadership, and on the management of complex organizations).

**Desirable changes recommended:**

The Department should consider offering more elective courses in the MA program and at times convenient to working students.

**5. Human Resources / Faculty**

The faculty in the Department of Social Work consists of 18-19 tenured members and 2 researchers on a grant, 29 adjunct faculty members, and 19 senior faculty. The senior faculty consists of 5 full professors, 5 associate professors, 3 senior lecturers, 4 lecturers and 2 researchers. The senior faculty in the research track (tenured and tenure-track) are required to teach 8 hours weekly. These hours must be comprised of 6 hours in classroom teaching and 2 of student research supervision of at least 2 students. Senior staff in the teaching track must teach 16 hours per week; 12 of those hours entail teaching in the classroom, and 4 are devoted to student supervision.

The Department reports serious understaffing issues because some faculty members are away on administrative appointments and are not replaced while employed elsewhere. This leaves only 13 active tenured members who can provide supervision to graduate students and fill administrative positions. Considering the large recent growth in the number of students, the lack of staff is a very serious issue. Most faculty members are social workers with the rest from a variety of fields. No faculty members appear to have a background in aging, disability or crime.

The Department's faculty members are mostly tenured with only two lecturers (junior untenured faculty members). Furthermore, the last two hires are of psychologists who cannot teach core social work courses. During the hiring process the Department was forced to give up hiring social work candidates who successfully obtained appointments at other academic institutions. In fact, the Department has a large number of faculty members who are not social workers. The Committee is concerned that, with the pending retirements, the Department will lose its focus on social work.

Tenure track faculty members require support and direction in achieving clearly articulated requirements for promotion, requirements which currently are insufficiently clear.

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

It is vitally important for the number of faculty members to be increased to cover the enormous workload arising from the burgeoning enrolments. The Department also needs to carefully plan for the replacement of those faculty members who are approaching retirement.

The Committee strongly recommends that *all* new faculty appointments be social work-qualified, experienced, and can provide professional and academic leadership. With the large number of social workers in Israel with a PhD degree and who have undertaken / are undertaking a post-doctorate abroad, there is no justification for appointing new faculty members who do not hold a social work degree.

The Committee recommends that the Faculty/university ensure that faculty members who take up employment in administrative or other academic roles outside of the Department for extended periods of time (a very unusual practice!) be replaced for the *entire* duration of the external appointment.

## **6. Students**

In 2013, the admission rates were rather high in both the undergraduate and graduate programs: the BA program accepted 39% of applicants, the MA program accepted 73%, and the retraining program 28%. Though no data **were** presented regarding the number of PhD applications, there has been a 38% increase in the enrollment of doctoral students between 2009 and 2013 (from 26 to 36 students in total). These high admission rates come with very low dropout rates across all academic programs.

Because of the reputation enjoyed by the Department, students apply to study social work in Beer Sheva from all over the country. On average, half the students are local and half come from elsewhere in Israel. The Committee met students who came to Beer Sheva specifically to study in the Department and who plan to stay in the area after graduation.

Applicants are processed by the central unit of the university utilizing the SEKEM ranking (national exams and psychometric tests). The Department's average SEKEM score is quite high and respected by the university. It was reported that some of those admitted automatically based on high SEKEM scores are students who failed

to gain admission to psychology and their interest in and suitability for social work is limited.

The Department actively works with candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not meet the SEKEM threshold to facilitate their admission into the program. However, their number is small and the Department's capacity in helping underprivileged students is limited due to resource constraints.

BA students reported that the large number of students in classes is detrimental to the quality of their professional education. This is especially so in classes that teach practice skills, for example, skills in working with groups. This also applies to the MA classes.

Students receive very limited financial support from the Department and nor do they receive formal career counseling from it.

In the 2013-14 academic year the Department increased the number of students admitted to the BA program by 50% (from 73 in the preceding year to 120). This dramatic increase was not accompanied by a commensurate investment in additional faculty numbers.

While there is a university-wide entity that maintains contact with alumni (the Ben-Gurion Institute), the Department has no direct or organized contact with alumni. Through their close relationship with agencies in Negev, however, it is known that its BA and MA graduates comprise between 55% and 75% of their social work staff.

Students showed great enthusiasm for the program and faculty members. The Committee met students who applied solely to the Department and plan to study there for an additional degree. The only complaint students voiced was of tension among senior faculty that is reflected in conflicting grading of MA theses. (See comments earlier in this report about the need ensure greater independence from the Department of the examiners charged with grading of MA theses.)

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

The number of students enrolled in each program should be reassessed and be based on realistic faculty workload expectations and overall resourcing.

#### **Desirable changes recommended**

Conduct alumni surveys on a continual basis to assess the relevance of the Department's professional education to the field's changing needs.

## **7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes**

Required classes are often held with up to 120 students in the classroom. Elective courses are smaller with about 20-25 students. The MA courses are also either for the full student cohort or are electives with 25-30 students.

Faculty members noted that they try to assign papers and written exams as the means of course assessment. This is difficult in large classes where multiple-choice exams are more frequently utilized. The Committee regards this latter mode of assessment as undesirable for most social work courses.

The Committee was impressed by the examples of the Department's social activism which range from an educational program for illegal immigrants to poverty and politics. These activities are reflective of the Department's mission which rests on "four pillars [namely]: Generic, multimodal, and multicultural intervention and the promotion of social activism and social justice values and practices".

The evaluation of courses is taken very seriously. In addition to the electronic feedback from students, the Department holds forums and surveys to assess quality of teaching and content evaluation.

The Department is one of the first to include clear statements of intended learning outcomes in most of its courses. This is an important step forward that the Committee was impressed with.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Advisable changes**

The Center for Youth should be made an official part of the Department and offer courses to both BA and MA students.

## **8. Research**

There are three research centers in the Department of Social Work, namely, Women's Health Studies and Promotion, the Israel Center of Qualitative Methodologies, and the Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center. A quarter of all Master's students take advantage of the research opportunities through the research track.

The Department has had significant success in its publication of papers in high impact journals from 2008 to present. In five years, 151 papers were accepted into peer-reviewed journals, 7 books were authored and another 7 were edited, and 33 chapters were written. Further, the faculty published 30 articles per year in peer-

reviewed papers;. This amounts to less than two publications per year per faculty member. Faculty members also are involved in collaborative research in Israel and abroad. The average grant award per faculty member in 2013 was \$37,478, and the amount in total grants in 2013 for social work was \$494,605, of which only \$67,952 comes from competitive sources.

Some significant impediments to research in the Department arise from the constraints of a small number of faculty having to service a very large and growing number of students across several programs. This leaves little time for research and also militates against the type of laboratory model of research groups comprised of faculty and doctoral students. There are also limited grants for doctoral students.

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

The level of publications and grant writing requires special scrutiny on the part of both the Faculty and the Department. An established Department like the Charlotte B & Jack J Spitzer Department of Social Work should be able to attain a significantly higher **level of** academic productivity.

### **9. Infrastructure**

The Department is located in a relatively new building (since 2007) that is very “friendly”. The faculty members have adequate offices, classrooms, and meeting spaces. The third floor is the home for three Department-related research centers as well as the Centre for Third Sector Research. The latter is not part of the Department but should be considered for adoption, a trend that is common in American schools of social work.

Although the Department has been offering its BSW on the university's Eilat campus since 2009 and the MA program since 2010, the Committee did not cover these programs in its deliberations.

The Department does not have a dedicated IT person. As a result, its website is inadequate. The associated centralized computerized system for class registration does not provide adequate registration services to the Department and, in consequence, is a source of much frustration and stress to students and staff.

Regardless of the need and the recommendations of the previous review committee, no serious action has been taken in relation to e-learning focused on the entire Negev region.

### Recommendations

#### **Advisable changes:**

Ready access to a computer support person ought to be provided for faculty and administrative staff.

The Department should explore the possibility of implementing e-learning courses

## **10. Self-Evaluation Process**

The previous evaluation of the Department was conducted in 2007 and the majority of these recommendations have been implemented.

The self-evaluation report mirrored most of what the Committee found during the course of its site visit. The reported outcomes of the strategic planning process are encouraging as they reflect an understanding of where the Department is. The challenge is to follow up with concrete steps.

### Recommendations

#### **Essential changes required:**

Use the strategic plan as a blueprint for the Department's priorities and action items. A collective focus on this plan and its recommendations will help the Department successfully regain its academic rigor and status as a national leader in social work education.

## **Chapter4: Summary of Recommendations and Timetable**

### **Essential Changes:**

The Committee recommends that no new students be admitted to the PhD program until a major review of the program is completed. The Committee believes that the PhD program needs to be revamped. It needs to be a smaller program with some core courses/seminars that all students are required to participate in. Some coursework should be required in order to help prepare students for leadership roles outside of the academy.

The Department also needs to issue a handbook for PhD students that outlines procedures and all other matters related to the PhD program and candidature.

The Department suffers from internal tensions, a situation which needs to be addressed in order to create a more harmonious and collegiate working environment.

Another matter that needs to be addressed with some priority is the inequitable distribution of the administrative workload. The Committee believes that tenure-track faculty should not carry major administrative duties.

The Department should reduce the number of MA students and advise applicants/first year students in writing and verbally that most students will not be able to write a thesis due to the lack of supervision capacity within the Department.

It is vitally important for the number of faculty members to be increased to cover the enormous growth in the workload arising from the burgeoning enrolments. The Department also needs to carefully plan for the replacement of those faculty members who are approaching retirement.

The Committee strongly recommends that all new faculty appointments be social work-qualified, experienced, and can provide professional and academic leadership.

The Committee recommends that the Faculty/university ensure that faculty members who take up employment in administrative or other academic roles outside of the Department for extended periods of time be replaced for the entire duration of the external appointment.

The number of students enrolled in each program should be reassessed and be based on realistic faculty workload expectations and overall resourcing.

The level of publications and grant writing should be scrutinized in light of the severe resource constraints faced by the Department arising from burgeoning student enrolments and a reduction in the number of faculty members available for teaching and research, in part due to the failure to replace faculty members who secure employment elsewhere for extended periods of time.

The Department should use the strategic plan as a blueprint for its priorities and action items. A collective focus on this plan and its recommendations will help the Department successfully regain its academic rigor and status as a national leader in social work education.

**Advisable Changes:**

The Department should assess and carefully articulate its mission and identity in light of other social work programs in the region that similarly seek to serve Israel's southern periphery.

The Department should adjust the curriculum (and faculty requirements accordingly) in order to ensure that community work (and perhaps policy practice too) enjoys a more prominent place in the professional training that it offers.

The Department needs to invest in formal supervision training and ongoing support for thesis supervisors in order to enhance its supervision capacity and thereby permit a more equitable spread of the thesis supervision load across its small faculty.

Grade inflation needs to be addressed in order for grades to meaningfully serve as indicators of students' academic performance.

The Department needs to ensure that Masters theses are not examined by any faculty member involved in the supervision of the thesis and, ideally, one of the two examiners should be external to the Department altogether.

The Department should revamp curriculum content of cultural diversity to include most current theories and avoid grouping minority groups as if they were homogenous. Indeed, the Department should introduce a dedicated course on social work practice in diverse societies at both the BA and MA levels.

The Department should increase field supervisors' remuneration so that it is comparable to that offered by other social work programs in Israel.

The Department should consider offering more elective courses in the MA program and at times convenient to working students.

The Center for Youth should be made officially a part of the Department and offer courses to both BA and MA students.

Ready access to a computer support person ought to be provided for faculty and administrative staff.

The Department should explore the possibility of implementing e-learning courses

**Desirable Changes:**

The Department should assess its connection and relationships with the other departments in the Faculty of Humanities Social Sciences. The synergies arising from alliances with other departments in the Faculty should prove to be beneficial to the Department of Social Work.

Conduct alumni surveys on a continual basis to assess the relevance of the Department's professional education to the field's changing needs.

**Signed by:**



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Prof. Allan Borowski



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Prof. Ram Can'an



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Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak



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Prof. David Biegel



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Prof. Zahava Solomon



or Sven Hessle, Stockholm University, Stockholm

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Prof. Sven Hessle

**Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment**

February 2015

Prof. Allan Borowski  
School of Social Work  
RMIT University  
Australia

Dear Professor,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging upon this mission, the CHE seeks: to enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies, to provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, and to ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this important endeavor we reach out to world renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges that confront the Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as the Chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of the study programs in **Social Work and Human services**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak, Prof. Ram Cnaan, Prof. David Biegel, Prof. Zahava Solomon and Prof. Sven Hesse

Ms. Alex Buslovich-Bilik will be the coordinator of the Committee.

Details regarding the operation of the committee and its mandate are provided in the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hagit Messer-Yaron  
Vice Chair,  
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

*Enclosures:* Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

**Social Work –Schedule of site visit**  
**Ben Gurion University**

**Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> ,2015**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Participants</b>
9:-09:0030	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Zvi Hacothen – Rector Prof. Gad Rabinowitz – Vice Recror
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Dean of Faculty of Humanities Social Sciences	Prof. David Newman
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the head of the department of Social Work	Prof. Julia Mirsky
11:00-11:45	Meeting with senior academic staff <b>with tenure</b> (representatives of relevant committees)*	Dr. Efrat Huss – head of the art track Prof. Yonatan Anson Prof. Zvia Walden – head of the Youth track Prof. Julia Mirsky – Chair Dr. Dorit Segal-Engelchin – head of the retraining program Prof. Vered Slonim-Nevo – Eilat coordinator Prof. Julie Zwickel – head of PHD program Dr. Roni Kaufman - head of MA program Dr. Yair Ronen Prof. Orly Sarid - head of BA program
11:45-12:15	Meeting with senior academic staff <b>without tenure</b> (representatives of relevant committees)*	Dr. Maya Lavi Agai Dr. Galia Moran
12:15-12:45	External teachers	Vered Daitchman Yosef Orna Amos Gila Reshef Martin Cohen
12:45-13:30	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
13:30-14:15	Meeting with BA and MA students** (up to 12 students)	Adi Reiss – BA student Doron Midron - BA student Bela Kalbanov - BA student Yuval Saar Heiman - MA student Anat Hess - MA student Ossama Abu Ganem - MA student Oz Peperberg - MA student

14:15-15:00	Meeting with PhD students** and teaching assistants (up to 10 students)	Calanit Tsalach – PHD student Anat Shalev - PHD student Nur Shimei - PHD student Jana Bar - PHD student Einav Lapid - PHD student Shimrit Engelsman - PHD student Avigdor Kaner - PHD student Meital Simchi - PHD student Eynat Veger Atias - PHD student Itay Fruzinin - PHD student
15:00-15:45	Open slot	<u>Department Tour:</u> The Art track exhibition, Final projects, Thesis and doctoral papers desk.  <u>Meeting with Department Alumni:</u> Ilana Azulai Omra Levi Dana Haim Uri Carmel
15:45-16:00	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
16:00-16:30	Summation meeting with heads of institution, Dean and head of the department	Prof. Zvi Hacoheh – Rector Prof. Gad Rabinowitz – Vice Rector Prof. David Newman Prof. Julia Mirsky Dr. Dorit Segal Engelchin

\* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.

\*\*\* The visit will be conducted in English with the exception of students who may speak in Hebrew and anyone else who feels unable to converse in English.