



Response to the Recommendations of the Evaluation Committee of the Council for Higher Education

Chapter 4: 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.

Increase in the number of faculty members is now under negotiation with the university. A higher number of faculty members will enable our faculty members to reduce the number of their supervisees, which in turn, will allow them to provide their students more personal attention.

All PhD students in our department are required to participate in a research seminar in addition to taking 6-10 credits, as recommended by the supervisor and approved by the student's doctoral committee. Starting next year, we will expand the PhD program to include compulsory courses in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and participation in the departmental seminars.

The Rector's office have seriously considered the recommendation to suspend admission of new students to the PhD program. However due to the above measures taken by the department in cooperation with the Rector's office, we decided to postpone the committee's recommendation for now.

We believe that the above revisions will effectively address the current caveats of the PhD program.

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.

All procedures and matters related to the PhD program and candidature are advertised on the website of the Kreitman School of Advanced Graduate Studies, which serves as the administrative framework for PhD studies at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The website provides information regarding: admission to doctoral studies; requirements for receiving a Ph.D. Degree; duration of studies and regulations; optional PhD tracks; and, structure of the dissertation.

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

Our Department is generally characterized by good relations and a positive work environment. The factual basis for the conclusion of the Committee is unclear.

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.

Due to the shortage of academic staff in the Department, tenure-track faculty members are called on to fulfill major administrative duties. The addition of new faculty members, if approved by the university, will enable the Department to reduce tenure-track faculty members' share of administrative work.

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.

Over the past few years, the Department has invested increased effort in encouraging MA student to engage in research and to write a thesis due to the high value it ascribes to social work's involvement in research. These efforts indeed led to growing numbers of MA graduates who have completed a research thesis.

The addition of new faculty members, if approved by the university, will enable the Department to continue in this important direction.

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.

Increasing the number of faculty members is critical to manage the considerable growth in Department faculty members' workload resulting from burgeoning enrolment. As mentioned above, this issue is now under negotiation with the university.

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

We fully agree with the Committee's recommendation. The Department's recent faculty appointment is a qualified and experienced social worker.

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.

Whenever a faculty member is take up employment in administrative or other academic roles, the department teaching budget is compensated to enable a temporary employment of an external teacher.

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

The addition of new faculty members, if approved by the University, will address, and possibly promote, realistic faculty workload expectations.

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 addition of new faculty members, if approved by the University, will also contribute significantly to the level of faculty members' publications and grant writing by reducing their workload of administrative and research supervision tasks.

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.

The Department operates in accordance to its strategic plan (e.g. We encourage the staff and students' involvement in teaching, learning and practicing the tools and mechanism of social activism and policy practice; We provide the students with hands-on experience with organizations and services, teaching them to critically estimate these services and initiate changes in them).

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's mission, in light of other social work programs in the region is continuously reviewed and adjusted if necessary. The updated version appears in the Department's web site.

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 has expanded macro-level practice teaching by including:

- 1) an additional course on community work in the BA program; and,*
- 2) a course on policy practice in both the BA and MA program.*

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.

The Department is considering workshop thesis training for junior level faculty members including new faculty members, if approved by the university, to promote a more equitable spread of thesis supervision among faculty members.

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

We have discussed this issue within the faculty meeting. Further discussions are planned for the near future.

The Department needs to ensure that Masters thesis 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 involvement of students' supervisors in the examination of Masters theses is in accordance with the Faculty's policy, which requires that both the student's supervisor and an additional examiner, which may be internal or external to the Department, examine his/her Masters thesis.

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.

Starting next academic year, a course on social work practice in diverse societies will be provided 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.

We agree, the department is working closely with the rector office to address this issue.

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

Over the past year, we have included more elective courses in the MA program. Special efforts have been made to offer the courses 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.

The Youth Studies have been officially a part of the BA program for the past three years.

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

Support is available from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; however, such support needs to be expanded to address the Department's needs.

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

The Department plans to explore this possibility in depth in the near future.

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.



This is done now as part of the Faculty's attempt to identify potential routes for collaboration in teaching. This effort will enable our Department to work together with other departments to establish joint courses.

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

This suggestion will be reviewed and considered for action.

Regards,

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