



Committee for the Evaluation of Middle Eastern Studies Programs

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Department of Middle Eastern Studies

Evaluation Report

December 2010

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Chapter 1- Background

During its meeting on October 7, 2008, the Council for Higher Education (hereafter: the CHE) decided to evaluate departments in the fields of Middle Eastern History and, in the case of Hebrew University, the Department of Arabic Languages and Literature, during the academic year 2009 – 2010.

Following the decision of the CHE, the Minister of Education who serves ex officio as a Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a committee consisting of:

- **Professor Dale F. Eickelman – Dartmouth College, USA, Committee Chair**
- **Professor Emmanuel Sivan – Hebrew University, Israel (co-chair)¹**
- **Professor Jere L. Bacharach – University of Washington, Seattle, USA**
- **Professor Richard W. Bulliet – Columbia University, USA**
- **Professor Ilai Alon –Tel Aviv University, Israel²**

Ms. Marissa Gross - Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the committee was requested to:

- Examine the self-evaluation reports, which were submitted by institutions that provide study programs in Middle East History/Studies and in the case of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, also the Department of Arabic Language and Literature.
- Present the CHE with final reports for the evaluated academic units and study programs – a separate report for each institution, including the committee’s findings and recommendations.
- Submit to the CHE a general report regarding its opinion as to the examined field within the Israeli system of higher education with recommended standards.

The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

The first stage of the quality assessment process consisted of self-evaluation, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report by the institutions under evaluation. This process was conducted in accordance with the CHE’s guidelines as specified in the document entitled “The Self-Evaluation Process: Recommendations and Guidelines” (October 2008).

¹ Prof. Sivan did not participate in the review of the Hebrew University to avoid a conflict of interest.

² Prof. Alon did not participate in the review of Tel Aviv University to avoid a conflict of interest.

Chapter 2-Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first formal meetings on April 23, 2010. At this meeting committee members were given an overview of higher education in Israel and a description of the Israeli CHE. They also discussed Middle Eastern Studies programs in Israel and fundamental issues concerning the committee's quality assessment activity. Committee members had received copies of the departmental reports before this date.

During April-May 2010 committee members conducted full-day visits to five institutions (six departments) whose Middle Eastern Studies programs the committee was requested to examine.

This report deals with the Department of Middle Eastern Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

The Committee's visit to the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev took place on April 29 and May 2, 2010.

The Committee spent two days of intensive meetings with opportunities to visit the libraries and other facilities, meet with the administration, tenure and tenure-track faculty, adjunct faculty, and BA, MA and PhD students. We thank the appropriate individuals for their involvement in our proceedings as their input allowed us to explore in significantly greater depth many of the issues raised in the self-study reports.

The schedule of the visit, including the list of participants representing the institution, is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Middle Eastern Studies Program at Ben-Gurion University

* *This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institution, and does not take account of any subsequent changes. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Committee based on the documentation provided by the institution, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Committee. The Committee agreed that the Department's Self-Evaluation Report is focused, well-organized, and exemplary.*

1. Background

Established in 1994 with a PhD track added in 2001, the Department of Middle Eastern Studies is a comparatively new program that has inherited little of the Orientalist ethos that inspired the founding generation of Middle East specialists at programs established at earlier dates. With a comparatively young faculty, Ben-Gurion's Department does not face the generational transition that is challenging some other programs and departments in Israel. Its recent foundation has contributed to the Department's being in major ways *au courant* with the best practices of European and North American programs.

During the 2008-09 academic year, 269 undergraduate students, 64 Master's level students, and 15 doctoral students were enrolled in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. In total, the Department has 12 senior faculty members and two members who have joint appointments with other departments. About 50 percent of the teaching staff are non-tenured adjunct professors.

2. Teaching staff and research

While none of the programs reviewed by the Committee expressed satisfaction with their current level of staffing, the Ben-Gurion faculty manages to be more comprehensive, both chronologically and methodologically, than some other institutions. The research competences of their senior faculty are well distributed over Islamic (both pre-modern and modern), Ottoman, Iranian, modern Arab, and Arabic literature fields, and their diverse course offerings present students with an array of choice. Taken in the aggregate, BGU faculty members have an active program of international publication and research, and many publish with internationally recognized presses and their work commands major reviews and comments, and often appear on the reading lists of North American and European graduate seminars. Many Departmental faculty members also manage periodically to teach regularly at institutions outside of Israel, which facilitates their participation in the mainstream of Middle East studies. The MAPMES program also regularly bring in international faculty visitors, exposing both faculty and students to the main currents of studies elsewhere.

Only a few courses are country-specific in the Middle East Studies Department at Ben-Gurion University, and these are pro-seminar rather than lecture in format. Courses on Shi'ism, the Wahhabiyya, modern Arabic literature, and the Arab-Israeli conflict exemplify a breadth of offerings that other university programs could well emulate. To be sure, organizational structures at some universities stand in the way of encompassing as much diversity in one department as at BGU, although faculty elsewhere often find ways to transcend the boundaries of discipline,

department, and program. The Committee feels that current best practices in Middle East Studies internationally favor the Ben-Gurion approach.

This Department also differs from its Israeli counterparts elsewhere in the number and diversity of its junior faculty and adjunct teaching staff. The Committee met only five of the twenty-eight adjunct staff, but noted their high level of training and scholarship. Indeed, several BGU adjuncts could easily qualify for tenured university posts should the opportunity arise. The large number of adjunct staff clearly reflects priorities and budgeting decisions that differ from those made at other universities. Although adjunct staff members tend to be underpaid, we did not detect a feeling of exploitation because of the evidently high level of inclusion and collegiality. Nonetheless, the high numbers of adjunct faculty indicate a significant underlying problem.

In terms of future planning, the Self-Evaluation study notes that the Department has a high non-tenure to tenure ratio in its teaching staff. This has led to an innovative teaching program, but may have a negative long-term effect in terms of the Department's overall reputation for quality research. The Self-Evaluation study notes that five of the 14 tenured faculty members will retire within six to nine years. The long-term goal should therefore be to create a more balanced non-tenure to tenure ratio. An immediate goal should be to create a more balanced non-tenure to tenure ratio. This is especially the case for the Arabic language and culture element of the program, currently staffed entirely by adjunct instructors.

The Committee appreciates the strategic planning of the Department and concurs that the Department's long-term viability will be significantly enhanced by addressing this issue, especially as it relates to the Arabic Language and Culture offerings.

3. Teaching program

However diverse and stimulating a curriculum may appear, the test of its effectiveness is its ability to attract and retain high quality students. By this test, the Ben Gurion department is outstanding. It has a smaller number of BA students than some other programs—much smaller if the separate Arabic department enrollments are added to those in Middle East History/Studies—but the average psychometric scores are comparatively high. Moreover, the dropout rate, averaging 6.8% over the period 2004-2008, is startlingly low in comparison with other Israeli Middle East study programs.

The Department has recently begun a new program to identify first-year students of high promise and enroll them in a dedicated pro-seminar. Approximately one-third of recipients of the Departmental BA continue on to MA studies at Ben-Gurion or elsewhere. We also note a high level of formal cooperation with faculty members in other departments, including the joint supervision of student theses and other projects.

The Department has expressed concern about the admission of less qualified students and its desire to raise standards. Judging from the distribution curves contained in the Self-Evaluation report, it is making slow but steady progress toward this objective.

Program satisfaction at the MA level is indicated by a five-year dropout rate average of only 10%. Special programs designed to socialize graduate students into the Middle East studies research environment contribute to this success. One such program, begun in 2007, is a research seminar on “Theory and Methodology in the Study of the Middle East” open to MA and PhD students from all Israeli universities. (In North America, graduate student organizations sometimes organize non-credit seminars with the complementary goal of infusing recent developments in social theory and methods into Middle East-related graduate studies. Such activities focusing on theory are hallmarks of the Middle East programs at the University of Chicago and Princeton University, among others.) A more ambitious activity in Israel is the student-edited publication of *Jama‘a*, a Hebrew-language journal that publishes quality research articles. Each issue also includes an article that students select for translation from English because of its importance. Although open to submissions from graduate students throughout Israel and highly regarded throughout the Israeli scholarly community, *Jama‘a* is financially supported by BGU alone, which also allocates dedicated working space to the journal. Graduate students and faculty members at all the reviewed programs and departments spoke highly of this sustained initiative.

The Committee met in separate sessions with eight doctoral candidates, eight MA candidates (divided equally between the regular M.A. program and the international MAPMES program, which also has Israeli degree candidates), and eight undergraduate students. BGU’s MA program began in 1998 and its PhD program, started in 2001, became an autonomous degree-granting program only in 2009. The MA program began in 1998, with a separate “international” MA program, MAPMES, established in 2002. To date, six doctoral degrees have been awarded for dissertations that cover a range of topics.

Dissertation committee members include a mix of BGU faculty and colleagues drawn from Israeli and US institutions. For example, a dissertation committee for a thesis based on an ethnographic study of Islamic law courts in East Jerusalem had as a member an anthropologist at a major US East Coast university. Drawing on faculty from other universities works well when the faculty have an effective prior working relationship with faculty members at the degree-granting institution. This is the case for the BGU Ph.D. committees. Students at all levels found faculty members accessible and supportive in their research and studies.

Unlike many Middle East programs elsewhere in Israel, Arabic is taught within the Middle East Department. Structurally this is a plus for the program, although inadequate staffing is a shortcoming. Likewise, Middle East Languages and Literatures is an integral part of this Middle East studies program, rather than a separate department as occurs elsewhere. This is an added plus that means that the quality of supervised graduate studies more readily emulates the standards of cultural studies as currently understood internationally. A recent doctoral dissertation on an Arab author, for example, set the analysis in the context both of a prominent European sociologist concerned with literature as well as others directly engaged in literary studies, and the published work of the BGU faculty indicate a strong and persuasive ability to contribute to a range of disciplines in literary studies, history, and social thought.

Indicative of the growth in quality of the department, the topics of departmental MA theses show a similar diversity in topic and methodology that at the same time reflect the

engagement of departmental faculty, faculty in other departments and programs at BGU, and faculty elsewhere in Israel and overseas. In our meetings with graduate students at both the doctoral and master's level, students emphasized their ability to cross the lines between departments and programs when such crossings into other departments were relevant to their academic program. Financial support for PhD students, as for MA students appears to be more generous than for programs elsewhere in Israel.

Finally, mention must be made of the MAPMES program for students from abroad. After interviewing four MAPMES students in a session that also included four regular MA students, the Committee was favorably impressed both as to the quality of the education being imparted and to the constructive interrelations between the Israeli and international students. The Committee feels that the department has made a sound decision in keeping the MAPMES program fairly small. A review of MA and PhD theses presented in English, the abstracts of those presented in Hebrew plus a review of the sources used in Arabic and European languages, and interviews with graduate students indicates a high level of graduate work.

3. Library and infrastructure

The Achilles heel of this generally outstanding program is the library. With no staff expert on Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies or in Arabic, there is little hope of achieving a significant improvement in the collection in the immediate future. The Self-Evaluation study indicates that each department is responsible for recommending books for purchase and allocates budgets by department. The amounts allocated to Middle East Studies in recent years—\$8,000 (2009), \$9,000 (2008), and \$5,500 (2007)—strike us as inadequate even for quality undergraduate instruction. Students spoke of the need to plan trips to Haifa and elsewhere in Israel to obtain books needed for their research. A dedicated librarian and an increase in budget are needed if BGU is to retain its domestic and international standing in Middle East Studies. Ironically, the presence of the MAPMES program exacerbates the problem since the non-Israeli students are amazed at the poor quality of the library, experience the absence of library resources firsthand, and carry their bad impressions home with them to Europe and North America when they complete the MAPMES program.

No other major infrastructural deficiencies came to the Committee's attention.

Chapter 4: Recommendations and timetable

1. Immediate

The poor state of the library requires immediate remediation. Some of the steps that need to be taken involve other libraries and are specified in the Committee's General Report. Locally, high priority should be given to hiring a specialist on the Middle East with suitable skills in Arabic and to increasing the acquisitions budget.

A full faculty appointment is also needed in the Department's Arabic language and culture program. Unlike other Israeli programs where Arabic is the domain of a separate department, Ben-Gurion's Department of Middle Eastern Studies encompasses all Arabic instruction. This contributes to the Department's strength. The absence of a tenured or tenure-

track faculty member with credentials in Arabic linguistics and pedagogy is a serious deficiency that needs to be corrected to ensure the continuation of the high quality of this part of the Department's mandate.

The Committee feels that strongly supporting the Arabic Languages and Literatures component of the Department and not allowing it to be spun off as a separate department will contribute strongly to the Department as currently constituted and to its Arabic languages and literatures component.

2. Intermediate

The Department should continually reassess the relative need for full-time and adjunct faculty. To achieve the international prominence that the structure of the program and the quality of its senior faculty merit—a prominence that at this point is emerging—the Department should consider reducing the number of adjuncts and redeploying the savings to add another full-time tenure-track faculty member. Since the quality of the adjuncts is very high, this would not be an easy decision; but it should nevertheless be discussed, particularly if no new positions are offered to the Department.

3. Long term

The Department has already shown a keen awareness of the need to replace faculty as they retire. Since no retirements are immediately in the offing, decisions about the specializations of new faculty can be postponed for some years. But the question should be addressed with sufficient lead time to appraise fully the impact of faculty change on the program as a whole to avoid the serious problems noted at other institutions with Middle East programs in Israel.

Signed by:



Prof. Dale F. Eickelman,
Chair



Prof. Ilai Alon



Prof. Jere Bacharach



Prof. Richard W. Bulliet

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



March 23rd, 2010

Prof. Dale Eickelman
Department of Anthropology
Dartmouth College
USA

שר החינוך
Minister of Education
وزير التربية والتعليم

Dear Professor Eickelman,

The State of Israel undertook an ambitious project when the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) established a quality assessment and assurance system for Israeli higher education. Its stated goals are: 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. Involvement of world-renowned academicians in this process is essential.

This most important initiative reaches out to scientists in the international arena in a national effort to meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher educational system today. The formulation of international evaluation committees represents an opportunity to express our common sense of concern and to assess the current and future status of education in the 21st century and beyond. It also establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process among scientists around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

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

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 Middle Eastern Studies.

The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Dale Eickelman (Chair), Prof. Emmanuel Sivan (Co-Chair), Prof. Ilai Alon, Prof. Jere Bacharach, and Prof. Richard Bulliet.

Ms. Marissa Gross will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as the chair of the Evaluation Committee, you will be requested to function in accordance with the enclosed appendix.

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

Sincerely,

Gideon Sa'ar
Minister of Education,
Chairperson, The Council for Higher Education

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Ms. Riki Mendelzvaig, Secretary of the Council for Higher Education
Ms. Michal Neumann, Head of the Quality Assessment Unit
Ms. Marissa Gross, Committee Coordinator

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November 2009

Appendix to the Letter of Appointment for Evaluation Committees (Study Programs)

1. General

On June 3, 2003 the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to establish a system for quality assessment and assurance in Israeli higher education, which came into effect in the academic year of 2004-2005. Within this framework, study-programs are to be evaluated approximately every six

The main objectives of the quality assessment activity are:

- To enhance the quality of higher education in Israel;
- To create an awareness within institutions of higher education in Israel to the importance of quality evaluation and to develop an internal culture of self-evaluation, as well as the required mechanisms;
- To provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel;
- To ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

It is not the CHE's intention to rank the institutions of higher education according to the results of the quality assessment processes. The evaluation Committee (hereinafter "Committee") should refrain from formal comparisons.

2. The Work of the Evaluation Committee

2.1 The Committee shall hold meetings, as needed, before visiting the institution, in order to evaluate the material received.

2.2 The Committee shall visit the institutions and the academic units being evaluated – if possible - within 4-6 months of receiving the self-evaluation reports. The purpose of the visit is to verify and update the information submitted in the self-evaluation report, clarify matters where necessary, inspect the educational environment and facilities first hand, etc. During the visit, the Committee will meet with the heads of the institution, faculty members, students, alumni, administrative staff, and any other persons it considers necessary.

2.3 The duration of the visits (at least one full day) will be coordinated with the chairperson of the Committee.

2.4 Following the visit, the Committee will submit the CHE with:

1. A final report on each of the evaluated departments,
2. A general reports on the state of the discipline in the Israeli higher education system.
The general report will include recommendations to the CHE for standards and potential state-wide changes in the evaluated field of study.

2.5 The reports will be sent to the institutions and the academic units for their response.

2.6 The reports and Committee's findings will be submitted to the CHE and discussed within its various forums.

3. Conflict of Interest Policy

3.1 In order to avoid situations that may question the credibility and integrity of the evaluation process, and in order to maintain its ethical, professional and impartial manner, before issuing their Letter of Appointment members and chairperson of the evaluation Committee will sign a Declaration on Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality.

3.2 In the event that a member of the Committee is also a current or former faculty member at an institution being evaluated, he/she will not take part in any visits or discussions regarding that institution.

4. The Individual Reports

4.1 The final reports of the evaluation Committee shall address every institution separately.

4.2 The final reports shall include recommendations on topics listed in the guidelines for self-evaluation, including:

- The goals, aims and mission statement of the evaluated academic unit and study programs
- The study program
- The academic faculty
- The students
- The organizational structure
- Research
- The broader organizational structure (school/faculty) in which the academic unit and study program operate
- The infrastructure (both physical and administrative) available to the study program
- Internal mechanisms for quality assessment
- Other topics to be decided upon by the evaluation Committee

5. The Recommended Structure of the Reports

Part A – General background and executive summary:

5.1 General background concerning the evaluation process; the names of the members of the Committee and its coordinator; and a short overview of the Committee's procedures.

5.2 A general description of the institution and the academic unit being evaluated.

5.3 An executive summary that will include a brief description of the strengths and weaknesses of the academic unit and program being evaluated.

Part B – In-depth description of subjects examined:

5.4 This section will be based on evidence gathered from the self-evaluation report and the topics examined by the Committee during the site visit.

5.5 For each topic examined, the report will present a summary of the Committee's findings, the relevant information, and their analysis.

Part C –Recommendations:

5.6 This section will include comprehensive conclusions and recommendations regarding the evaluated academic unit and the study program according to the topics in part B.

5.7 Recommendations may be classified according to the following categories:

- ***Congratulatory remarks and minimal changes recommended, if any.***
- ***Desirable changes recommended*** at the institution's convenience and follow-up in the next cycle of evaluations.
- ***Important/needed changes requested for ensuring appropriate academic quality*** within a reasonable time, in coordination with the institution (1-3 years)
- ***Essential and urgent changes required, on which continued authorization will be contingent*** (immediately or up to one year).
- ***A combination of any of the above.***

Part D - Appendices:

5.8 The appendices shall contain the Committee's letter of appointment and the schedule of the on-site visit.

6. The General report

In addition to the individual reports concerning each study program, the Committee shall submit to the CHE a general report regarding the status of the evaluated field of study within the Israeli institutions of higher education. The report should also evaluate the state and status of Israeli faculty members and students in the international arena (in the field), as well as offer recommendations to the CHE for standards and potential state-wide changes in the evaluated field of study.

We urge the Committees to clearly list its specific recommendations for each one of the topics (both in the individual reports and in the general report) and to prioritize these recommendations, in order to ease the eventual monitoring of their implementation.

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule



The Department of Middle East Studies –schedule of site visit- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Evaluation Committee meeting, room 326, Building 74

DAY 1:

Time	Subject	Participants	Title
9:00-9:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Zvi Hacoheh Prof Yael Edan Prof. Moshe Justman Dr. Relli Shechter	Elected Rector Deputy Rector Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences Head of Department
9:30-10:15	Meeting with the heads of the Department of Middle East Studies	Dr. Relli Shechter Dr. Nimrod Hurvitz	Head of Department Former Head of Department
10:15-11:00	Meeting with representatives of departmental teaching committees	Dr. Muhammad al-Atawneh Dr. Haggai Ram Dr. Avi Rubin	Teaching Committee (B.A.) Graduate Studies (M.A. and Ph.D.) MAPMES (international M.A.)
11:00-11:30	Meeting with the heads of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	Prof. Moshe Justman Ms. Rachel Danry	Dean Head of Faculty Administration

Time	Subject	Participants	Title
11:30-12:30	Meeting with all Senior Academic Faculty*	Prof. Aref Abu-Rabia Dr. Iris Agmon Dr. Muhammad Al-Atawneh Dr. Yair Huri Dr. Nimrod Hurvitz Prof. Yoram Meital Prof. Benny Morris Dr. Haggai Ram Dr. Avi Rubin Prof. Meir Zamir	
12:30-13:15	Lunch (closed working meeting at room 343, Building 74)		
13:15-13:45	Special Departmental projects	Dr. Yair Huri Prof. Yoram Meital	Editor, <i>Jama'a</i> ; organizer, international workshop Chairman, The Chaim Herzog Center

Time	Subject	Participants	Title
13:45-14:45	Meeting with Junior academic faculty*	Ms. Sharon Maftzir Ms. Orly Rahimiyan Ms. Haya Sasportas Mr. Ilan Shdema Ms. Dafna Sharef	
14:45-15:30	Meeting with adjunct lecturers*	Dr. Alon Fragman Dr. Nitzan Amitai-Preiss Ms. Sheila Moussaiey Dr. Ariel Sheetrit Dr. Ursula Wokoock	Coordinator, Arabic Studies Adjunct Lecturer Adjunct Lecturer Adjunct Lecturer and Post Doc. Adjunct Lecturer
15:30-16:00	Closed-door working meeting of the evaluation committee		

DAY 2:

Time	Subject	Participants	Title
9:00-9:45	Meeting with B.A. students**	1 st year Ohad Shemesh Shai Tal 2 nd year Nadem Abu-Hadoba Dotan Shmuel Ya'ara Sigler 3 rd year Elad Ben-Aroche Shai Gortler Riki Wiskop	
9:45-10:30	Meeting with M.A. students**	M.A., regular Hala Abu-Shareb Adi Efrigan Oded Ra'anan Shuli Zilberfarb M.A., international Eyal Bar Erin Pocock Lara Portnoy Jesus Rodriguez	
10:30-11:15	Meeting with Ph.D. students**	Safa Abu-Rabia Shahar Ajami Ofer Goterman Nina Menashe Aviad Moreno Monika Livia Orlinschi Haya Sasportas Orit Yekutieli	
11:15-11:45	Tour of campus (Including classes, offices of faculty members, library)	Dr. Relli Shechter Ms. Sivan Revensari Ms. Zahava Wiesshous	Head of Department Secretary for Student Affairs Senior Librarian

Time	Subject	Participants	Title
11:45-12:30	Closed-door working meeting of the evaluation committee		
12:30-13:15	Lunch (closed working meeting at room 343, Building 74)		
13:15-14:00	Summation meeting with heads of the institution and of the Dept. of Middle Eastern Studies	Prof. Zvi Hacohen Prof. Yael Edan Prof. Moshe Justman Dr. Relli Shechter Prof. Meir Zamir	Elected Rector Deputy Rector Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences Head of Department Former Head of Department

* 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.