



Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Humanities

Tel Aviv University

Report of the External Evaluation Team

for

The Council for Higher Education

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The following document is the Evaluation Committee's report on the Department of Philosophy of Tel Aviv University to the Quality Assessment Unit of the Council for Higher Education (CHE). In keeping with the template provided by the CHE, the report is divided into three parts, A: General Background and Executive Summary, B: In-depth description of subjects examined, and C: Recommendations.

Part A – General Background, Committee Procedures and Executive Summary

General Background

The report is based upon the Evaluation Committee's interviews on the Tel Aviv campus and its study of the Department's Self-Evaluation Report (December 2008). The Evaluation Committee (EC) is composed of Professors Paul Davies, Richard Eldridge, Jacob Joshua Ross, Gila Sher, and the committee's chair, Daniel Dahlstrom. Ms. Michal Kabatznik served as the CHE appointed coordinator. Each member of the committee received and studied the Department's Self-Evaluation Report individually in advance of the committee's meeting in Tel Aviv. Shortly before its on-site visit, the members of the EC met and conferred to determine the number and ranking of questions to pose during its interviews as well as to assign different members of the committee with the responsibility of leading the respective discussions with the different groups of interviewees. The Department of Philosophy in Tel Aviv University, housed mainly on the third floor of Gilman Building in the Ramat Aviv campus, is the largest such department in Israel, teaching philosophy to undergraduate and graduate students alike.

The EC conducted its interviews of the Tel Aviv University Department of Philosophy on Monday and Tuesday, April 22 and 23, 2009. In successive meetings on the first day, the EC met with members of the university administration (including the rector, vice-rector, the head of university quality assessment, the dean of the faculty of humanities, administrative director), the head of the department, the head of the department's quality assessment, representatives of relevant departmental committees, and senior academic faculty, members of the faculty, students, and alumni. On the second day, the EC had meetings with the following groups: junior academic faculty, adjunct lecturers, untenured tenure track faculty, BA, MA, and PhD students as well as Alumni, followed by a summation meeting with leading members of the administration as well as the heads of the department and of the department's quality assessment. The EC was highly satisfied with the level of forthrightness, cooperation, and seriousness of those who participated in these meetings. No question went unanswered or was evaded. The EC was also satisfied with the clarity and frankness, organization and detail of the Department's Self-Evaluation Report.

Committee Procedures

The Committee members received the self-evaluation reports in January, 2009, and discussed them via email.

The Committee held its first meeting on April 19th, 2009, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel and the quality assessment activity, as well as General Philosophy study programs.

In April and June, 2009, the Committee members visited the institutions offering General Philosophy study programs. During the visits, the Committee met various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report deals with the Committee's general impression of the field of General Philosophy within the Israeli system of higher education.

The Committee wishes to thank the management of the institutions and the general philosophy departments for their self-evaluation reports and for their hospitality towards the Committee during its visits.

Executive Summary

The Department successfully carries out an enormous and ambitious program of teaching multiple traditions of philosophy to a large number of students, at undergraduate and graduate levels, while conducting research of the highest international standards across those many traditions. In the faculty, students, and alumni interviewed by the EC, it found a resounding affirmation of the philosophical education that the Department enables and a strong sense of its vital importance to Israel. The Department exemplifies the virtue of encompassing a plurality of philosophical traditions and, thanks to its success in maintaining this profile; it exemplifies the place and critical role that philosophy can be accorded in the cultural and intellectual life of Israel. As the rest of this report elaborates in some detail, the conditions under which students study and under which members of the faculty teach and research are far less than optimal. Yet in spite of these conditions and even some recent declines in enrollment, the number of students committed to the study of philosophy at undergraduate and graduate levels remains unparalleled in the world, a fact no doubt closely tied to the faculty's profound and recognized engagement in teaching and research. For all these reasons, the EC found the state of philosophical education in the context of Tel Aviv's Department of Philosophy admirable and inspiring.

At the same time, the EC has doubts about the long-term prospects of this situation. The department is facing two major, related challenges that, if not faced, do not bode well for its future. The first major challenge concerns the ratio of students to faculty (773 students to 17.5 faculty). At approximately 44:1, this ratio is simply too high to guarantee an adequate educational experience and a sufficiently high quality of instruction. The size of the faculty is simply too small. As a result, many courses, particularly at the introductory level, are simply too large for a single instructor. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of tutorials (teaching assistants) in the introductory courses and by the practice of providing graders only for classes in excess of 91 students. At the same time, the heavy use of adjuncts and teaching assistants (the latter both in tutorials and in courses of their own) indicates that the present number of faculty members is insufficient to cover the department's curricular obligations to students. Adding to this problem are the retirements, in 2008 and 2009, of two senior members of the faculty. New arrangements for adjuncts, permitting them to teach more while receiving some benefits as "teaching fellows," are a welcome development that may help the situation. But while reliance upon adjuncts has some "side benefits," overreliance upon non-tenured and/or non-permanent faculty is unhealthy for the integrity of the program. We thus concur with the Department that "the shortage in tenure-track members of the department is an evident and pressing problem."

The second major challenge concerns the philosophical diversity of the faculty itself. Due to recent retirements of philosophers specializing in analytic philosophy, the department's ability to expose students to this central tradition has been severely compromised. The lack of professors who concentrate on the philosophy of language and logic, metaphysics and epistemology, and the philosophy of mind also undermines the department's commitment to providing students access to a plurality of philosophical traditions.

Both of the foregoing mentioned, major challenges are documented in greater detail later below. Indeed, problems with both the size of the faculty and the balance of

traditions of research among the members of the faculty are recurrent themes of the report. However, the EC also found other substantial challenges facing the department that, while also detailed below, deserve mention in this executive summary. These include: insufficient funding of graduate students, the lack of a placement service for graduating MA's and PhD's, the lack of a mentoring program for junior faculty, inadequate oversight of teaching assistants, an overworked administrative staff, a deplorable physical infrastructure (faculty lack adequate office space and computer equipment), and a drastic (50%) reduction of library expenditures that impairs the facility of learning and research. While seemingly daunting, the deficiencies represented by these challenges also underscore the diligence and enterprise of all the members of the faculty, since they manage collectively to teach and research with remarkable effectiveness in spite of these difficulties.

There is one additional note deserving mention, on a topic that pertains equally to research and teaching: the potential parochialism of the faculty. More than half of the full time professors, lecturers, and adjuncts received their doctorates from TAU. There may be special reasons for this situation (e.g., advantages of hiring instructors with an appreciation for and loyalty to TAU's distinctive practices and traditions, the limited pool of Hebrew-speaking scholars). Nevertheless, the EC strongly suggests that, all things being equal, it is in the best interests of the department to keep at least the number of full time professors and lecturers from TAU below the 50% threshold.

In conclusion, we would like to iterate our conclusion that the Department of Philosophy at TAU is a highly successful, vibrant community of enthusiastic and deeply committed students as well as dedicated professors who are also renowned scholars. The challenges confronting the Department are considerable but hardly insurmountable and the faculty, together with the administration, have clearly demonstrated that, with the proper support, they have the will and wherewithal to face them successfully.

Part B – In-depth description of subjects examined

This part of the EC's report is divided into five sections, each of which corresponds to a separate section or chapter of the Department's Self-Evaluation Report:

1. Departmental aims and self-conception
2. Research profile and academic staffing needs
3. Study program
 - 3.1 Undergraduate program: (BA)
 - 3.1 Graduate programs (MA & PhD)
4. Teaching and learning
5. Self-administration and physical infrastructure

1. Departmental Aims and Self-conception

The Department aims to teach and conduct research in philosophy on remarkably broad areas and levels of specialization. It prides itself in its diversity and openness, thanks to a vision of philosophy as a branch of knowledge that demands “the utmost rigor of thought and an extensive training in its complex tradition,” while serving as “a central part of humanistic and scientific culture”. In addition to largely sharing a commitment to this spirit of pluralism, the faculty and students regard philosophy and, in particular, the work done in the department of philosophy as a key part of the culture of Israel. It was apparent, from interviews with faculty and students alike, that they do an enormous amount of the work of teaching and research under very difficult conditions and that much of the motivation for that extraordinary diligence is their sense of accountability for helping cultivate an intellectually responsible citizenry. The Department is to be complimented for its admirable aims and understanding of itself as well as its considerable effectiveness in realizing its vision of itself. Nevertheless, the Department’s ability to achieve its aims is increasingly in peril in at least two aspects. First, by any normal standards, faculty members are overworked, in large part because of the sheer number of students whose education is in their hands. Second, the balance of traditions sought by the Department has been jeopardized by departures of various faculty members who have not been replaced. We treat these twin perils to the department's profile and self-understanding in more detail below, before making specific recommendations regarding them in Part C.

2. Research Profile and Academic Staffing Needs

This section corresponds to Chapter 4 of the Department's Self-Evaluation Report. We regard research and teaching as equally important parts of a major philosophy department such as the Department at Tel Aviv and, hence, we place our evaluation of the research profile and academic staffing needs ahead of the discussion of the study programs in order to offset the impression that research plays second fiddle to teaching.

The Philosophy Department at Tel Aviv is home to an extremely large graduate research community. Both faculty and students attest to the collegiality underpinning their work. Students are clearly aware of their teachers’ research and are encouraged, from the first, to feel part of a research active institution. The Department demonstrates a serious and energetic commitment to top quality research. It has nourished a culture within which an eclectic range of interests and projects thrive. The Department's Self-Evaluation Report

outlines the research of 21 members of faculty. Much of the output is of the highest standard, appearing in prestigious journals and with publishers of international repute. Many of the faculty have established links with universities in the US and Europe and there is a healthy grant application and award record. The content of the research is far-reaching. It extends across a variety of fields, including: aesthetics and the philosophy of art, the history of modern philosophy, phenomenology, and political philosophy. There are distinctive contributions to Chinese, Indian and Comparative philosophies. There are also many interdisciplinary projects with the other Humanities departments, with the Faculty of Social Science, the School of Law, and the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science. These links seem well established and bode well for the future.

The focus of the early and mid-career faculty falls very much within comparative philosophy and European (continental) philosophy. With respect to the latter, it has led to articles and monographs that engage fruitfully with work in literary criticism, linguistics, psychoanalysis, critical theory, and art history. It has also led to distinctive treatments of Kant and Wittgenstein. It is a focus that is clearly proving very successful in attracting graduate students.

However, the Department has traditionally had a very strong profile in the two main streams of contemporary philosophy: analytic philosophy as well as continental philosophy. Indeed, the department understands itself as a pluralist department, committed to a balance of different philosophical approaches. Yet in recent years, the department has lost a large number of faculty from the analytic stream, and today it is in danger of losing its position as a premiere analytic philosophy department. The recent losses in the analytic field include several key figures of considerable stature in the profession. In addition, one analytic philosopher has shifted her research to continental philosophy, and another has been on leave for a long time and her return to the department is uncertain. Finally, one of the young analytic philosophers in the department holds only half a position in philosophy. These changes in the faculty in recent years have undermined the earlier balance. As a result of the departure of several faculty members who specialize in some aspect of “analytical” philosophy, particularly in the areas of philosophy of logic and philosophy of language, hiring philosophers with this specialization is an urgent need of the Department and its highest hiring priority.

It is absolutely essential both for the quality of the department's program at all levels and for the department's standing in the world that it reestablish the balance between analytic and non-analytic philosophy and hire additional full time faculty in the analytic area. In Part C we shall accordingly recommend in particular hiring in the philosophy of language and mind, epistemology and metaphysics, and logic. For the purpose of both replacing retiring professors and achieving a size commensurate with its curricular obligations, the Department needs more tenure-track faculty in general (as mentioned above). One means of addressing the present situation – understaffing in general and understaffing in analytical philosophy in particular – would be to pursue Alon Fellowships more aggressively.

Given the Department's size and its singular potential among Israeli universities for fermenting philosophical discussion both nationally and internationally, it would be highly advantageous for the Department (both students and faculty) for it to develop more faculty exchanges with other departments of philosophy, both in and outside Israel. In addition to the intrinsic philosophical merits of increasing discussion among philosophers and

students, pursuit of such exchanges holds great promise for meeting academic staffing needs particularly in a time of sharp fiscal constraints.

The EC was surprised to hear that there are few attempts to work together with scholars from the Islamic tradition on philosophical projects (particularly for an Arab-less faculty that prides itself on its progressive impact on Israeli). It remains unclear whether study of the medieval Arabic tradition in philosophy, so vital to the development of philosophy in the West, is adequately represented in other departments (e.g., Arabic and Islamic studies) and, if so, whether the Philosophy Department interacts significantly with them. It was disturbing to hear about problems currently befalling a project that had been set up with al Quds University. It is very much hoped that the department will be able to continue to work with Arabic-speaking philosophers and in the area of Islamic thought.

Several members of the department complained about the relatively low weighting accorded research in Hebrew. According to some members, such publications "do not count at all." The issues here are complex but, given their far-reaching consequences, they need to be addressed. Since this issue is not unique to TAU, our recommendations in regard to it will be directed at the CHE.

Although members of the faculty acknowledge the generous support given by the university to their research (leave arrangements, travel bursaries, etc.) and the regular opportunities they have to teach their research specialties, the student:faculty ratio at Tel Aviv is higher than that at any philosophy department in a major research university in the US or the UK. This point is connected, of course, with what is said elsewhere in the report about teaching arrangements, but it is a point surely worth making here as well. The situation in regard to research is also exacerbated by the fact that at least three members of the Department will be retiring in the next five to six years. The department and the University need to consider carefully the effects these departures are likely to have on the overall research profile of Philosophy. The current, severely restricted library provision in Philosophy also presents a considerable obstacle to conducting research.

3. Study Program

This section reviews the organization of the BA, MA, and PhD programs in the Department, based upon both Section 3.2 in the Department's Self-Evaluation Report and our interviews. In AY 07-08 there were 547 undergraduate students pursuing BA's in philosophy, 171 graduate students pursuing MA's, and 55 PhD students – or a total of 773 students overall.

3.1 Undergraduate Program (BA)

There are two programs awarding a Bachelor of Arts: a Dual-Major program (56 credits taken in the philosophy department) and an Extended-Major program (76 credits taken in the philosophy department). The two programs share the following requisites: three courses in the history of philosophy (6 credits), one course in formal logic (4 credits), three guided readings in works of Descartes, Hume, and Kant (8 credits), four introductory courses to particular fields: metaphysics and epistemology, ethics and political philosophy, logic and philosophy of language, Eastern Asian and Comparative philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of religion and Jewish philosophy, philosophy of science and digital culture (8 credits), and a proficiency exam. The Dual-Major program also requires two middle-level classes and two seminars in two fields of specialization respectively (16 credits), along

with two electives in chosen fields of study and an elective in any field (14 credits). The Extended-Major differs by requiring three middle-level classes and seminars in three fields of specialization (24 credits), elective classes in those fields (12 credits), and general elective classes (14 credits). Both programs provide students with a balance of breadth and rigor, the sort of balance appropriate to a well-conceived undergraduate degree in philosophy. Students expressed their appreciation for the variety of offerings, the high quality of instruction, and the guided readings courses in particular. Not surprisingly, students were less enthusiastic about the introductory courses which, in contrast to the guided readings courses, do not include tutorials. We concur; particularly given the student-to-faculty ratio and the value of the tutorial experience, the Department should consider ways to introduce more tutorials in the first year of studies. Both for this purpose and for the sake of having smaller discussion sessions, the Department needs more teaching assistants than it presently has. We realize that it might not be possible for the Administration to make additional teaching assistants available to the Department. But the need for them is patent, they have a direct and positive impact on the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning, and, hence, we urge the Administration to begin, even incrementally, to deploy resources accordingly. Some students also complained about the fact that a large number of MA graduate students are teaching the courses and about the resulting lack of access to full and associate professors. These complaints corroborate the EC's general assessment that the department is overreaching, trying to do too much with too little resources. The EC also learned from its interviews with teaching assistants that they are relatively unprepared and unsupervised. So while the program is well-designed, its implementation leaves something to be desired (as discussed in more detail below under "B-4. Teaching and Learning"). One policy in particular strikes us as ill-advised, namely, that of not allowing graders for courses with less than 91 students.

3.2 Graduate programs (MA & PhD)

The graduate program is thriving, with a large number of students, a distinguished faculty, a broad array of courses, and uncommonly upbeat students. Students report that their professors are very accessible, and their satisfaction with the program, including the curriculum and the attention they receive, is (on the whole though not unqualifiedly) very high. Morale among graduate students is also high, and they have great enthusiasm about, and appreciation of, their philosophical studies. Senior faculty are engaged in research, teaching, and mentoring, as well as in public activities, and the program as a whole is rich and dynamic. The program offers both MA and PhD tracks, although technically the PhD tracks belong to the "School of Philosophy". Altogether, there are four tracks: (i) MA with Masters thesis (Research Track); (ii) MA without thesis (Academic Track); (iii) Standard PhD track (following an MA with a thesis); (iv) Direct PhD Track (directly from 1-2 years of MA studies without thesis). We commend the philosophy department for the level of excellence and congeniality of the graduate program.

We examined the following main structural features and issues regarding the graduate program: (1) the size and standards of the program; (2) the program's teaching staff relative to the fields within contemporary philosophy and its connections with fields outside philosophy; (3) other structural problems; (4) the prospects and merits of direct vs. indirect tracks to the doctorate; (5) receiving one's entire education from the same department; and (6) job prospects and placement for graduates.

3.21 Size & Standards

The size of the graduate program, in terms of the numbers of its students, is a quite large, with 171 M.A. students, and 45 PhD students. However, with only 17.5 senior faculty, the number of its faculty is relatively small for a graduate program of this size. As a result, there is a patent shortage of faculty to teach the large number of MA & PhD students. (This problem was iterated by the department chair, heads of departmental committees, faculty, and students). This is especially worrisome in view of the fact that the department is expecting a few retirements in the next few years.

The standards of admissions to the different tracks are uneven to the detriment of both tracks. On the one hand, students who receive a grade of 60 ('D' in American universities) are allowed to enroll in the Academic MA track, a standard that strikes us as overly weak. The excessively weak requirements for the Academic M.A. Track lowers the level of the graduate program. On the other hand, the academic standards for the Direct PhD Track are very high. In addition to getting a grade of 90 in their MA studies (including a grade of 90 for two seminar papers, submitted to two different teachers), students are required to have received a grade of 90 in their past BA studies. The latter requirement strikes us as unreasonably high. The excessively high requirements for the Direct PhD Track prevents many qualified students to be eligible for this track which is in many respects superior to the Standard PhD Track (see 3.2.4 below). If a student proves his or her abilities in MA studies (including seminar papers), why should he/she be required to have excelled in the student's past BA studies?

In view of these findings regarding the department's size and standards, the EC makes specific recommendations in Part C below.

3.22 Fields of philosophy and connections with fields outside philosophy

The department has faculty specializing in a wide array of topics, including the History of Philosophy, Analytic (contemporary Anglo-American) philosophy, Continental (contemporary European) philosophy, and Chinese, Indian, and Islamic philosophy, and covering such diverse fields as the philosophy of language, logic, knowledge, mind, metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, etc. In addition, the department offers courses in the philosophy and history of science, through its connections with the Cohn Institute.

However, while the department prides itself in being a pluralist department, this pluralist balance is imperiled, as already noted, by the departure of several professors who specialize in analytic philosophy. This imbalance does not bode well for the graduate program in particular since it denies graduate students exposure and access to the techniques and approaches of a central tradition of the international philosophical community. In Part C we shall accordingly recommend in particular hiring philosophers in the analytic tradition who specialize in the philosophy of language and mind, epistemology and metaphysics, and/or logic.

It is also essential for a graduate program that focuses on a variety of "philosophies of ..." (mind, language, science, logic, aesthetics, etc.) and "... philosophies" (political, social, Chinese, Indian, Islamic, etc.) that it forge strong connections with related disciplines in the university. Graduate students should be allowed and, in some cases, encouraged to take advanced courses in other departments. It is our impression that the department has

not established sufficient interdisciplinary connections and this impression is the source of interdisciplinary recommendations in Part C.

3.23 Other Structural Problems

There are additional structural problems in the graduate program that present MA and PhD students with the following, particular challenges: (1) as is evident from 3.1 above, MA students teach an inordinate amount, robbing them of time that they might otherwise profitably devote to their own studies and research; (2) there is a severe shortage of financial aid (in the form of scholarships or fellowships) for MA and PhD students alike; (3) PhD students lack opportunities to give public lectures and, more generally, for preparation for academic careers, and (4) PhD students lack the opportunity to participate in small, high-level seminars, which are extremely valuable, and are offered in all (or almost all) other top PhD programs, both in Israel and abroad. These seminars could be designed exclusively for PhD students or for PhD and Research MA students.

3.24 Direct vs. Indirect PhD Track

Graduate students at Tel Aviv University have two PhD tracks: (i) the standard or indirect track which requires an M.A. degree and an M.A. thesis; (ii) the direct track which requires 1-2 years of M.A. studies but not an M.A. degree or an M.A. thesis. In contrast to the United States, most PhD students at Tel Aviv University take the indirect track to the PhD. They pursue the indirect track in spite of the fact that (a) most students are very well prepared when they join the graduate philosophy program (most have a B.A. in philosophy and have taken at least half of their B.A. classes in philosophy), (b) most PhD students begin their academic studies at a later age than in universities abroad, (c) completion of the PhD in the direct track is (or should be) shorter than in the indirect track, and (d) the university supports and encourages the direct PhD track. In short, in spite of the obvious advantages of taking the direct PhD track, both for students and for the university, in terms of efficiency, support, and time, most PhD students prefer the indirect track, and the philosophy faculty recommend the direct track only to a selective few.

We are not sure why graduate students at Tel Aviv University (and Israeli universities more generally) do not opt for the direct PhD track. Among the reasons students cite are a need to write an M.A. thesis in order to prepare themselves for the rigors of a PhD thesis, a preference for making a short-term commitment than a long term commitment to graduate studies (take one step at a time), and a lack of any real advantages for the direct track, either in terms of time or in terms of financial support. It appears that choosing the Indirect (Standard) PhD Track is partly a matter of flaws in the program itself, i.e., the noted lack of advantages in doing so. But beyond that it is not clear to us whether choosing the indirect PhD track is mainly a matter of tradition and habit or a matter of rational decision-making. On the one hand, it is unreasonable to think that Israeli students require more preparation for a PhD thesis than American students. If anything, Israeli students are often better prepared for graduate studies in philosophy since they usually devote a full half of their undergraduate studies to philosophy courses. Moreover, Israeli students, who are older than typical American students, have a greater interest in shortening the duration of their graduate studies than American students and experience abroad suggests that the quality of PhD theses is not negatively affected by taking the direct track. On the other hand, it is possible that young Israelis face greater uncertainties

than their peers abroad, and as a result it is rational for them to prefer short- rather than long-term educational commitments. In light of these considerations we introduce a set of recommendations regarding the direct track in Part C.

3.25 Receiving one's entire education from the same department

Unlike PhD students in the United States, most PhD students in the philosophy department at Tel Aviv University receive their entire philosophical education (B.A., M.A., and PhD) at the same university. This has the undesirable consequence that they interact with a relatively small number of teachers and mentors, and are exposed to a limited number of approaches to, and points of view on, philosophy. This problem is common to all Israeli departments, and its solution requires a concerted effort and cooperation of all the five philosophy departments, but it has greater impact on PhD students in departments which, like the Tel Aviv philosophy department, tend to hire their own former students as permanent faculty. We recognize the complexities of this issue: partly it is a function of the small number of philosophy departments in a small country. Partly, it may be connected to special circumstances of Israeli PhD students. We are also aware of the fact that some top departments attain, and continue to preserve, excellence by cultivating their own top students. But on balance it seems to us that graduates of the B.A. philosophy program in Tel Aviv University will benefit from receiving their graduate education in another philosophy department (in Israel or abroad). Moreover, the philosophy graduate program in Tel Aviv University will benefit from recruiting at least some of its students from among the graduates of B.A. philosophy programs in other Israeli universities.

3.26 Job prospects and placement for M.A. and PhD students

Whereas graduate philosophy programs in the United States offer placements programs for their graduates, both as part of, and in addition to, programs offered by the respective university as a whole, philosophy graduate students at Tel Aviv University (and other Israeli universities) have no placement services at all. This is especially unfortunate in view of the fact that job opportunities are so few and difficult to come by. The number of tenure track openings in philosophy departments is very small, and the competition is very tough (and includes Israelis who receive their PhD from top international universities), so that PhD's have to pursue other alternatives. Our impression is that students are not aware of all the job opportunities available to them even in Israel, for example, teaching positions in Israeli colleges (which do not have philosophy departments yet offer philosophy classes), fellowship opportunities (such as the Alon, Lady Davis, and Kreitman fellowships), and so on. In short, a director of placement is wanting.

4. Teaching and Learning

This section focuses on practices, strategies, attitudes, and accomplishments in teaching and learning, in contrast to curricular structures and requirements (see "**3. Study Program**" above).

4.1 General assessment of the pedagogical situation

Three facts about the teaching of philosophy at TAU in general are most prominent:

- (1) The faculty is understaffed.

Tel Aviv's department is possibly the largest philosophy department in the world in numbers of students at all levels. Its student/faculty ratio of roughly 44:1 –763 total students and 17.5 full time faculty in 2007-08 – is quite likely the highest student/faculty ratio in the world. (Even if one adds the small numbers of philosophy professors from the Cohn Institute whose courses are cross-listed in the philosophy department, the ratio remains simply too high.) In addition, the department teaches a greater number of students from other programs than students pursuing degrees in philosophy. The number of these students has increased by 201% since 2002-03. Hence it is very, very far below international norms for research university staffing (18/1 in philosophy departments in the United Kingdom; 15/1 or lower in comparable philosophy departments in research universities in the United States). While the total number of students studying for the BA has dropped by 27% over the past five years (probably as a result, in part, of the development of the college system for studying for professional degree BAs), the numbers of MA and Ph.D. students have increased slightly, and the number of BA graduates has increased by 35%. In short, the department is both spectacularly successful in attracting students and spectacularly understaffed.

(2) The study of philosophy in the Department has thrived in spite of understaffing. Morale among students at all levels (BA, MA, Ph.D., and alumni) is fairly high, despite both worries about their individual futures and many specific complaints about lack of resources within the department (see below). Students consistently praise the dedication of the senior faculty. They report becoming more critical in their thinking: not just more skeptical, but also more appreciative of ranges of views. They think philosophy is important for a tolerant and open-minded society. They are clearly attached to the program and to their instructors. In short, the faculty members in the department are doing heroic work under desperate conditions of understaffing.

(3) Retirements are looming.

As noted in the Executive Summary above, the Department faces a potential loss of full time teaching staff. One professor has just entered retirement (2008), with another to follow in 2009. Other professors are nearing retirement, and the status of another professor is unclear.

The import of (1), (2), and (3) is patent: the Tel Aviv philosophy department desperately needs increased support in the form of further senior members of the teaching staff and it has more than earned that support. Without new members of the teaching staff, there is a danger of drift and demoralization in the program, despite the current high levels of morale and accomplishment among faculty and students.

4.2 Assessment of the pedagogical situation at each level (BA, MA, & PhD)

Because the issues in the pedagogical situation of the undergraduate and graduate programs are different, we address each of them in turn in the following subsections.

4.21 Teaching and learning in the undergraduate program

BA students report that MA students (often under-prepared, see below) do most of the teaching, with full responsibility for BA courses. As noted above, they sometimes find the teaching by MA students disappointing. When Full or Associate Professors do teach BA courses (often required ones), enrollments are sometimes very high (200 to 250 students) without smaller discussion sections (tutorials) or Teaching Assistant support. As

a result, students have no chance to ‘work through’ the material in discussion. They report frustration in being unable to ask questions. BA students report a university-wide problem of lack of attention and support. They value the efforts of the philosophy department to do the best it can, but they worry about support for the humanities in general and for philosophy in particular. As noted above (Section 3.1), one way of providing the attention and support that BA students find missing is to provide more tutorials, particularly at the extremely important entry-level.

The course syllabi (available in English) for 2007-08 are professionally prepared and show appropriate choices of material. They specify readings from week to week, and they have clear lines of progress throughout appropriately related readings. They are largely more text-oriented than problem-oriented (though there is no firm line here). It is noteworthy that none of them list the writing requirements for the course or the format for evaluation. Hence it is impossible to assess exactly how much analytical writing is being required. In cases of very large enrollments, it would be very difficult to have much other than a final exam. Regular, serious (and seriously corrected) analytical writing is essential to progress in philosophy at all levels. Given the numbers of students, there is some reason to worry whether students are being required to do enough of this kind of work and are receiving enough attention for it. BA students feel an overall lack of personal attention. While to some extent this is normal for a large university, the numbers (and the teaching by MA students) suggest that there is a problem here of more than normal dimensions. The need for more teaching assistants, more tutorials, and smaller classes again enters into the picture here. But it is vital to education in philosophy that students be required regularly to write (formally presenting their ideas and constructing arguments) and that they receive adequate feedback from their teachers.

4.22 Teaching and learning in the graduate program

MA students value the collegiality and accessibility of their teachers (under difficult conditions). But they regard the number of teachers, the facilities, and the library as deficient. There is little financial support for them and they are poorly compensated for the contributions that they make to teaching. MA seminars of 20-25 students make it difficult for faculty members to attend to the work and interests of individual students (though they do their best). Perhaps most important, the MA students themselves believe that they are teaching too much, with unhappy consequences for both the BA students and their own research work. They believe they have too much responsibility for the teaching life of the department. It is regrettable in any case, but particularly given the degree to which the Department depends upon these teaching assistants, that the Department provides no formal preparation or system of advice for them in beginning their teaching (though a university-wide teaching center). The only requirement is prior, successful completion of the course that they are now teaching. MA students have the sense (echoed by BA students) that they are being thrown into the classroom in desperation on the part of the department. There is no senior faculty member assigned to oversee teaching and assisting by MA and Ph.D. students. Senior faculty members used to visit classes; now senior TAs (Ph.D. students) have full responsibility for overseeing the program. MA students are aware that they have less exposure to analytical philosophy than they should. Talking about lines at the library, about difficulties in getting recent monographs (as a result of

library budget cuts), and about the paucity of teaching staff, various MA students reported: “The situation is getting worse year by year. You can feel this.” “We could go on and on.” “It’s all about the money.”

Ph.D. students were likewise happy with the program and with their advisors, but saw the lack of financial support (for staff, for fellowships, for the library) as a significant problem. They are not optimistic about their futures---there are virtually no academic jobs available for philosophy Ph.D.s in Israel. But their advisors are honest about this, and the Ph.D. students love their work. They are studying at TAU largely because they are attached to their advisors and topics. Ph.D. students reported that there are occasional visits by advisors to classes taught by MA and Ph.D. students.

The alumni (three recent BA students) reported that philosophy has been directly important for their working lives. They spoke of positive transformations in their perspectives on problems, in their abilities to read, think, and write, and in their appreciation of rigor and directness in argumentation. They reported dissatisfaction with class size. MA instructors and TAs were not always professional.

Combining the reports of students at all levels and of alumni with the striking facts 1, 2, and 3 listed above (see 4.1), it is clear that this is a spectacularly over-worked and under-staffed department. It is doing the best it can with the resources it has, but it lacks sufficient regular teaching faculty to maintain appropriate quality and attention at all levels. The effects of lack of sufficient staffing are quite evident at all levels.

4.3 Additional virtues and shortcomings

While the overall situation (under-staffing) and recommendation (increased staff) are clear, some additional points warrant comment.

(a) The EC was quite impressed with the three Guided Reading Seminars (I: Descartes’ *Meditations*; II: Hume’s *Treatise*; III: Plato’s *Gorgias* and Kant’s *Groundwork*) that are required for BA students at the second year level. The texts are appropriate. The structure of guided reading is imaginative and useful. These materials can be successfully taught by (well-prepared) MA students. The BA students valued these courses in particular as providing chances for sustained ‘working through’ of the material. This system is an excellent response to conditions of extreme scarcity of resources

(b) The department maintains an active colloquium series in which students are encouraged to participate, especially at MA and Ph.D. levels.

(c) There are opportunities to take courses at other Israeli universities.

(d) The proficiency tests for the BA degree may not be working well. Students are given ten texts they must know. Five of these are then specified (not long before the exam) as the texts that will appear on the exam. Students must then answer questions on three of these texts. They have little sense of what counts as appropriate mastery of these texts—unsurprising, since the texts are not directly taught. BA students believe that these proficiency exams are over-weighted in counting for 15% of the BA grade, and they believe that they should be pass/fail. It does seem reasonable to have *some* exam of this kind as a filter for entry into MA seminars by BA students, but it is not clear that this filter is working appropriately.

(e) Students at all levels report difficulties in getting texts from the library. Especially with regard to recent monographs, the library collection is inadequate, and the acquisitions

process is so slow and chancy that students (and faculty) report that it is easier for them just individually to buy on amazon.com books that ought to be in the library.

(f) Though job prospects for Ph.D. students are very dim, there may be some chances of employment in colleges, and it may be possible to cultivate connections (internships) with non-academic institutions. It seems advisable to for the philosophy department to maintain a Placement Officer for Ph.D. students, who would have the job of collecting job notices (in Israel and elsewhere, in the universities and in the colleges) and notices of internships and post-doctoral fellowships. This is a normal practice for Ph.D. students in the United States and United Kingdom.

(g) Similarly, the BA and MA students should be made more aware of the career services advice and support that are already offered university-wide. Perhaps a member of the university-wide office could visit the philosophy department once a year, in order to present to students an account of the services that this office offers.

5. Self-administration and Physical Infrastructure

5.1 Self-administration

The administrative staff is plainly overworked, charged with more responsibilities than can or should be expected of program coordinators and administrators. Nonetheless, the department appears to be very well run. The chair works efficiently and well with the administrative staff and members of the faculty who in turn appear to approve his administrative procedures.

Nonetheless, some misgivings about the department's administrative policies were voiced. The EC registered complaints that the tenure procedure takes too long and that the requirements for tenure should be made more transparent. Not surprisingly, these complaints were coupled with a complaint about a lack of mentoring by senior faculty. There is, indeed, no mentoring program in the department. At the same time, there was some difference of opinion regarding the trenchancy of complaints regarding tenure and mentoring. Nonetheless, given the importance of these issues, we feel obliged to register them and incorporate suggestions regarding them into our final set of recommendations.

5.2 The status of adjuncts

Without teaching assistants in courses other than logic, adjuncts teach several introductory courses (sometimes in multiple institutions). These courses are typically quite large, leaving adjuncts with little time to engage in research and publish (a sine qua non for movement into a full-time position). Some adjuncts indicated that they do not consider themselves part of the department, not only because of their hectic schedules, but also because they may neither advise students formally nor be present at faculty meetings. Given the adjuncts' considerable contribution to the Department's program, it would be advisable to have one of the adjuncts represent their interests to the Chair and to the faculty at faculty meetings.

The Department relies heavily on its adjuncts to meet its curricular obligations, with some apparently even serving informally as graduate advisors or on Ph.D. committees. Some adjuncts are very accomplished and have been with the Department for many years. Many adjuncts also play a significant role in research, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and undergraduate advising (often "without suitable credit or recognition," in the words of one adjunct). Adjuncts are thus clearly distinct from graduate students (who are also employed

as part-time teachers), and only the former should be identified as such. The Department accordingly has a commitment to securing the continued services of excellent adjuncts and acknowledging their distinctive contribution.

The recent teaching fellow agreement (allowing for 12 month contracts) and lifting of limits on adjuncts' teaching loads and renewals are long overdue matters of equity that also signal a recognition of the vital importance of adjuncts to the University. Given the Administration's commitment to reducing the number of academic staff members, this reliance on adjuncts is not likely to wane (despite or, better, even thanks to the Administration's recent reduction in the department's adjunct allocation). However, to the extent that the positions of adjuncts are unstable from year to year, this reliance becomes fragile and the Department's capacity to plan is hampered – as the Department itself notes in its Self-Evaluation. For all these reasons, it is in the Department's interest (a) to re-examine the role of adjuncts in its program and (b) to consider the pros and cons of stabilizing some adjunct positions, endowing them with a status that, while not tenure-track, secures them continued affiliation and employment. Any such stabilization should not provide a pretext for dispensing with hiring of new faculty members, something that we have been strongly urging in our report. With a student-to-faculty ratio of 44:1, the case for hiring new faculty remains overwhelming. But given the fiscal constraints announced by the Rector – “we have been forced to cut back the number of academic staff from 1,400 to 1,00” – it may well be not only equitable but realistic and beneficial to all parties for the Department to fashion more stable positions (e.g., five year term contracts) for a limited number of adjunct positions.

5.3 Physical infrastructure, Administrative Staffing, and Library

The EC can strongly corroborate the department's claim that there are serious problems with the physical infrastructure. The office space for the department, especially for its faculty, is scandalous, with two and sometimes three faculty members sharing a space that can barely accommodate two small desks and with a lack of up-to-date computers. The EC also endorses the conclusion reached in the Department's Self-Evaluation that the administrative manager and her assistant are in need of more assistance. Resources are also badly needed to shore up the alarmingly decreasing purchases of books in philosophy for the library.

Part C – Recommendations

We make the following recommendations to the Department, the University Administration, and/or the Council of Higher Education and distinguish them in terms of their urgency. The most urgent recommendations are those requiring either immediate or steadfast attention to insure the quality of the research and education that the Department provides. We employ check marks to flag our judgment of the respective level of urgency of a recommendation: three check marks '√√√' for the most urgent, two check marks for the next most urgent, one check mark for a less urgent but nonetheless pressing recommendation. Unchecked recommendations signal practices or policies whose adoption we consider highly advisable. As a means of minimizing redundancy, we present at most very brief justifications for these recommendations but conclude each recommendation with a parenthetical reference to the pages in Parts A and B where the relevant justification or discussion can be found.

Recommendations to the Department and the University Administration

1. Replacing retirees and increasing the size of the faculty √√√

Our report corroborates that the faculty is understaffed and faced with an exorbitant student to faculty ratio (higher than the ratio in any comparable philosophy department in the US or UK). We accordingly recommend that the Department be authorized (a) to replace retiring faculty within a year of the respective faculty member's retirement and (b) to increase the size of its senior faculty from 17.5 to at least 20 FTE's. We also recommend that the Department continue its current practice of hiring faculty from top departments in Israel and abroad (Executive Summary, p. 5; Sections 1-2, p. 7; Sections 4.1, 4.21-4.22, pp. 13-15).

2. Hiring philosophers in the analytic tradition √√√

In view of the imbalance in the department's offerings and research profile (including the most recent retirement of a philosopher of language and Leibniz scholar), the department urgently needs to hire philosophers in the analytic tradition who specialize in the philosophy of language and mind, epistemology and metaphysics, and/or logic. We accordingly recommend that the Department be authorized to search in two or more of these areas of analytic philosophy as part of its authorization to replace retired professors or hire for new positions (Executive Summary, p. 5; Sections 1-2, p. 7; Section 3.22, p. 11).

3. Hiring a replacement with expertise in medieval Islamic philosophy √

Given the role played by Islamic philosophers in the history of philosophy, not least the transmission of Greek thought and, in particular, Aristotle's texts on logic and science into the Latin West, it is important that the Department be authorized to replace its retiring expert in this area, with someone who has a comparable research area of specialization. We recommend that the Administration authorize the Department to search for such a replacement (Section 2, p. 7).

4. Direct track

We have three complementary recommendations regarding the prospect of the direct track in the philosophy department's graduate program.

First, we recommend that the Department

(a) reduce the unreasonably high requirements for admittance to the direct PhD track (see the “revising standards and procedures” recommendation below) and

(b) restructure the Direct PhD Track so that students can be accepted to this track immediately after completing their B.A. degree.

Second, we recommend that the University Administration, in consultation with the Department, provide better financial support (committing financial aid, e.g., fellowships) for students taking the direct track compared with students who take the standard track.

Third, we recommend (a) that the Department and/or Administration establish a departmental and/or university wide committee to investigate the desirable scope of the direct PhD program and (b) that, until such a committee reaches its conclusions, the Department make special effort to identify suitable candidates for the direct PhD track and encourage them to take it (Section 3.24, p. 12).

Recommendations for the Department

1. Undergraduate curriculum revision √√

In light of declining enrollments and the obvious difference in levels of satisfaction between courses with and those without tutorials, we recommend that tutorials be introduced at introductory levels, though not at the cost of the tutorials for the Guided Reading courses that, in part because of the tutorials, are an unmistakable success (Section 3.1, p. 9; Section 4.21, p. 14).

2. Monitoring undergraduate teaching √√

We recommend that the department assign senior professors with the responsibility of formally monitoring undergraduate instruction by MA and PhD students (Section 3.1, p. 9; Section 4.22, p. 15).

3. Asserting the importance of writing √√

We recommend that the Department take steps to insure that, in its courses, teachers are requiring sufficient writing and providing feedback on that writing (Section 4.21, p. 14).

4. Graduate curriculum revision √

We recommend that, for the benefit of faculty and students, the department make it possible for faculty to offer seminars designated exclusively for PhD students or exclusively for PhD and Research MA students (Section 3.23, p. 12).

5. Revising standards and procedures √

We recommend that the Department (a) raise the grade requirement on the proficiency exam for admission to the Academic M.A. Track, (b) reexamine the content of the exam itself, and (c) either lower the requirement on the B.A. grade of M.A. students applying for the Direct PhD Track or else admit B.A. students who satisfy the current requirement directly (Section 3.21, p. 11; Section 4.3, p. 16).

6. Interdisciplinary

Because of the need for interdisciplinary competence in philosophy, we recommend that the Department (1) establish and encourage interdisciplinary connections in general and (2) allow – in some cases even require – graduate students to take advanced courses in other departments (Section 3.22, p. 11).

7. Interuniversity #1

We recommend that the Department, as a means of broadening students' horizons, (1) encourage graduate students to take advantage of the opportunity (that presently exists) to enroll in advanced courses at other universities, (2) encourage both BA and MA students to consider pursuing their doctoral studies at another university, (3) recruit undergraduates from other Israeli universities to the philosophy graduate program at Tel Aviv university, and (4) pursue with the administration the allocation of special fellowships for recruitment of graduate students from other universities (Section 3.25, p. 13; Section 4.3, p. 16).

8. Interuniversity #2

We recommend that the Department attempt to develop more faculty exchanges with other departments of philosophy, both in and outside Israel (Section 2, p. 7).

9. Placement

We recommend that the Department create a placement service for both PhD and MA graduates within the philosophy department and that it appoint a philosophy professor as a placement director, responsible for assisting graduates in their search for employment or further research opportunities (doctoral or post-doctoral) (Section 4.3, p. 16).

10. Research in Hebrew

We recommend that the department take steps formally to reconsider the value of its current practice of discounting Hebrew publications in cases of promotion and tenure (Section 2, p. 7; but see, too, CHE Recommendation #4 below).

12. Tenure

We recommend that the department state or, as the case may be, re-state formally (albeit with sufficient generality and flexibility for application to individual cases) its requirements for tenure and make these requirements known to all tenure-track faculty members (Section 5.1, p. 17).

13. Mentoring

We recommend that the Department introduce a mentoring program for junior faculty (where a different member of the senior faculty is assigned to be the mentor of each untenured, tenure track junior faculty member, with the responsibility of counseling him or her on departmental and university practices, requirements, and expectations, including those for promotion and tenure) (Section 5.1, p. 17).

14. Non-TAU Faculty

While there may be special reasons for the Department to hire its own former students, there are also good reasons (e.g., intellectual diversity) to insure that the faculty be composed of members with diverse educational backgrounds in philosophy. We accordingly recommend that the Department keep under a roughly 50% ceiling the number of its faculty who received their doctorate from the Department (Executive Summary, p. 5).

15. Adjuncts

We recommend that the Department (a) consider establishing an “adjuncts’ representative,” whose responsibility is to represent the interests and perspectives of adjuncts on Departmental policies and (b) re-examine the role of adjuncts in its program, with a view to considering the value of stabilizing a limited number of adjunct positions (Section 5.2, p. 17).

Recommendations for the University Administration

1. Increasing support for graduate students √√√

There are not enough teaching assistants, present teaching assistants are poorly compensated, and both MA and PhD students are underfunded. We recommend that the Administration strive to provide resources to increase the number of teaching assistants, the stipend for being a teaching assistant, and the financial support for its MA and PhD students (Sections 3.1, p. 9; 3.23, p. 12; 4.21, p. 14; 4.22, p. 15).

2. Infrastructure #1: faculty offices √√√

We recommend that the University Administration make space available to the Department to provide each faculty member with an office of his or her own (Section 5.3, p. 18).

3. Infrastructure #2: library √√√

Given fiscal constraints and an extended period of underfunding, there is no short-term solution to the poor state of library resources in philosophy. We cannot underestimate the graveness of this situation for a major research university generally and for research in philosophy in particular. We recommend that the University Administration, at least in the short-term, seek ways to halt the precipitous decline in library purchases of publications in the field of philosophy (Section 2, p. 7; Section 4.3, p. 16; Section 5.3, p. 18).

4. Infrastructure #3: administrative staff

We recommend that the University Administration increase by 8 work hours per week the assistance provided the administrative manager and her assistant (Section 5.3, p. 18).

5. Placement

We recommend that a member of the university-wide career services office make visits to the philosophy department at least once a year, in order to present to undergraduate and graduate students an account of the services offered by this office (Section 4.3, p. 16).

6. Interuniversity

We recommend that the University facilitate exchanges among faculty and students with other universities, primarily in Israel but also abroad when feasible (Section 2, p. 7; Section 3.25, p. 13).

Recommendations to the Council of Higher Education

1. Increasing financial support for graduate students √√√

Given (a) the dependency of the quality of both undergraduate and graduate philosophy programs on the level of support that MA and PhD students receive and (b) the paltry level of this support by international standards, we strongly recommend that the CHE explore every possible avenue for helping universities increase that level of support (Section 4.22, p. 15).

2. PhD's as teaching assistants √√

The union agreement affecting the hiring of PhD students as teaching assistants may be nationwide and may require that the CHE, either in conjunction with or in place of Tel Aviv University, seek to renegotiate this agreement in such a way that removes the financial obstacle to hiring PhD students as teaching assistants. We recommend that the CHE do whatever it can to aid the universities in regard to this matter.

3. Sustaining academic staff √√

Departments like philosophy require a “critical mass” of faculty members in order to achieve and maintain a level of excellence. With its enormous student-to-faculty ration, the Department of Philosophy at Tel Aviv University has clearly been pushed to the limit. Yet maintaining excellence in its department and others is vital to Israeli higher education, culture, and the well-being of its people. To the extent that pressures currently exist to reduce the number of academic staff (faculty) in higher education, we recommend that the CHE, for the good of Israel, adopt a policy of resisting such pressures.

4. The importance of Hebrew as a philosophical language √

The issue of the importance of philosophical publications in Hebrew (including translations of significant texts into Hebrew) is important in two respects, one immediate, the other long-range. In the short-term, the issue arises of the weight to be assigned these publications in tenure and promotion cases. On the whole, we learned that these publications are either not considered at all or considered to be of lesser importance than publications in English. More clarity on this subject is crucial to planning and judicious time-management on the part of those seeking tenure and promotion. This jaundiced attitude towards publications in Hebrew may be related to philosophy's perceived need to differentiate itself from Jewish studies. Moreover, there seems to be a certain amount of distrust of the blind reviewing process of Hebrew articles in Israeli publications, given the fact that the Israeli philosophical community is relatively small. Yet, while these difficulties are real, the practice of excluding or even undervaluing Hebrew publications cannot be salutary in the long term for the state of Israeli philosophy. Accordingly we

recommend that the CHE form a committee, composed of members of each department of philosophy in Israel, to investigate the practices of the different departments regarding the weight assigned to philosophical publications in Hebrew and make recommendations (Section 2, p. 7).

5. *Interuniversity: enlarging educational horizons for students and faculty*

The following recommendation follows up on Recommendations 6 and 7 to the Department and Recommendation 6 to the University Administration. In view of the fact that exchange of students and faculty among Israeli departments of philosophy requires coordination among the respective universities that house them, we recommend that the CHE form a committee with representatives of the various departments, charged with exploring ways to promote exchange of students and faculty among their departments.

Signed by:



Prof. Daniel Dahlstrom, Chair



Prof. Paul Davies



Prof. Richard Eldridge



Prof. Jacob Joshua Ross



Prof. Gila Sher

Appendix 1- Copy of Letter of Appointment



מדינת ישראל

STATE OF ISRAEL

Minister of Education

Tuesday May 5th, 2009

Professor Daniel Dahlstrom
Department of Philosophy
Boston University
USA

Dear Professor Dahlstrom,

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.

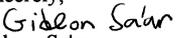
This most important initiative reaches out to scientists in the international arena in a national effort to meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher educational system today. The formulation of international evaluation committees represents an opportunity to express our common sense 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 Chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of General Philosophy Studies. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Daniel Dahlstrom - Chair, Prof. Paul Davies, Prof. Richard Eldridge, Prof. Jacob Joshua Ross, and Prof. Gila Sher. Ms. Michal Kabatznik will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as 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 Chair of this most important committee.

Sincerely,


Gideon Sa'ar
Minister of Education
and Chairperson of 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. Michal Kabatznik, Committee Coordinator



October 07

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. Within this framework, study-programs are to be evaluated every six years and institutions every eight years. The quality assessment system came into effect in the academic year of 2004-2005.

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 of the importance of quality evaluation and to develop internal self-evaluation mechanisms on a regular basis;
- 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 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 institution and the academic unit being evaluated – if possible - within 3-4 months of receiving the self-evaluation report. 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, the administrative staff, and any other persons it considers necessary.
- 2.3 In a meeting at the beginning of the visit, the committee will meet with the heads of the institution (president/rector, dean), the heads of the academic unit and the study-programs, in order to explain the purpose of the visit. At the end of the visit, the committee will summarize its findings, and formulate its recommendations.
- 2.4 The duration of the visits (at least one full day) will be coordinated with the chairperson of the committee.
- 2.5 Following the visit, the committee will write its final report, including its recommendations, which will be delivered to the institution and the academic unit for their response.
- 2.6 In the event that a member of the committee is also a faculty member in an institution being evaluated, he/she will not take part in discussions regarding that institution.

3. The Individual Reports

- 3.1 The final reports of the evaluation committee shall address every institution separately.
- 3.2 The final reports shall include recommendations on topics listed in the guidelines for self –evaluation, such as:
 - The goals and aims of the evaluated academic unit and study programs.
 - The study program.
 - The academic staff.
 - The students.
 - The organizational structure.

- 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.

4. The structure of the reports

4.1 Part A – General background and an executive summary:

- 4.1.1 General background concerning the evaluation process, the names of the members of the committee, a general description of the institution and the academic unit being assessed, and the committee's work.
- 4.1.2 An executive summary that will include a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the academic unit and program being evaluated.

4.2 Part B – In-depth description of subjects examined:

- 4.2.1 This part will be composed according to the topics examined by the evaluation committee, and based on the self-evaluation report submitted by the institution.
- 4.2.2 For each topic examined the report will present a summary of the findings, the relevant information and analysis.

4.3 Part C –Recommendations:

- 4.3.1 Comprehensive conclusions and recommendations regarding the evaluated academic unit and the study program according to the topics in part B.
- 4.3.2 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.***

4.4 Part D - Appendices:

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

5. The General report

In addition to the individual reports concerning each study program, the committee shall submit to the CHE the following documents:

- 5.1 A general report regarding the status of the evaluated field of study within the Israeli institutions of higher education.

We urge the committee 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

Schedule of Site Visit

22nd – 23rd April 2009

Location:

All meetings will take place in the Gilman (Humanities) Building.

On Wednesday all meetings will be held in Room 133;

On Thursday all meetings will be held in Room 457.

Wednesday April 22nd, 2009

09:00-09:45	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Dany Leviatan , Rector, Prof. Aron Shai , Vice-Rector, Prof. David Horn , Head of Quality Assessment at TAU, Prof. Shlomo Biderman , Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Eli Friedlander , Head of Quality Assessment Philosophy
09:45-10:45	Meeting with the heads (academic and administrative) of the Department of Philosophy	Dr. Ovadia Ezra , Head of the department, Prof. Eli Friedlander , Head of Quality Assessment Philosophy, Ms. Miri Dvir , Departmental secretary
10:45-11:45	Meeting with representatives of relevant departmental committees	Dr. Orna Harari , curriculum committee, Dr. Hagi Kenaan , funds and scholarships committee, Dr. Galia Pat-Shamir , B.A. teaching committee, Dr. Yaron Senderowicz , M.A. teaching committee
11:45-12:45	Meeting with Senior Academic Faculty	Prof. Ilai Alon , Dr. Eli Dresner , Dr. Hagi Kenaan , Dr. Noa Naaman-Zauderer , Prof. Ruth Ronen , Dr. Yaron Senderowicz
12:45-13:30	Lunch	Mr. Yohay Bloom – BA, Ms. Eva Epstein – MA, Mr. Noam Hoffer – Phd, Ms. Miri Zengina - MA
13:30-14:15	Tour of campus (Including classes, studios, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.)	Tour to be led by Ms. Noa Sharir
14:15-15:00	Closed-door working meeting of the evaluation committee	

Thursday April 23rd, 2009

Time	Subject	Participants
09:00-09:45	Meeting with Junior academic faculty	Ms. Zoe Gutzeit, Mr. Tomer Sassonkin, Mr. Idan Shimony
09:45-10:30	Meeting with adjunct lecturers	Dr. Ilana Arbel, Dr. Yiftah Goldman, Dr. Dana Riesenfeld
10:30-11:15	Meeting with B.A. students	Ms. Hallel Artzi, Mr. Aner Barzilay, Ms. Libby Ben-Naftali, Mr. Yohay Bloom, Ms. Doly Goldenberg, Mr. Assaf Manor, Ms. Osant Tabachnik, Ms. Yael Tal
11:15-12:00	Meeting with M.A. students	Mr. Or Dagan, Ms. Eva Epstein, Ms. Maya Halpern, Mr. Assaf Hazan, Ms. Shay Katz, Ms. Aviv Reiter, Mr. David Sachs, Ms. Niva Sharon, Ms. Miri Zengina
12:00-12:45	Meeting with PhD students	Ms. Meirav Almog, Ms. Anat Asher, Mr. Erez Firt, Mr. Noam Hoffer, Mr. Yaniv Iczkovits, Ms. Liad Mudrik, Mr. Ori Rotlevy, Mr. Dan Tenne, Mr. Assaf Weksler
12:45-13:30	Meeting with Alumni	Mr. Shay Blank, Mr. Rotem Yifat, Mr. Itay Warman
13:30-14:00	Lunch	Dr. Ovadia Ezra, Prof. Eli Friedlander, Dr. Yaron Senderowicz
14:00-14:30	Closed-door working meeting of the evaluation committee	
14:30-15:00	Summation meeting with heads of the institution and of the Dept. of Phil.	Prof. Dany Leviatan , Rector. Prof. Aron Shai , Vice-Rector. Prof. David Horn , Head of Quality Assessment at TAU, Prof. Shlomo Biderman , Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Prof. Eli Friedlander , Head of Quality Assessment Philosophy Dr. Ovadia Ezra , Head of the department