

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Reply to comments from UGC (mala"g)

We appreciate the close attention the referee is paying to the details of our programme, but at the same time are seriously concerned that the attention is focusing on the details, to the detriment of the major structural problems facing the department. As pointed out in the initial report, the department suffers from a chronic shortage in full-time faculty members, leading to an over reliance on external lecturers. Furthermore, budgetary constraints lead to our being under constant pressure to increase class sizes and compromise on the quality of the external lecturers we employ. We are still waiting a promised overall review of the department's budgeting that will enable us to match our resources to our commitments at all levels of teaching and training.

Specifically:

1. We have reframed the payment of field work supervisors so that they are now paid a salary on a par with that paid by other universities and colleges. Budgeting is assured by the university.
2. We held the retreat. Due to pressure of other commitments, the retreat was limited to one day, and focussed on a general review of the teaching programmes, and the importance of involving full-time faculty at all levels of teaching
3. There are no itemised funds available for needed computer hardware with the result that faculty are largely dependent on research budgets for matching funds – and even then we cannot replace computers that are less than five years old. While we make every effort to garner research funds, and continue to do so, these efforts are not always successful, the funds obtained are often considerably lower than requested and they do not always include sufficient funds for the purchase of basic equipment which the university is committed to provide.
4. There is still no dedicated computer support person for the department, and we continue to rely on support personnel from our parent Faculty. This support is, in general, adequate.
5. The four specialisations do not duplicate the BA programme, which is generic rather than specialised. All syllabi are available on the department web site. Again, reliance on external lecturers reduces our ability to discuss in-house and control issues of course content.



6. In the absence of a full time member of staff specialising in social policy, our ability to offer elective courses in policy is limited. There is a year-long introductory course in policy for the BA and an advanced course for the MA, as well as courses associated with the MA track in Social Change (most of which are taught by external lecturers)
7. We do not understand this question, and do not accept that the practice courses are lacking in their intellectual level
8. Given the current budgetary constraints and personnel shortage under which the department operates it is extremely difficult to talk of "major re-evaluation". A start was made at the departmental retreat and is continuing, together with the Dean, within the framework of the major revision of the budget structure of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Naturally, the restructuring of the study programme will depend heavily on the budgeting available, and on our ability to recruit new, high quality faculty who will be able to open up lines of research, teaching and student supervision.

Sincerely yours,

Professor Jon Anson,

Head of department of Social Work

BGU

Professor David Newman
Dean
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