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Report for: The Israeli Council of Higher Education.  
From: Professor Gila Sher

**Re: Ben Gurion University's Implementation of the Recommendations made by the External Evaluation Team of Philosophy Departments in Israel, November 2009**

## **I. Data**

This report is based on:

1. Report of the External Evaluation Team for the Council for Higher Education, November 2009 (Evaluation of the Philosophy Department at Ben Gurion University of the Negev).
2. Report of the External Evaluation Team for the Council of Higher Education: Departmental Response. Yakir Levin, Chairperson & Professor Yael Edan, Deputy Rector. December 2009.
3. Report: Implementation of the Recommendations of the External Evaluation Team for the Council of Higher Education, November 2009. Dr. Abraham Mansbach, Head of the Department of Philosophy & Professor David Newman, Dean, The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ben Gurion University of the Negev. August 2011.
4. Faculty Roll and other Documents by the Philosophy Department, Ben Gurion University.
5. Response of Chair of Philosophy Department, Prof., Abraham Mansbach, to Questions Concerning Hiring & Recruitment in the Academic Years 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12. May 10, 2012.
6. Response from Rector Zvi HaCohen to Additional Required Information on the Implementation of the External Team's Recommendations. May 13, 2012.

## **II. Implementation of Recommendations to the University**

*Levels of Urgency: \*\*\* - most urgent, \*\* - next most urgent, \* - pressing need.*

- 1.\*\*\* Replacing retirees - ***Partial implementation.***
- 2.\*\* Adding senior academic staff - ***Not implemented.***
- 3.\*\* Special needs - ***Implemented.***
- 4.\* Full compensation for teaching - ***Implemented.***
- 5.\* Establishing full-time position of the administrative coordinator - ***Departments' needs are reexamined.***
6. Support for MA studies - ***Implemented.***
7. Library support for acquisitions - ***Partially Implemented.***

## **III. Implementation of Recommendations to the Department of Philosophy**

*Levels of Urgency: \*\*\* - most urgent, \*\* - next most urgent, \* - pressing need.*

- 1.\*\* Hiring priorities - ***Recommendation accepted. Partial implementation.***
- 2.\*\* Asserting the importance of writing - ***Implemented.***
- 3.\*\* Increasing tutorials and the number of teaching assistants - ***Implemented.***
- 4.\*\* Revision of MA standards and curriculum - ***Implemented.***
- 5.\*\* Accelerating the pace of MA completions - ***Implemented.***
- 6.\*\* Supervision of teaching assistants - ***Implemented.***
- 7.\* Cognitive science program - ***Implemented.***
8. Interuniversity #1: expanding educational horizons - ***Implemented.***
9. Interuniversity #2: Promoting faculty exchange - ***Implemented.***
10. Mentoring - ***Will be implemented when new junior faculty join the department.***
11. Internet and graduate students - ***Implemented.***

#### **IV. Discussion**

The department of philosophy has adequately implemented virtually all the external team's recommendations, and I commend it for this. On one issue, hiring priority, the department followed the team's recommendation only partially: its first advertisement singled out the team's first priority, ancient philosophy, but its second advertisement left the field open, aiming "to attract the best candidates for any of the other hiring priorities" rather than focusing on the team's 2nd priority, ethics and political philosophy. This strategy seems to me perfectly reasonable. In its next advertisement, the department will continue to pursue the recommended priorities.

The university have also implemented most of the recommendations and is taking steps to re-examine others. But there is one exception: While the university has taken significant steps toward replacing retirees (recommendation #1, highest priority), it has not and said it does not foresee adding senior academic staff (recommendation #2, second highest priority).

Let me elaborate:

1. Replacing Retirees (highest priority): The department hired one full time faculty member "Min Ha-Minyan" to replace a retired faculty member, and was authorized to hire two more full time faculty members "Min Ha-Minyan" to replace another retired faculty and a faculty that will leave the department at the end of the present academic year. I commend the university for these allocations. Once two new philosophers are hired, the department will have (as Chair Mansbach indicated) 8.5 positions "min ha-minyan". However, the external team emphasized that replacing retirees means bringing the number of positions "min ha-minyan" to 10.5. That is: to implement this requirement the university has to authorize two more full-time positions "min ha-minyan".

2. Adding Senior Academic Staff (second highest priority): The external team recommended that the university enlarge the philosophy faculty "min ha-minyan" to 12 FTEs (full time positions) by the end of 2014. The Rector says: "In terms of expansion to 12 FTEs, the university does not anticipate resources available to comply with this recommendation". Now, the rationale for this recommendation was that to be a top department, a department needs a "critical mass" of faculty "min ha-minyan", and it's very hard to reach this state with fewer than 12 full-time positions. For that reason, this requirement should be taken very seriously.

#### **V. Current State of the Philosophy Department.**

The external team was very much impressed with the quality of the philosophy department at Ben Gurion university, and as far as I can see, the department is still very impressive. I am a bit concerned about the departure of Dr. Hila Jacobson whom the external team saw as an extremely promising young philosopher. It is important that the department replace her with an equally strong philosopher.

**VI. Conclusions / Recommendations**

Both the department and the administration have done a good job in implementing the external team's recommendations, and I commend them for it.

However, it is of the utmost importance that the administration recognize the urgent need to replace *all* retirees in a timely fashion as well as to increase the number of FTE's to 12 so the department has the critical mass it requires in order to excel. I strongly urge the administration to commit itself to implementing these recommendations.