Gila Sher
Department of Philosophy, 0119
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla, CA 92093-0119

(858) 534-8504
FAX: (858) 534-8566
email: gsher@ucsd.edu

June 16, 2012

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

Re: **Tel Aviv 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. Response of the Philosophy Department at TAU to the Report of the External Evaluation Team. January 21, 2010. Dr. Ovadia Ezra, Head the Department of Philosophy.

2. Report: Implementation of the Recommendations of the Evaluation Committee. November 22, 2011. Professor Eli Friedlander, Head of the Philosophy Department.

3. Response to Request for Additional Information on the Implementation of the External Team's Recommendations by the University. May 24, 2012.

II. Implementation of Recommendations to the Department & the University
Levels of Urgency: *** - most urgent, ** - next most urgent, * - pressing need.

1.*** Replacing retirees & increasing the size of the faculty **- Partial implementation. The overall situation is worse than it was.**

2.*** Hiring philosophers in the analytic tradition **- Partial implementation.**

3.* Hiring replacement with expertise in medieval Islamic philosophy **- Steps toward implementation.**

4. Direct Track **- Not implemented, but being deliberated.**

III. Implementation of Recommendations to the Department of Philosophy
Levels of Urgency: *** - most urgent, ** - next most urgent, * - pressing need.

1.** Undergraduate curriculum revision - ***Attempts at partial implementation (there are considerable difficulties having to do with large size of the undergraduate body of students and lack of funds for section leaders).***

2.** Monitoring Undergraduate Teaching - ***Implemented.***

3.** Asserting the importance of writing - ***Not implemented; no steps toward implementation, no explanation.***

4.* Graduate curriculum revision - ***First step toward implementation.***

5.* Revising standards & procedures - ***Not deliberated yet, but initial steps taken.***

6. Interdisciplinary ***- Implemented.***

7. Interuniversity #1 ***- Implemented.***

8. Interuniversity #2 ***- Implemented.***

9. Placement ***- Implemented.***

10. Research in Hebrew ***- Not implemented. Outside the department's jurisdiction.***

12. Tenure ***- Not implemented; an alternative method is practiced.***

13. Mentoring ***- Not implemented; an alternative method is practiced. Irrelevant due to small number of untenured senior faculty.***

14. Non-TAU faculty ***- Not implemented.***

15. Adjuncts - ***Partially implemented.***

IV. Implementation of Recommendations to the University
Levels of Urgency: *** - most urgent, ** - next most urgent, * - pressing need.

1***. Increasing support for graduate students ***- Being implemented for PhD students. Not implemented for MA students.***

2.*** Infrastructure #1: faculty offices - ***Only minimal implementation.***

3. *** Infrastructure #2: library - *Not implemented.*

4. Infrastructure #3: administrative staff - *Not implemented.*

5. Placement - *Not implemented.*

6. Interuniversity - *Implemented with respect to universities abroad. Not implemented with respect to Israeli universities.*

V. Discussion

The department of philosophy has implemented many of the recommendations, is deliberating the implementation of a few others, and is pursuing alternative methods with respect to still others. However, one recommendation the department seems to have completely ignored: that of emphasizing the importance of writing (III.3 above).

The university's implementation record is more mixed.

On the positive side, much progress has been made toward increasing the support for PhD students. This marks a considerable improvement in the situation of PhD students (apparently throughout the university), and is a very welcome step. Furthermore, some progress was made toward replacing retirees: one philosopher was hired, and the university authorized a hiring position and an application for an Alon Fellowship next year.

On the negative side, the overall situation with replacing retirees is worse now than it was in 2009. Only one retiree position was filled, and the number of senior positions (positions Min Ha-Minyan) went down from 17.5 to 15.5. As noted above, one position and one Alon Fellowship are authorized for next year, but even if both positions are filled, there will be a net loss of one position compared with 2009. In particular, no progress was made toward increasing the number of senior positions to at least 20 FTEs, as recommended by the external team. Several of the other recommendations to the university have not been implemented either. Of special importance are the recommendation to supply each senior faculty member with his/her own office (IV.2 above) and the recommendation to increase the support to MA students (IV.1 above).

V. Current State of the Philosophy Department

The philosophy department at Tel Aviv University continues to be very successful department both in terms of research and in attracting a large number of students (indeed, its success in the latter respect appears to be unparalleled in the world). But to function properly, the department needs to grow considerably, and in particular the number of senior faculty (faculty min ha-

minyan) has to grow. In fact, however, the number of senior faculty continues to decrease and this endangers the department's ability to function effectively.

VII. Conclusions / Recommendations

The department of philosophy should complete the implementation of the external team's recommendations. Among other things, in hiring new faculty the department should make a special effort to hire philosophers who were educated in other universities, either in Israel or abroad (Recommendation III.14 above. The only hiring since the external team issued its recommendations was of a philosopher educated in the department.)

The university should make a special effort to enlarge the senior faculty (faculty min ha-minyan) of the philosophy department in accordance with the external team's recommendation (II. 1 above). This is especially important in view of the upcoming retirements and given the unparalleled number of philosophy students that the department has to educate.

In addition, the university should make efforts to implement the external team's recommendations that have not been implemented so far, especially the ones concerning faculty offices and support to MA students.