

10 Sivan, 5773  
May 19, 2013

To:  
Ms. Tamar Efrati  
Coordinator for QA  
Quality Assessment Division (QAD)  
Council for Higher Education  
Jerusalem

**Response to the Report of the CHE Evaluation Committee for  
Department of Literature of the Jewish People, Bar-Ilan University**

Dear Ms. Tamar Efrati,

Enclosed please find the response of Dr. Tamar Wolf-Monzon, the Department's chair, to the report by the Committee for the Evaluation of the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar Ilan University.

1. "We have read the report with great interest, and we were pleased to see that the Committee found the department's vision to be unique and praiseworthy among the departments of Hebrew literature in Israel and abroad. The report emphasized the fact that our department combines the study of Hebrew literature with the study of literature in other Jewish languages, an integral part of our program which is reflected in the variety of our faculty members. We plan to further develop this combination in the future, expanding the initiative to examine literature written by Jews in additional languages, thus enriching the analysis of Hebrew literature across the ages, as well as the analysis of the textual dialogue that transpires between one historical period and another.
2. We adopt the Committee's recommendations (abstract, page 4, section 5) regarding the establishment of a center for the analysis of Judeo-Arabic literature as a foundation for the expansion of the vision of Literature of the Jewish People, alongside the existing centers for Yiddish and Ladino. The center will focus on poetic aspects of the literary compositions, comparing them with literary compositions in Hebrew and in other Jewish languages.
3. The preservation and continuation of the department's achievements (the most notable of which were detailed on page 6 of the report) require budgetary support in three key areas:
  - Financial grounding for the Encyclopedia of the Jewish Story project (section 3, "accomplishments"). This is the department's flagship project, bringing to the fore the link between

- Hebrew literature and literature written in other Jewish languages.
- Financial support for department publications and periodicals, including among others: *Criticism and Interpretation*; *Ayin Gimel: A Journal of Agnon Studies*; *Piyyut in Tradition*; and *Pirke Shirah*.
  - Absorbing an additional faculty member in the field of Ladino. Each year the Center for Ladino Studies absorbs an impressive group of quality graduate students (section 1, “accomplishments”), and they are all currently mentored a single senior faculty member.
4. The council has recommended immediate transfer of the library to another building, where it shall be equipped with modern technology appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (page 12). This recommendation reinforces our repeated appeals to the university administration to address the disgraceful conditions of the library and to facilitate reasonable resources for students and faculty. One possible solution is the inauguration of a “Literature of the Jewish People” building, which would include the requisite libraries for the study of Hebrew literature and for the study of literature in other Jewish languages, alongside archives, special collections, and the necessary computerized systems for research and instruction. The university has expressed willingness to allocate an area for this purpose, and we hope the plan will come to fruition with the assistance of the university, combined with external funding.
  5. We accept the recommendation of the Committee to expand the study of theory of literature in the department and to complement the department’s synchronic orientation with analysis of the connection of the studied literary works to other literary works of the same time period, along with a consideration of the influence that other literary and cultural trends may have had upon Jewish and Hebrew authors. This expansion will complement the diachronic approach to the study of Hebrew literature throughout the ages, as a central axis within the department. In so doing, we would be pleased to cooperate with researchers from other departments in Israel and abroad for the purpose of mentoring graduate students and promoting research projects.
  6. We accept the recommendation of the Committee to place much higher emphasis on Hebrew publications, as far as advancement procedures are concerned (page 9 section 2). We believe there is a need to achieve a more reasonable balance between the demand for publications in European languages and the importance of faculty publications in Hebrew journals. We hope this need will be brought to the attention of the professional committees in the university, including the





Appointments Committee. In the spirit of the Committee's recommendation, an emphasis upon Hebrew publications will underscore the standing of Hebrew culture and the humanities in general within Bar-Ilan University.

7. In the spirit of the Committee's recommendations, we call upon the University Senate to formulate a transparent and sound policy regarding faculty promotion for the various disciplines.
8. We have noted the need to train young faculty members and to encourage their academic success. We accept the recommendation to include junior faculty members in the research, travel, and translation funds. We hope to receive the cooperation of the university on this matter.
9. We expect university authorities to cooperate with the development of the department and the preservation of the current departmental model for the long term, with regard to all of the areas of expertise focused upon with the department: *Aggadah* and *Midrashic* Literature, Medieval Poetry and Prose, *Hassidut* and Enlightenment Literature, and Modern Hebrew Literature. We are interested in the continued contribution of retired faculty in the mentoring of graduate students and in maintaining the focal points of research that they established within the department. We hope that an appropriate way to compensate them for their contribution may be found.

#### Noted Inaccuracies in the Report

1. (page 6, "accomplishments") – Although the Center for Yiddish Studies in memory of Rena Costa was not established until 1994, lectures on Yiddish literature were incorporated in the department as early as 1983.
2. (page 8, section 5) – Two senior faculty members do indeed teach introductory courses: department chair Dr. Tamar Wolf-Monzon teaches the introductory course on the foundations of poetry, and Dr. Revital Refael-Vivante teaches the introductory course to medieval literature.

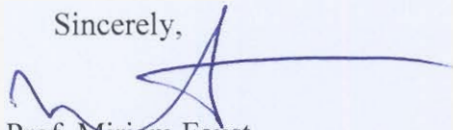
In summary, we feel that the Evaluation Report expresses a deep understanding of the strengths and unique contributions of the Department, and makes valuable recommendations for the improvement and development of the Department".

As the Vice Rector of Bar-Ilan University and the person in charge of quality evaluation procedures, I would like to add several comments to the chair's responses. As noted by the chair, several aspects of the future plans of the Department of Literature of the Jewish People depend on financial support of the University administration. Since the universities in Israel are currently facing a period of uncertainty with regard to future budgetary cutbacks, it is very difficult to make strong commitments to any department to supply the required resources in line with the CHE committee's recommendations. In the case of the Department of Literature of the Jewish People, financial support is needed for renovating the library, supporting the Encyclopedia of the Jewish Story project and the department's publications and periodicals and absorbing an additional faculty member in the field of Ladino. However, the Rector has recently started discussions on the status of all University libraries and is now formulating a plan for improving the current situation. Also, over 130 new senior faculty members joined the various departments at Bar Ilan, including two new senior faculty members, Dr. Vered Tohar and Dr. Lilach Nethanel, that joined the Department of Literature of the Jewish People. The Rector promised to finance additional new faculty if the Departments succeed in recruiting outstanding candidates.

With regard to the recommendation to achieve a more reasonable balance between the demand for publications in European languages and publications in Hebrew journals, this issue has been brought to the attention of the Rector, who is in charge of all promotion procedures.

We look forward to working with the Department as well as with University officials to address the substantive issues and recommendations raised in the report. We thank the CHE Committee for helpful recommendations and hope to continue to improve the quality of the Department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Miriam Faust', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Prof. Miriam Faust  
Vice Rector

In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:

Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector

Prof. Eliezer Tauber, Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies

Dr. Tamar Wolf-Monzon, Head, Department of Literature of the Jewish People