

20 Kislev, 5772  
December 4, 2012

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

**Response to the report of to the CHE Evaluation Committee for  
Department of Geography and Environment, Bar-Ilan University**

Dear Ms. Daniella Sandler,

Enclosed please find our response to the report by the Committee for the Evaluation of the Department of Geography and Environment at Bar Ilan University.

After carefully reading the report of the review committee we have found several errors and misimpressions that should be corrected.

1. Executive summary, page 3, third paragraph: While the number of BA and MA graduates has indeed fallen during the period from 2005/05-2010/11, the trend of the number of PhD graduates in the report is not representative. While there were no PhD's granted in 2010/11, in the following year (2011/12) four PhD's were awarded by the department which is higher than any of the previous years reported.
2. Page 6, text related to Tables 3.1.1 and 3.1.4: The comment regarding "From 2005-2009 more students graduated than were enrolled in the program" is due to an error in the original Table 3.1.4 on page 20 of the original report. The column for BA students lists "Major and minor" followed by the word "majors" in parenthesis. The latter word should be removed and thereby the misunderstanding resolved.
3. Page 7, first paragraph: There is an error in the number of field courses that the committee counted ("one in physical and one in urban geography"). Every year there is one regional geography course, at least two BA field courses (one physical and one urban), and two MA field courses (one physical and one urban). This is in addition to one day field trips that are offered as part of other courses.
4. Page 8, end of first paragraph in Section 4.3: "Finally the measurements of learning outcomes in the BA program consist entirely of exams in specific courses." While this may be the case in specific courses, most courses include homework assignments and exercises, and some include quizzes and/or a short term paper in addition to the final exam. In addition there are courses where students' assignments include a seminar paper and a paper presentation.
5. Page 8, 7 lines from the bottom: "We had the impression...that core geographic competencies are being postponed to the MA level." Students who are enrolled in the expanded major track acquire sufficient skills and competencies to join the labor market and indeed upon completion of the BA many students find employment in the relevant fields.
6. Page 9, Section 4.4, first sentence: There is an error in the number and distribution of faculty members.

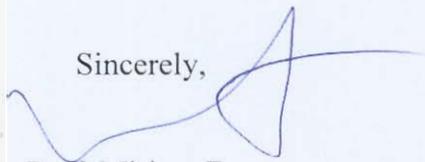
The department has 10 full time faculty (not 9 as written), 5 in physical geography and 5 (not 4) in human geography.

7. Page 9, third paragraph of Section 4.4, first sentence: The number of faculty members at the various ranks is different than the one in the evaluation report. In the year being considered there were 3 lecturers, 1 (not 2) senior lecturers, 3 (not 2) associate professors, and 2 (not 1) active full professors.

8. Page 10, second paragraph: There is a misimpression that faculty research collaborations are primarily "outward-facing" since this is often a consequence of extramural research funding. Nevertheless there are internal collaborations between full time faculty and part time faculty, as well as between full time faculty members. These collaborations often take the form of joint submission of research project and operating the research, joint journal papers, or joint mentoring of graduate students and its related research.

Aside from these comments, I would add that 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 read "Miriam Faust".

Prof. Miriam Faust

Vice Rector

In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:

Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector

Prof. Zemira Mevarech, Dean, Faculty of Social Studies

Prof. Michael Sofer, Head, Department of Geography and Environment

2 Nisan, 5773  
March 13, 2013

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

**Completion of Response to the report of to the CHE Evaluation Committee for  
Department of Geography and Environment**

Dear Ms. Daniella Sandler,

Enclosed please find our completion of response to the report by the Committee for the Evaluation of the Department of Geography and Environment at Bar Ilan University.

1. Strategic mission: The Department has initiated internal discussions and formed an internal committee regarding the future development of the department, including the identification of several research areas that will be specific and unique. Full consideration will be given to the expertise of the current and future faculty members.
2. The Department plans to develop new marketing strategies which will be closely linked to the research areas. Faculty members have initiated internal discussions and formed an internal committee regarding the marketing channels and means that they have to follow in order to increase student numbers.
3. The curriculum committee together with the Department council is reviewing all courses and will strive to develop a modern, integrated curriculum with a minimum amount of content redundancies, and courses that are more focused and rigorous. While every effort will be made to separate undergraduate and graduate courses, some overlap is inevitable due to the limited number of faculty members.
4. Providing gathering space and work space for PhD students is indeed a desirable goal. Unfortunately the department suffers from limited available office and laboratory space. Due to the heavy budgetary cutbacks of the last years, many departments suffer from similar infrastructure problems and the university administration is working to gradually improve the situation.

6. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the level of research funding obtained by most faculty members. We expect this trend to continue.

7. In order to maintain contact with graduates, the Department has created an alumni mailing list through which information of interest concerning departmental news and events is distributed.

Aside from these comments, I would add that we look forward to working with the Department 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,

  
Prof. Miriam Faust  
Vice Rector  
In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:

Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector

Prof. Zemira Mevarech, Dean, Faculty of Social Studies

Prof. Irit Amit-Cohen, Head, Department of Geography and Environment

Prof. Michael Sofer, Department of Geography and Environment