

7/7/2013

**Dear committee members,**

I received your detailed report regarding the Department of Behavioral Sciences undergraduate program, dated 20 June 2013. I thank the committee members for their careful examination of the program and their valuable feedback.

In its report the committee commends the department for its efforts to comply with the recommendations of the committee. The committee notes in this regard that the department complied with most of its core recommendations, making its undergraduate program more rigorous, up-to-date, and coherent. I was pleased that the committee noted our efforts to comply with its recommendations. The committee however notes several issues that still warrant our attention. I will address these issues in the following paragraphs (for brevity's sake I will not elaborate on the issues that the committee found our changes satisfactory).

### **1. Undergraduate Program**

B. *“The program in Educational Psychology ... This program is under revision as a program in Education with a teaching certificate; as such, it should be separated entirely from Behavioral Sciences....”*

Reply: The Behavioral Sciences undergraduate program includes a “MOKED” in educational psychology (20 academic points). It currently includes courses relevant to psychology, education, as well as the interaction between the two disciplines. Ariel University plans to develop its educational programs and currently has three proposed programs waiting for MALAG’s decision. The university plans to separate studies focusing on education from the current behavioral sciences undergraduate programs, when these programs are hopefully approved. While these changes will not be made in the following academic year, we are hopeful that they will be initiated the year after (2015).

F. *“At least one course integrating the various views in behavioral sciences should be added to the curriculum. Courses integrating the behavioral sciences have not yet been added.”*

Reply: The course/s were not integrated in the current undergraduate program. However, it should be noted that the *Introduction to psychology* course taught as part of the program is significantly longer than corresponding courses in other departments. It is a yearly course with an additional “tirgol” (overall 6 academic points). This course encompasses significantly more material than other corresponding courses in other academic institutes (e.g., a 2 academic point course in Tel-Aviv University). The breadth of the course allows it to incorporate topics such historical and philosophical antecedents of modern psychology. We therefore believe that the committee’s requirements have been at least partly satisfied. Following the committee’s comment however I have instructed the relevant departmental committee (“teaching committee”) to plan changes in the undergraduate program- separating the *Introduction to psychology* into two courses, one taught in the first academic year and a second taught in second or third year. These changes will most likely

be made in the academic year 2015.

H. “...*the department should consider instituting an honors program for especially promising students interested in research and graduate school, with special seminars and research experience. This would help to challenge the best students who are kept back by the college’s mission to train students who are less well prepared for college. An honors program has not been implemented.*”

Reply: Following the committee’s suggestion the department’s chair appointed Drs. Lavi, Litman-Ovadia, Zerach and Karni (date: November 12, 2009) as members in a committee devoted the instituting an honors program in the department (undergraduate program). The committee has presented its detailed suggestions toward the end of the academic year, in line with the MALAG’s committee guidelines. Regrettably, the implementation has taken longer than expected due to, among other reasons, budgetary constraints. We are however happy to inform the committee that the program is scheduled to begin in this upcoming academic year. We plan to implant the program gradually; We have nominated Dr. Abira Reizer (senior faculty member) as head of the program and will open a unique workshop (open to students who are part of the department’s/dean honorary list) focusing of positive psychology and providing an intimate mentorship by a leading faculty member (Dr. Litman-Ovadia, head of the organizational psychology graduate program in the department). We plan to incorporate additional aspects into the program in the following years (a mentorship program etc.). Overall, we believe that the program will be in line with the MALAG’s committee’s vision.

## **2. Infrastructure**

B. “*The students reported a lack of computers and printers and insufficient wireless connections. It is not clear whether there are more computers and printers available to students than previously. A new library is under construction. However, electronic access to archived materials both on campus and off is increasingly more important than physical structures, and it is not clear that significant improvements along these lines have been made.*”

Reply: The new library is under construction and is planned to provide sufficient access to scientific literature as well as means to print the data. The library has also expanded its scientific databases. In addition, the campus significantly increased the number of computers available to student (in special “computer rooms”, scattered in hall ways and within vacant class rooms). I would also like to note that the department provided *each* senior staff member with an office (either private or shared) equipped with its private computer (room shortage was an issue in earlier years). Finally, two special rooms housing computers are available for lecturers who are not senior staff members. Overall, the staff members are under the impression that students as well as the department’s staff do not have problems reaching up-to-date scientific literature.

## **3. Faculty**

B. “*New Programs...There had been a concern that the department did not have the resources, either in number of faculty or expertise of faculty, to support two BA programs as well as post-baccalaureate programs.*”

Reply: No changes were made in the department’s graduate program. We have developed several “dual course” programs (“DO CHOGI”) with other departments (e.g., the Economics and Business

Management program). These programs do not tax the department resources (i.e., based on the department's current graduate program) while providing the students with specific academic interests a venue to explore these interests. In addition, staff members have been recruited as part of our effort to base our department on a larger base of senior staff members. Among the recruited staff members I can note Dr. Yaniv Mama, Dr. Daniel Fitousi, and Dr. Aviv Weinstein etc. All these staff members are considered as high quality researchers by their fellow researchers and department members. We believe that the staff members in the department are well suited for future expansion of our graduate programs as well as doctorate program. Developing these programs in the future will be planned carefully, taking into account the committees warning. No such plans have been currently presented to MALAG.

**4. Alumni Survey** - *"The committee recommends that the department conduct a survey of alumni. ... This will be useful for planning purposes and for keeping the department up to date with needed improvements and changes."*

Reply: Presented in article 5, below.

**5. Alumni Association.** *"The committee also suggests that the department establish ongoing contacts with alumni to build an alumni culture, which can be valuable to the institution and to the department. ... The department presented details of the numerous ways that the college maintains contact with alumni, including surveys of evaluation and a website for employment. However, these activities appear to be college-wide rather than based in the department..."*

Reply: We thank the committee for its recommendations regarding an alumni survey and association. Regrettably, we have not been able to initiate such activities due to budgetary constraints. I plan to present the University's Rector with a plan to conduct an alumni survey and later establish an alumni association in the upcoming year.

**Remarks regarding Sociology and Anthropology:**

The committee addressed several issues regarding the sociology and anthropology components of the program including a call for an interdisciplinary course linking the different perspectives of the behavioral sciences (instead of or in addition to a course on the philosophy of science).

Reply: With regard to the sociology and anthropology components of the graduate program, I have contacted the chair of the sociology department and requested him to reexamine this component of the program in light of the committee's recommendations. I will make the necessary changes taking into account the institutional budget considerations. With regard to the suggested interdisciplinary course, I plan to make changes in the current *Introduction to Psychology* course, dividing the course into two parts (as elaborated in "1. Undergraduate Program, article F"). The second course (one semester) will address interdisciplinary issues, as requested by the committee.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yoram Braw

Chair, Department of Behavioral Sciences