

Tamuz 25, 5773
July 3, 2013

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

Response to the Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of Psychology Department

Dear Ms. Tamar Efrati,

Enclosed please find the responses of the Chair of Psychology to the review of the implementation of the recommendations by the CHE Evaluation Committee. The chair and the staff feel that the quality of the Department has improved considerably since the original report was issued, as can be seen in the following responses (in bold) to each of the Committee's recommendations:

1. Modernizing graduate-level research training

The committee recommended that the department re-think its graduate training throughout the department to establish cutting edge research training in each, especially by formulating and building strong training programs at the core of the discipline (i.e., in cognition, perception, and neuroscience, and in social psychology, respectively). The committee noted that while relevant advances had been made in the clinical programs along these lines, more was needed in these programs as well. The department indicates that major changes have been made in PhD-level training by exposing students to advanced research methods and advanced statistical techniques. Emphasis is now placed on research skills, scientific writing, grant proposals, article reviews, and presentation skills. New courses in neuroscience, social psychology, and clinical psychology are part of the core training at the graduate level. More specifically, individual differences in social behavior, social neuroscience, ethics, a research colloquium, and family interventions in rehabilitation are now included. In terms of the clinical programs, PhD students are now doing internships in clinical and rehabilitation psychology at the clinic while working on their dissertations in the department. The clinic also provides for conferences in which experts from abroad share their research and treatment innovations. The department aims to create a special clinical program for training researcher-clinicians for which PhD students are recruited from the top ranks of the clinical MA tracks, and then pursue internship and dissertation research within the clinic; a proposal to this effect has been submitted to the university.

Since the committee's visit, we have revised our curriculum to increase the emphasis on evidence-based approaches. This included a reduction in the number of psychodiagnostic courses, the introduction of a year-long research colloquium course (one semester run jointly with the other clinical tracks, and an additional semester for our students alone), and an increase in the number of elective courses (run jointly for the three clinical programs) including ones focused on evidence-based approaches (e.g., schema therapy, short-term dynamic therapy).

A new emphasis has also been placed on attempting to publish student doctoral research. With the approval of the advanced studies department, two accepted and one submitted article may substitute

for the usual Ph.D. dissertation. Yet, in all cases, as part of the curriculum, students are encouraged to perform and publish a meta-analytic paper in their area of research. This is worked out carefully with their instructor and has proven quite successful in recent years.

2. The experimental program

The committee indicated that the experimental program seemed ill-defined, being coherently organized neither in cognition and perception nor in cognitive neuroscience. The committee recommended that the department re-conceive and re-build this program, and more aptly name it to capture program content (e.g., cognitive neuroscience), and make at least two faculty hires to begin to establish a presence in this crucial area that is core to the discipline. The committee also recognized that two additional faculty (beyond the two recommended) will also be needed in the future to establish programmatic excellence. The department indicates that this program is now called the cognitive and affective neuroscience program and has been reorganized to focus on cognition and cognitive neuroscience. Two new faculty have been hired (one for rehabilitation and one for experimental). The new director of the Brain Research Center (which is next door) has also agreed to reinforce the program and now acts as a thesis advisor for some students. The department is now searching for an additional faculty member as well and hopes that funding will be forthcoming for this position.

Added to the curriculum a course on ethics in research and Psychology, a topic that was until now covered as a section in the research methodology core course. Also, a new recruit to the department (Ilanit Gordon) will now cover the social neuroscience side of the program. In addition, a faculty member in the Brain Science program (Elana Golumbic) will reinforce the program on the cognitive neuroscience side and will be available as an advisor for our graduate students.

3. The social-organizational program

The committee recommended that the department use upcoming retirements in social-organizational psychology as an opportunity to develop a first-rate program in experimental social psychology (focused for example on social cognition, prejudice, intergroup bias, or social neuroscience), and to phase out the less research-oriented emphasis on organizational development. The recommendation was that plans for such a program be formulated and that at least two faculty hires be made, even though two additional faculty beyond these will be needed in the future to fully establish programmatic excellence. The department indicates that 3 such faculty hires have been made (one part-time) with research foci ranging from individual differences in social behavior, social cognition and psychological distance to social support and intergroup relations. Yet another faculty hire was also made in the area of leadership with the aim strengthening the area for which this program was previously known. The research expertise of these new faculty is reflected both in the undergraduate and graduate program curriculum. Further, graduate training is now done by senior faculty rather than by adjunct faculty. The department indicates as well that implementing these recommendations has created a challenge in establishing suitable lab space for new faculty and obtaining competitive start-up funds needed for faculty recruitment in psychological science, matters that remain to be resolved.

As described in our previous response, major changes have taken place in the personnel profile and in the curriculum of the social-organizational program following the Report. Two new faculty members joined the program (Dr. Uziel and Dr. Stephan) both with a strong emphasis on basic research in social psychology. New courses were added to the program reflecting this change in social

cognition, individual differences, language and cognition. Additional courses with a social psychology focus will follow in the coming years. With the retirement of several faculty members in over the past few years, the programs personnel profile is now balanced between researches with a social and organizational focus. Two of the 4 students perusing a PhD degree in the program that have joined the program in the past three years study basic processes in individual difference in social behavior (supervised by Dr. Uziel). Notwithstanding it is unfortunate that job opportunities are lacking in the department for both PhD and Master's level student. Such opportunities could have enhanced students' commitment to the system and increase their ability to focus on their research goals with fewer external distractions. Although the June 2012 response described a prospective addition to the program of another senior social psychologist (Prof. Kent Harber), this has not taken place (at Prof. Harber's decision). The program still searches for two new members to replace senior faculty who are about to retire in the coming years. Improvements have also been made in allocation of lab space for basic social psychological research although shortage of space is still an existing problem. The program's ability to attract new faculty is also constrained by the limited allocation of start-up money by the university.

In terms of the latter, see our point #15 (below).

4. Clinical programs – Clinical science and empirically supported treatments

The committee recommended that the clinical programs be brought up to international standards by several means, including by reducing the number of courses in each of the main areas (psychopathology, assessment, and intervention), emphasizing clinical science and evidence-based practice in course content, requiring at least one course in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), making an effort to ensure that adjuncts hired reflect the mission of the program, and doing whatever possible to arrange that students have the option of doing their practicum at a site offering evidence-based practice training (e.g., CBT). The department indicates that considerable progress has been made in implementing these recommendations and that given the new guidelines to be issued by the Ministry of Health (with extensive discussions with the CHE and faculty from the universities), the department is confident its efforts will not result lead its students to be penalized later.

Our students now receive training in at least three therapeutic approaches (2 semesters of CBT, 2 semesters of dynamic psychotherapy, and 1 semester of family therapy). Additionally, each of the adult track's students takes part in at least one year-long CBT practicum and one year-long psychodynamic practicum (both of which take place within our training clinic), alongside one year-long externship (which takes place in area psychiatric hospitals and provides exposure to work in a trans-professional treatment team and to work with severe psychopathology).

In order to base the child clinical students' learning on evidence based approaches to normal and abnormal development, assessment, and therapy, a mandatory course in developmental neuropsychology has been introduced, as well as an elective course in evidence-based diagnosis and intervention into autism spectrum disorders. In addition, a more ecological approach to assessment has been employed, through the introduction of integrative assessment courses in both year 1 and 2 (commencing 2014). These courses integrate semi-structured interviews and observations with standardized and more traditional approaches to psychological assessment, providing an ecological view of the child and her environment.

5. Hiring a new clinical faculty member, a top researcher, to head the clinic

The committee recommended that the department hire a senior scientist (tenure-track) to head the clinic who specializes in evidence-based practice, and also replace retiring faculty with clinical scientists. The department indicates that 3 new research-oriented clinical faculty have in fact been hired, and at least one of these new faculty members is serving as co-director the clinic. Moreover, the clinic now offers supervision in a variety of evidence-based treatments (of differing theoretical orientations), including CBT, cognitive therapy, schema-focused therapy, and short-term psychodynamic therapy.

Our program's ability to attract new faculty has been constrained by the limited availability of space and start-up money, and by the absence of an "absorption bonus" (maanak klita) that is provided to new faculty at most other universities (including TAU and Haifa, to which we lost prospective faculty hires in recent years). Thus, we still suffer from a lack of new faculty who could teach more cutting-edge courses and supervise additional students. Yet, with some strong persuasion and clear need, the child clinical program expects the arrival of a new faculty member, Dr Danny Horesh, who has completed his post-doc at NYU. Dr Horesh brings up to date knowledge on evidence-based clinical practice, and will replace two adjunct faculty members, with more traditional views on diagnostic assessment and therapy.

6. Conducting research in the in-house clinic

The committee recommended that the clinic implement its plan to make the clinic more research-based, further developing science-based assessment and also treatments based on the research. The department indicates that training in the in-house clinic has been upgraded, as noted above (see #5 above), and that all treatment protocols are also accompanied by empirical evaluation measures. Indeed, a full-time post-doctoral research fellow has been hired to coordinate research activities within the clinic, supervised by (and collaborating with) the 3 faculty members who co-direct the clinic. A faculty committee has also been established to initiate and oversee all additional research projects in the clinic, and there are about 10 PhD and MA projects ongoing in the clinic now. In addition, a specialty clinic for young children has recently been established, headed by a top-notch researcher in developmental, to provide training, research, and treatment in child-clinical. Finally, research at the clinic has been dependent on the university extending the clinic's budget (e.g., for hiring the full-time post-doc) and maintaining this funding is crucial.

The adult clinical track has been involved in, and supportive of the transitioning the departmental clinic into a research clinic. Members of the program (Peri, Gilboa-Schechtman, Tuval, and Rafaeli) take an active role in a research steering committee that has been meeting regularly. These meetings have culminated in two grant proposals to outside agencies aimed at funding additional research infrastructure in the clinic. The clinic's post-doctoral research coordinator takes part in the adult track's meetings, and together with the core program faculty, has been supporting the development of MA and PhD proposals related to psychotherapy research based on work conducted in the clinic.

7. Unifying initial stages of the 3 clinical tracks

The committee recommended that the 3 tracks of the clinical program be unified at initial stages to include a common core to foster an integrated view of clinical science as well as specialization by track. The department indicates that a joint CBT course in the curriculum of all clinical tracks. The ultimate aim is to have all students complete the same curriculum in the first year, and to then begin to specialize subsequently. To facilitate interchange across programs, a wide variety of electives are also available to students in all tracks.

In the interim period, the MALAG has issued a recommendation for a core curriculum in applied psychology (including clinical psychology), which is in the process of being ratified by the Ministry of Health's Psychology Council. To bring our program into compliance with these recommendations, we created a stand-alone *ethics* course to replace an ethics unit that was part of the first year dynamic psychotherapy course. This course addresses ethical principles relevant to the field of psychology practice (psychotherapy and assessment) and research.

In addition to all the elective courses, several of our required courses are now (or will be, starting the next academic year) run jointly across the three clinical tracks: 2 semesters of CBT; 1 semester of ethics; 4 semesters of statistics; and the year-long practicum in psychodynamic therapy.

8. Faculty student ratio

The committee noted that across all graduate programs the faculty-student ratio was far too high for effective training, and it thus recommended that the department reduce MA enrollment from 193 to 120 and PhD enrollment from 170 to 100, with a maximum of 6 doctoral students per advisor (across all years) and a total number of graduate students supervised by each advisor (MA and PhD combined) not exceeding 8. The department indicates that the ratio is now lower than it was in 2007 and that steps have been taken to reduce the number of incoming PhD students by half, from about 30 to 15. No comment was made about reduced numbers of MA students.

The incoming PHD class will number about 15 students, a reasonable number for us to handle. The faculty student ratio has not improved much as new faculty that have been hired have replaced those that have left over the past few years.

9. Admitting PhD students based on student-mentor fit

The committee suggests that the department establish a procedure for admitting PhD students that emphasizes not only grades and psychometric scores, but also research experience and fit with the research interests of one or more faculty in the program. The department indicates that most students now admitted to the PhD programs have existing mentors and that only 5 were admitted without a mentor. Indeed, MA students admitted to the 3 clinical programs complete additional application materials and screening and interviewing procedures that ask about research experience and interests. All accepted MA students also undergo an interview with a research-active mentor.

This trend of admitting to the PHD track only students who have a mentor continues and has worked out quite well for us.

10. Undergraduate program

The committee recommended that courses in the undergraduate curriculum be upgraded to reflect the expertise of newly hired faculty in cognition and cognitive neuroscience, and also in social psychology. The department indicates having focused more on faculty hiring and improving graduate programs than on the undergraduate program thus far, but that newly hired faculty are now teaching undergraduate courses. The plan now is to convene a curriculum committee to make curricular changes to the BA program.

With the addition of two new researchers with a social psychological emphasis in the past four years, undergraduate curriculum has also seen changes. The Basic undergraduate course in social psychology is now given by core faculty from the social program. To this course were added in the past years courses focusing on basic research skills in social psychology, an elective course on

individual difference in social behavior, and a seminar on social cognition, all at the BA level. Overall, the present curriculum covers a much wider spectrum than requested. The program includes a stronger emphasis on social psychological topics than before and introduces a new course in Ethics.

11. Transparency in promotion and tenure procedures

The committee suggested that ambiguity about the promotion and tenure process be reduced, transparency increased, and clear time-frame expectations for promotion provided to faculty. It was suggested as well that a periodic evaluation of tenure-track faculty be instituted (e.g., every 2-3 years) that includes a written evaluation and specific criteria to be met for promotion. The department indicates that the chair has clarified such procedures in department meetings and that the faculty promotions committee has begun discussing candidates' files and formally encouraging candidates to attend these meetings to discuss their files. The department plans to refine these procedures in the coming year.

The faculty committee, as a whole, and the department chair, more individually, has reviewed the cases of several faculty members who have the potential for promotion in the near future. In each case, a detailed recommendation was offered which describes what is lacking before a promotion recommendation to the university can be made.

12. Infrastructure

The committee recommended that the university significantly upgrade IT at the library to increase the number of e-journals available to faculty and students and to keep these e-journals up to date, and not, for example, a year behind. The department indicates that access to e-journals at the university has been improved, not least by the recent purchase of EBSCO to better enable searching for journal articles online, which has increased access considerably. Nonetheless, library resources that are also critical still await funding from the university, i.e., for APA Psychtests, Psychotherapy, Books, and Handbooks. Beyond this, the department notes that syllabi, exercises, and articles required for courses are now routinely available online, and registration is now done online as well.

The library still needs updating and it is not clear when this will happen.

13-14. Alumni

The committee recommended that the department reach out to its alumni by conducting an alumni survey, forming an alumni group, and circulating a regular newsletter, which may eventually assist with finances (fundraising). The department indicates that the faculty have discussed this and organized workshops/conferences to establish alumni contacts. Further efforts to set up an alumni data base, however, require funding. The vice-rector has thus made such a request to university public relations and awaits a response.

In order to reach the many alumni of the department, we need some financial resources which the university has indicated it is interested in giving us but has not provided us with any actual resources.

15. Additional Note: A General-Report Recommendation

Although the committee's report for this department did not specify it, it is worth noting that the general report evaluating psychology at universities in Israel recommended that psychology at universities be treated as a life science – in terms of teaching loads, undergraduate and graduate support, laboratory space

and facilities, and the like. Given that relevant funding (and other) challenges are noted in the department's implementation report, this recommendation from the committee's general report seems worth highlighting.

The Rector is aware of this but it is not clear whether it is actually being implemented. The moneys do not come to us but rather to the university.

In my capacity as the person in charge of quality evaluations procedures, I would like to add the following comments to the chair's responses: the Rector has made it clear that if the Department comes up with excellent candidates, he will make every effort to offer them positions in the Department. Also, promotion procedures have changed and are now faster than they used to be in the past. In addition, the issue of the libraries has been prioritized and we hope to see some improvement in the near future, depending on budgetary constraints.

We thank the CHE committee for the helpful comments and hope to continue to improve the quality of the Department in line with these comments.

Sincerely,

Prof. Miriam Faust
Vice Rector
In charge of Quality Evaluation

Cc:
Prof. Haim Taitelbaum, Rector
Prof. Zemira Mevarech, Dean, Faculty of Social Science
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