

The institution's implementation of the evaluation committees' recommendations

The purpose of this follow-up is to examine whether and to what extent the institution implemented the evaluation committee's recommendations, and the impact of the evaluation process on the quality of the department and study program.

*please note the document includes 2 sections

Institution: University of Haifa: Department of Hebrew Language

1. Information:

The evaluator used the following documents:

- a. The evaluation committee's report of October/2012.
- b. Implementation report submitted by the institution in November/2014
- c. Other documents (if there are any):
 - Table of Faculty staff and full syllabus and course description
 - CVs of new staff members

2. Did the institution implement the evaluation committee's recommendations?

Recommendations	Was the recommendation implemented? Yes/No/Partially	Is the implementation of this recommendation is crucial for the study program to continue? Yes/no	Is there a need for further follow up before the next round of evaluation? Yes/no/partially	notes
Recommendation 1	yes	yes	no	
Recommendation 2	no	yes	yes	
Recommendation 3	yes	yes	no	
Recommendation 4	yes	No but highly advisable	no	
Recommendation 5	yes	yes	no	

3.

This chapter will include the conclusions regarding the implementation the evaluation committee's recommendations, and also operative recommendation for the continuation of the follow up to be implemented by the institution's administration, the department, the CHE, the PBC, etc.

The Department of Hebrew Language (henceforth DHL) of Haifa University (HU) has followed and implemented most of the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee. In some cases (especially Recommendation 5), implementation was made possible through a praiseworthy personal initiative by staff members.

Three recommendations concerned the staff. Recommendation 1 called for the university's commitment to replace staff members upon retirement. In 2014, Prof. Ilan Eldar retired, and his position was filled. Recommendation 2, however, advising the allocation of a new tenured position to cover a broader range of topics in the field of the Hebrew language, has yet to be implemented. The University's recruitment policy requires the identification of an excellent candidate who is then considered for employment. Despite the identification by DHL of a candidate in the field of Biblical Hebrew, this recommended position has not yet been opened. Recruiting a new staff member has become a matter of urgency with the departure of one tenured staff member to another university in Israel. Recommendation 3 advised the University to give priority to DHL to present candidates for the Allon grants. This has been fully implemented and Dr Dalit Assouline, specialist in Yiddish and Haskalah Hebrew has joined DHL.

Recommendation 4 has also been implemented: the students' admission threshold has been raised from 490 to 530 points.

Recommendation 5 concerned the creation of a research centre in the DHL. While no administrative structure is envisaged, individual staff members of the DHL undertook a search for research grants. Four major research projects have been secured in this way (two through ISF):

- 1. "The Joseph & Racheline Barda Chair for the Study and Research of Jewish Heritage in Egypt," headed by Prof. Tamar Zewi.**
- 2. A research group created by Prof. Yael Maschler (ISF).**
- 3. Prof. Irit Meir's research project on sign language in the Sign Language Research Lab at the University of Haifa.**
- 4. Dr. Yehudit Henshke has just won an ISF research grant (2015--) for her new research on "The impact of Judeo-Arabic on Modern Hebrew."**

To conclude:

Most of the recommendations have been successfully implemented, some through the personal initiative of the staff members of the DHL of Haifa University.

It is essential:

- 1. That the University implements the Recommendation 2 concerning the creation of a new tenured position. This is especially urgent in the light of a new situation: the departure of one staff member whose position has not**

- yet been replaced. Adequate numbers of tenured staff are essential for the HLD being able to maintain high teaching and research standards.
2. The question of additional funding for tutorials (Recommendation 4) has not been addressed in the report. A clarification on this point is required.

Section 2:

General observation:

This part should include your review on the effect of the process on the quality of the evaluated field in the higher education system Israel.

The departments and programs of Hebrew Language at the five evaluated Israeli universities are among the leading world institutions in the field. The quality of research and publications of their staff members is well recognized, and the programs offer rich and diversified syllabus, with different centres of excellence and specialization across the different universities. In addition to the purely academic standing of these departments, one must stress their role in promoting the Hebrew language also at the national and international level. Most of these evaluated departments understand their work as a mission, both in promoting higher cultural standards and respect for Knowledge in Israeli society as a whole, and, in particular at Haifa University and Ben-Gurion University in the Negev, in promoting Hebrew language and culture among native Arabic speaking citizens.

Despite their quality and importance within and beyond Academia, the departments of Hebrew language and associated languages (Jewish languages, Semitics, etc.), like other humanities departments, have suffered over the past decade from declining interest among prospective students but also, in some cases, from budgetary restrictions inflicted by the universities themselves.

It seems that the evaluation process we have undertaken has been helpful to a certain degree. First of all, with very few exceptions to which we shall return, the authorities of the universities concerned showed interest and awareness of the special role of the Hebrew language units. It is the case that the evaluation has helped the departments to clarify their needs, set their priorities and put forward their assets, and also to create a forum of discussion with the relevant university authorities. The system based on interviews and feedback between the Evaluation Committee and all the individuals and administrative levels concerned has proved very helpful, and has allowed for a better understanding of the distinctive situation of each component during a constructive exchange of ideas. In most cases, and despite the broader tendency to reduce expenditure across the Humanities, our recommendations concerning the replacement of staff members upon retirement, and also those calling for creation of new positions in the departments, were

implemented. Overall, the evaluated Hebrew language units have clearly benefitted from support from the authorities of their universities. DHL at BGU is in a less comfortable situation than the other departments. The Faculty of Humanities is undergoing restructuring including merging smaller units into large departments, and the administrative status of the HLD is under discussion. Pending a solution, the renewal of the positions left vacant by retiring staff members is not sufficiently implemented.

It seems that our recommendations have suggested some new developments in the departments. The recommendations concerning the creation of research centres have for instance started to be implemented at BIU and Haifa University, often as result of individual initiatives of the staff members. It seems also that the departments found it useful when the Evaluation committee identified teaching fields which were less well represented in their otherwise rich programmes.

One of the concerns of the Evaluation Committee was the decreasing number of students in some of the departments. While this decrease reflected a general tendency across the humanities, it was more glaring at some departments (e.g. HUI) while it did not affect some others at all (e.g. TAU, BGU). The Evaluation Committee strove to identify the reasons for the students decrease or dropping numbers, while being conscious that different departments have different histories and attract different populations of students, and that there is no universal remedy for the decrease in students' numbers. It was evident that departments that opened new specialized Master degrees (for instance, Edition at TAU, BGU, or paedagogical training, for instance at Haifa University or HUI) attracted additional students, without compromising the quality of the intake.

Alongside various factors which often remain beyond the control of the universities and departments, one constant factor discouraging students or leading to the abandon of their studies in Hebrew language programmes has proved to be the compulsory test in Hebrew grammar and vocalization (Niqqud). It has become clear that first year students do not have sufficient background in Hebrew grammar, which should have been acquired in secondary schools. This is why a number of our recommendations have concerned setting and encouraging tutorials and small groups teaching in this basic but essential field. Such additional tutorials imply either additional funding or the redistribution of resources, and the departments were rarely successful in obtaining specific funding. Nonetheless, some departments have started to implement this recommendation through internal reorganization, employment of post-doctoral researchers or looking for innovative teaching methods. In any case, the necessity to find a stable solution for the teaching of Niqqud – an integral part of Hebrew language acquisition and use - remains one of the priorities.

To conclude, the academic programmes of Hebrew language in Israel should be protected and encouraged, because they represent an invaluable asset to their universities and to society at large.