

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 d: Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Department of Hebrew and Jewish Languages

1. Information:

The evaluator used the following documents:

- a. The evaluation committee's report of October/2012.
- b. Implementation report submitted by the institution on 19 October /2014
- c. Other documents (if there are any):
 - Table of Faculty staff
 - Syllabus of the courses
 - Description of two courses (Syntax and Semantics and Language, Society and Thought)

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

Recommendations	Was the recommendation implemented? Yes/No/Partially	Is the implementation of this recommendation 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	NA	yes	yes	
Recommendation 2	no	yes	yes	
Recommendation 3	yes	yes	no	
Recommendation 4	Yes see 2	yes	no	
Recommendation 5	Yes see 2	yes	no	
Recommendation 6	no	yes	yes	
Recommendation 7	yes	yes	no	
Recommendation 8	yes	yes	no	
Recommendation 9	partly	yes	yes	
Recommendation 10	Need more information			
Recommendation 11	partly	no	yes	
Recommendation 12	partly	yes	yes	
Recommendation 13	partly	No but advisable	Yes	

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 and Jewish Languages (henceforth DHJL) of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ) has submitted a report which shows that most of the recommendations made by the Evaluation Committee have been implemented or are in the process of implementation. We are, of course, aware that the HUJ and its humanities departments underwent restructuration in the past years, and its humanities departments in general and the DHJL in particular need time to readjust to the new organization and functioning.

Several recommendations concerned recruitment and employment of the staff members. As for the permanent staff members, Recommendation 1 concerned the replacement of retiring tenured staff members. The next retirement (Prof. A. Maman) is scheduled for 2016. The DHJL has taken the necessary steps for the replacement back in 2012. It is to be expected that the position will be allocated to the DHJL in conformity with the Recommendation 1. The Evaluation Committee also recommended a creation of an additional position in the DHJL, dedicated specifically to the field of Hebrew phonology and phonetics (Recommendation 2). A position was created, but the department chose to allocate it to a different field of Hebrew language studies: the History of the Hebrew Language. However, none of the applicants (11 candidates) was elected. The DHJS will renew the call for application in the coming year or two. The change of thematic orientation in respect to Recommendation 2 has been convincingly argued by the department, and is in line with the scientific rationale of two other recommendations of the Evaluation Committee (Recommendations 4 and 5). The DHJL chose to strengthen the philological rather than linguistic component of its curriculum, but pointed out that a position in linguistics with a specialization in phonology and morphology is advertised by the School of Language Sciences to which the DHJL belongs. Although this position in linguistics is not necessarily defined as concerning Hebrew, it is expected that this position will answer the requirements of the DHJL in the field of phonology. Indeed, Recommendation 4 advised a strategic planning of future recruitments between the DHJL and the School of Language Sciences, and Recommendation 5 advised that a practice of hiring staff with 50/50 contracts in the DHJL and the School of Language Sciences should be discontinued, while collaboration between the two entities should be strengthened and new positions

defined in a complementary way. This seems to have happened in the case of Recommendation 2, and a new position was redefined as History of the Hebrew Language with a possibility of reliance on the School for linguistics. This corresponds as well with the implementation of Recommendation 3 advising a closer collaboration, namely in the field of linguistics, between the DHJL and the School of Language Sciences. This collaboration has been further enhanced through the teaching of the staff members of the DHJL at the School of Language Sciences level, a coorganisation of a Teaching Diploma in Hebrew Language and of a summer school. However, both the position at the DHJL and the School of Language Sciences are still not filled.

Recommendation 6 concerned the integration of promising young researchers through specific grants. The report reacts to the Evaluation Committee's advice to apply for Alon and other foundations' grants by stating that such grants are not at the DHJL's discretion. This is certainly so. However, the department can initiate the process by presenting candidates for such grants at the University level. It would be appreciated if the DHJL provided information about the candidates for Alon grants it has put forward in the recent years.

A matter of special concern is the precarious status of adjunct lecturers at the DHJL (Recommendation 8). A general policy of the HJL has since improved this notably through introducing more stable work contracts. Adjunct lecturers are also entitled to apply for conference grants. As for Recommendation 9 concerning the necessity to support adjunct lecturers by employing them, when possible, in the research centres, the implementation report gives a slightly ambiguous answer. While some of the adjunct teachers are indeed employed in the research centres, others seem to be the centres' researchers who are temporarily employed as adjunct teachers. Some of these researchers provide crucial undergraduate teaching and bear a share of responsibility for the students' success. This is notably the case with the undergraduate teaching of the Niqqud, whose test (passed at high threshold of 85/100) is essential for the programme. The improvement of the teaching (through 5 interim quizzes preparing the students for the exam) have been introduced by M. Kahan who is one of the Ben Yehuda centre post-doctoral fellows and an adjunct teacher at the DHJL. One notices that the project of increasing the tutorials for the teaching of the basic skills unfortunately was not supported financially by the university.

Recommendation 10 expressed concern about the planning of sabbatical leaves: in some years up to three permanent staff members were on leave simultaneously with core teaching being provided by few tenured staff members in activity, and several temporary adjunct lecturers and Emeriti professors. It seems that a plan has been established for 2013-2014, but no details are provided.

The last Recommendation 13 concerned the surprisingly low numbers of international graduate students at the DHJL. A committee has been set up to improve on this point, but the DHJL states that additional funds are required for this action. The report does not specify what the additional funds are required for (grants for overseas students or additional teaching in the department?).

To conclude:

The DHJL has implemented several of the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee. Others are in the process of being implemented. In some cases, the information provided by the implementation report was insufficient to form a clear opinion about how far the recommendations made by the Evaluation Committee have been taken into consideration or have helped the department.

It is essential:

- 1. That a position in the DHJL is filled upon the retirement of Prof. Maman in 2016.**
- 2. That the authorities of the HUI recognize the necessity of additional tutorials in Niqqud and provide necessary funding.**
- 3. That the DHJL provides details concerning its action to promote young researchers (application for Milgat Alon, etc)**

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. HUU) 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, Education at TAU, BGU, or pedagogical training, for instance at Haifa University or HUU) 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.