

## 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: Tel Aviv University Hebrew Language Programme**

#### 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 21 September /2014
- c. Any other documents (please specify)
  - New staff member and new courses at TAU Hebrew Language Programme - Prof. M. Morgenstern
  - CV Prof. Morgenstern

#### 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 continuation of the study program? 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	Yes/Partially	Yes	Yes	
Recommendation 3	Yes	Yes	No	
Recommendation 4	Yes	Yes	No	
Recommendation 5	Yes/Partially	Yes	No	
Recommendation 6	Yes	Yes	No	
Recommendation 7	No	No but advisable	No	
Recommendation 8	Yes	No	No	
Recommendation 9	No	No	No	

#### 3.

Conclusions regarding the implementation of the recommendations. Please include operative recommendations for the continuation of the follow up to be implemented by the institution's administration, department, CHE, PBC, etc.

**In the light of the submitted implementation report and additional documents, it is clear that the Hebrew Language Programme (henceforth HLP) at the Tel Aviv University (TAU) has followed the recommendations**

of the Evaluation Committee and introduced numerous positive changes. It also appears that the efforts of the department met in most cases with positive reaction by the TAU rector and dean of humanities, who fully appreciate the importance of the HLP and its vivacity for TAU.

First, the Recommendations 1 and 2 concerning the replacement of HLP permanent staff and the allocation of these positions directly to the HLP rather than to its larger administrative structure, the Department of Hebrew Culture Studies. Given the retirement of 4 full staff members before 2018 (out of the total of 5,5), HLP has to ensure their replacement as a matter of particular urgency. These replacements are vital for the continuation of the programme. This point has been solved in a satisfactory manner. One additional position was allocated to the programme in 2013. The appointment of Prof. Matthew Morgenstern has allowed the HLP to introduce new courses into the BA and MA curricula. These include the course in medieval Hebrew, and more precisely an MA course on medieval Hebrew translations of work of Jewish authors written in Arabic. Through the introduction of this course, the HLP implemented Recommendation 6 of the Evaluation Committee which concerned the absence of a medieval Hebrew component in an otherwise exhaustive curriculum. This additional position has greatly helped to implement Recommendation 5 to increase the extent of core teaching by tenured staff rather than by untenured lecturers.

As for the 4 positions threatened by retirement of the staff members, the HLD has obtained a positive answer by TAU authorities; in principle, all 4 positions will be replaced upon retirement of their holders. This is the case with the first retirement in 2014: the position was allocated to the HLP and a strong candidate (Einat Gonen) was elected (out of 16 applicants). This appointment will ensure the continuity of HLP's research and teaching in the field of Israeli Hebrew. As stated, TAU authorities are committed to the replacement of the further 3 staff members upon their retirement. It is advisable to follow up on this matter in due course.

While the replacements of the permanent staff have been successful, the HLP has not secured an allocation of funds for small groups teaching and tutorials (Recommendation 7). The Head of HLP has made the necessary efforts to secure this funding. Unfortunately, no funds were allocated and to the contrary, some tutorials had to be cancelled. While the lack of tutorials and small groups teaching does not jeopardise the existence of HLP, it can have negative effects on the students' achievements and the level of help HLP can bring to enhance their excellence. It is advisable that TAU authorities seek to implement this Recommendation 7, in order to further promote the high level of students' results at the HLP.

As for the students, many of them have to support themselves economically while studying. To accommodate their needs, HLP has made a considerable effort to arrange the timetables in such a way that those who are employed can maximize their presence at the university and benefit from the teaching. MA lectures are concentrated in one day a week, and those of the editing programme in two days. It is noteworthy that students have a possibility to discuss their individual timetable problems with the consultants, and that HLP is willing and cooperative to accommodate the students' needs in this matter.

Recommendation 3 concerning the identity of the HLP within a larger unit (Dept. of Hebrew Culture Studies) has been satisfactorily implemented through a distinctive thematic curriculum. At the same time, HLP has developed scientific collaboration with the Departments of Semitic Linguistics and of Bible Studies. This collaboration includes a possibility to the students to attend courses in both units. In addition to these well developed collaborations, HLP has started to implement Recommendation 4 regarding a closer collaboration with the Linguistics Department. For the time being, this cooperation consists of members of the two units giving lectures and participating in colloquia in the other department.

Recommendation 9 concerning the creation of a research institute could not be implemented. Discussions between the Head of HLP and the TAU authorities made it clear that at this stage there is no sufficient manpower nor additional funds to implement this ambitious project. Such a research institute would greatly enhance the research dimensions of HLP, but is not essential for the continuation of the programme.

To conclude:

The essential Recommendations of the Evaluation Committee have been successfully implemented through the efforts of HLP with the support and understanding of TAU authorities.

It is essential:

1. To ensure that TAU's commitment to replace, in HLP, the 3 positions upon their holders' retirement is effectively carried out on time.
2. To strive to obtain additional resources for tutorials and small groups teaching.

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. HUC) 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 pedagogical training, for instance at Haifa University or HUC) 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.