



פרופ' מאיר מ' בר-אשר
הקתדרה בחקר האסלאם
ע"ש מקס שלטינגר
החוג לשפה וספרות ערבית
המכון ללימודי אסיה ואפריקה
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח

Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher
Max Schloessinger Chair
in Islamic Studies
Dept. of Arabic Language
and Literature
Institute of Asian
& African Studies
Faculty of Humanities

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The Hebrew University
The Department for Arabic Language and Literature

Response to the evaluation report of the CHE Committee for the Evaluation of Arabic Language and Literature Study Programs

The members of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University have carefully examined the report prepared by the CHE Committee for the Evaluation of Arabic Language and Literature Studies in Israel. We feel that the Committee accurately and perceptively identified our department's strong points as well as its weak points, and we therefore adopt its recommendations heartily. We furthermore feel that the Committee's recommendations provide well-directed and real measures to achieve improvement.

A number of the recommendations relate to university frameworks that are beyond the governance of the department – in particular, the recommendation to fill department positions as faculty retire. That said, we will act to implement the recommendations that are within our power to implement, according to the list in the attached file.


Meir M. Bar-Asher

Chair of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature

הר הצופים
ירושלים 91905
טל. (ב) 02-5836557
טל. (מ) 02-5883700
פקס. 02-5883558

Mount Scopus
Jerusalem 91905, Israel
Tel.(H) 972-2-5836557
Tel.(O) 972-2-5883700
Fax. 972-2-5883558
barasher@mscc.huji.ac.il

RECOMMENDATION	STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION
SHORT TERM	
1. Replacement of retiring faculty	We will strive to replace individual faculty members who are retiring and to cover their fields. This refers specifically and immediately to the fields of classical and modern literature, which will be affected by upcoming retirements. It goes without saying that this effort on our part requires an official university decision followed up by implementation by the faculty as a priority.
2. Replacement of fields represented by retiring faculty	See above.
3. Filling in gaps in the library collection	The faculty library liaison will be specifically empowered to evaluate the collection and to define areas and items for immediate purchases.
INTERMEDIATE TERM	
1. Reduce the work-load of junior faculty	The department head commits him/herself to reevaluating yearly the assignment of administrative duties in the department and will announce division of duties at the first departmental meeting of each year. Duties will be fairly and equally assigned among faculty members in order to ensure that junior faculty are not overburdened and are able to prepare themselves effectively for tenure procedures.

<p>2. Appointment of an efficient secretary</p>	<p>We have applied to the faculty authorities for a replacement in secretarial staff, and have alerted them to our problematic situation.</p>
<p>3. Add courses in BA on modern literature, Arabic dialectology and general linguistics</p>	<p>This recommendation falls on listening ears, especially given the fact that our native Arabic-speaking students have expressed to us their interest in more courses in modern literature. In accordance with this recurring request, in the last years we have introduced a number of mandatory as well as elective courses, which expose students to modern Arabic authors and include intensive reading in modern Arabic literature from all over the Arab world. In the passing year these included "Modern Arabic Short Stories" (Shachmon, 16124); "Stylistic Innovations in Contemporary Egyptian Prose" (Rosenbaum, 16890); "Aspects of Modern Egyptian Culture" (Rosenbaum, 16360); and "Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature" (Moreh, 16857).</p> <p>One should note, however, that Prof. Moreh is retired volunteer, not part of the department staffing. His course is an unplanned luxury.</p> <p>Following the expected retirement of Prof. Rosenbaum, we will have to either appoint a new faculty member with a specialization in the field, or to fill the gap with adjunct lecturers.</p> <p>In addition, and with regard to several notes in the CHE Committee's report. Students have also expressed growing interest in courses in dialectology and general linguistics. Since the addition of Dr. Shachmon to the department at least two courses on modern Arabic dialects are offered every year, and include the collection of spoken materials in active field work.</p> <p>Starting from the 2014/5 academic year we have also introduced an introductory courses in general linguistics as part of the compulsory BA curriculum (see no. 5 below).</p>
<p>4. Add courses in BA in literary and intellectual history.</p>	<p>A team-taught departmental course offering a survey of Arabic literature from the Jahiliyya to the modern period is currently in preparation.</p>

<p>5. Add courses for graduates on (i) research methods and (ii) an introduction to theoretical approaches to the subject .</p>	<p>In the past year, we carried out a major revision of required general classes (Known as "Gateway Courses" in the Faculty) in order to introduce a new requirement for our BA concentrators: two introductory courses, one on Middle Eastern History and one on General Linguistics, both of which provide instruction in research methods and theoretical approaches. This change, which becomes effective for BA students beginning their studies in the 2014-15 academic year, does not add to the students' course load, but rather directs their choice of "Gateway Courses" more effectively so as to provide essential theoretical and historical foundations for their study in the department .</p> <p>One should note that all the desirable and necessary additional courses require extra staff for the department cannot introduce them with the present level of staffing.</p>
<p>6. Integrate theory and discussion of secondary literature more fully into study of texts</p>	<p>We will encourage department faculty to include consideration of theoretical approaches to their subjects in their teaching, in BA instruction and especially in MA seminars. A number of instructors already include such material as a matter of course.</p>
<p>7. Introduce more teaching through Modern Standard Arabic, in order to improve students' pronunciation and increase their acquisition of the language at higher spoken level.</p>	<p>Active Use of Modern Standard Arabic: Students</p> <p>Since the 2013/4 academic year, we have introduced a weekly practice session linked to a first-year course in modern Arabic literature, in which students discuss literary topics in MSA. The sessions are led by a native speaker and have proved to be useful and very popular. In the 2014/5 academic year these sessions are externally financed, but we hope that in time it will become a standard part of our department budget.</p> <p>Active Use of Modern Standard Arabic: Faculty</p> <p>We are applying for external funding for a summer seminar in which junior faculty will improve their ability to conduct classes in MSA. We hope that increasing comfort in MSA will naturally lead faculty to decide to teach in that language, in place of or in addition to Hebrew</p>

<p>8. Create an MA seminar to give students peer-review of their work</p>	<p>We pledge to establish a graduate colloquium whereby all students on research tracks of MA and doctorate will meet bi-weekly or monthly and will in turn present their research projects. The colloquium will be coordinated by a graduate student, and supervised by a faculty member. Outstanding BA students may also be invited to present papers, on the recommendation of faculty.</p>
<p>9. Create a PhD seminar to give students peer-review of their work</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>10. Attract more Arab graduate students</p>	<p>We consistently encourage outstanding Arab students to continue their studies towards MA and PhD and do our best to provide them with scholarships as well as prizes. We will continue to take note of excellent Arab students who should be encouraged in this way, in order to create a pool of possible candidates for faculty positions in the future.</p>
<p>11. Make efforts to appoint Arabs to faculty positions within the Department</p>	<p>Your recommendation is well-taken, and your suggestion of contacting other Israeli departments is quite useful and will be implemented when our department is able to announce a call for candidates.</p>
<p>12. Create a workshop to acquaint students with potential job opportunities outside the academy</p>	<p>We intend to organize a one-day workshop in which alumni present their experience in job searches and in the work force, in order to introduce our students to the many opportunities available to department graduates.</p>

<p>13. Encourage faculty at all levels to apply for grants</p>	<p>New junior faculty will be instructed in the utility of application for grants. We plan to raise the idea of a multi-departmental forum for presentation of current projects, in order to promote the exchange of funding ideas.</p>
<p>14. Provide the necessary financial support for <i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>.</p>	<p><i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i> needs a full time executive editor, preferably a PhD in Arabic or Islamic Studies. Only such an appointment will solve the financial needs of JSAI in the long run.</p>
<p>15. Provide the necessary financial subvention to make possible the work of the Arabic-English online dictionary.</p>	<p>It is estimated that we would need 620,000 NIS annually for three years (totaling 1,860,000 NIS) to convert our Arabic-Hebrew dictionary into an Arabic-English one.</p>