



EVALUATION OF PHILOSOPHY STUDIES **BEN GURION UNIVERSITY**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF PHILOSOPHY STUDIES IN
ISRAEL

March 2023

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Section 1: Background and Procedures

1.1 In the academic year 2022, the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programs in the field of philosophy in Israel.

1.2 The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:

- The Hebrew University
- Bar-Ilan University
- Ben-Gurion University

1.3 To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of¹:

- [Prof. Nicholas Southwood](#) – Chair
- [Prof. Tamar Szabó Gendler](#)
- [Prof. Eli Friedlander](#)
- [Prof. John Hyman](#)
- [Prof. Simon May](#)

Ms Keren Hrushev served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

1.4 The evaluation process was conducted under the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (January 2022). Within this framework, the evaluation Committee was required to:

- examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the institutions that provide study programmes in Philosophy;
- conduct on-site visits at those institutions participating in the evaluation process;
- submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the academic units and study programmes participating in the evaluation;
- set out the Committee's findings and recommendations for each study programme;

¹ The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- submit to the CHE a general report regarding the evaluated field of study within the Israeli system of higher education, including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study;

1.5 The evaluation Committee examined only the evidence provided by each participating institution — considering this alongside the distinctive mission set out by each institution regarding its own aims and objectives. This material was further elaborated and explained in discussions with senior management, lecturers, students, and alumni during each one-day visit to each institution.

1.6 In undertaking this work, the Committee considered matters of quality assurance and enhancement — applying its collective knowledge of developments and good practices in the delivery of higher education in Philosophy (mainly from European countries and the USA) to evaluate such provisions in Israel.

Section 2: Executive Summary

The Committee visited the Be'er Sheva Campus of Ben Gurion University of the Negev on Wednesday, 15 March 2023². The Committee met with the Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Head of the Department of Philosophy, senior and junior faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni of the Philosophy program. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the Department's self-assessment exercise, assemble further information, provide our own assessment of the current and projected state of the Department, and formulate recommendations.

Overall, the Committee was highly impressed by the state of the Department. Driven by a record of recruiting outstanding scholars, the Department is characterised by genuine excellence in research performance; engaged and inspiring teaching resulting in an outstanding student experience; effective, supportive, and inclusive leadership and decision-making; an atmosphere of camaraderie between faculty members and between faculty and students; a spirit of innovation and support for innovation; and a sincere commitment to engaging in honest self-appraisal and self-improvement. The self-report was admirably thorough, thoughtful, and candid. The Department has already begun to initiate its own plans and strategies to address perceived shortcomings. In the view of the Committee, all of this adds up to a Department that is in excellent health that should be protected, encouraged, and supported.

At the same time, the Department faces important challenges. Perhaps the three most substantive concerns are (a) coverage of research and teaching; (b) student numbers; and (c) diversity. During and after our visit, the Committee discussed these and other challenges and how best to address them in a way that preserves and enhances the impressive strengths of the Department.

The remainder of the report will summarise the Committee's specific observations and recommendations concerning various aspects of the Department's core activities.

² The on-site visit schedule is attached as **Appendix 2**

Section 3: Observations

3.1 The institution and the parent unit

The Committee had frank and productive meetings with members of senior management, including the Rector, the Vice-Rector, and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. We were impressed by their vision and support for the Humanities in general and Philosophy in particular. All of them recognise the outstanding performance and achievements of the Department and the importance of preserving its notable strengths. In general, there appears to be a relationship of trust and goodwill between senior management and the Department.

The Rector, himself a historian, has an ambitious plan to secure the future of the Humanities at BGU by expanding the number of humanities courses that all BGU students are required to take. This plan strikes the Committee as providing a potentially valuable and exciting opportunity not only for the Humanities Departments but also for the generations of BGU students who will have the benefit of exploring the questions that the humanities raise, surrounded by a community of others who are also engaged in this exploratory endeavour. At the same time, and as we discussed with the Rector, such a scheme must be implemented judiciously to ensure that it enhances and does not compromise the quality and reputation of the division's core study programs.

The Committee feels strongly that, here and elsewhere, good outcomes will result if, and only if, there is direct and open communication between senior management and the Department regarding key university objectives and priorities. Once these have been established, the Department should be empowered to deploy its formidable creative powers to develop concrete proposals for implementation.

Recommendation (essential): Ensure frank and regular communication between the senior management and the Department and empower the Department to determine the specific ways in which it will implement University-wide recommendations and mandates.

3.2 Internal Quality Assurance

The Committee was highly impressed by the quality of the BGU Philosophy Department's self-report, which we found to be thorough, thoughtful, conscientious, and forthright. Perhaps most impressively, the Department has already begun to identify and remedy perceived weaknesses. For example, thanks to good working relations with the Dean of the Faculty and the Rector of the University, the Department initiated an international search immediately following the retirement of one faculty member, replacing him with another. This proactive response means students will not experience a gap in Departmental offerings.

All key recommendations from the previous assessment (2009) within the Department's power have been acted upon, demonstrably improving and strengthening the Department. The main recommendations of that report concerned: (a) hiring a new generation of outstanding faculty; (b) strengthening the BA program by increasing writing instruction, tutorial offerings, TA support, and TA supervision; (c) adjusting the requirements of the MA program to promote student completion rates; (d) creating a Cognitive Science program; (e) enhancing mentoring; and (f) expanding the horizons of student and faculty experience through international and inter-university cooperation and exchange.

Most importantly, the Department is to be commended for its responsiveness to the previous Committee's recommendation regarding hiring: Since 2009, it has brought in six new members, culminating in a current headcount of nine FTE and one affiliated faculty. In 2012, the Department recruited Noa Schein (PhD, University of California at Irvine, 2006), specialising in Early Modern Philosophy, and Shlomo Cohen (PhD, Hebrew University, 2006), who is also a physician, and who specialises in Bioethics, Applied Ethics, Environmental Ethics, and Experimental Philosophy. In 2013 Andy German (PhD, Boston University, 2011), now Head of the Department, joined, specialising in Ancient Philosophy and 19th-century to early 20th-century German Philosophy. In 2017 Uri Leibovitz (PhD, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2008) was recruited, specialising in Metaethics and Philosophy of Science. In 2020 Ori Beck (PhD, University of Pittsburgh, 2015) joined, specialising in the Philosophy of

perception, Philosophy of mind, and Analytic Metaphysics. In 2022 the Faculty increased its FTE from 8.5 to 9, enabling it to recruit Jacob Abolafia (PhD, Harvard University, 2019), specialising in Political Philosophy and Continental European Philosophy (including the Frankfurt School), with a teaching AOC in Islamic Political Philosophy. In 2018, the Cognitive and Brain Sciences Department recruited Nir Fresco, a University of New South Wales PhD (2013) specialising in the Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Cognitive Neuroscience, and Computation. (The Department was closely involved in Fresco's recruitment and cooperated with him in research, teaching, and student supervision.) The Department also employs three or four highly qualified part-time adjunct lecturers, three of whom have a long-term semi-permanent affiliated status. Their presence partially compensates for the gap between the actual number of full-time faculty members and the 12 FTE positions recommended by the 2009 Evaluation Committee.

These recruitments – conducted using best practices for international searches – have contributed substantially to the Department's academic reputation, excellence, and range of teaching and research. The Department should be commended on its efforts.

Regarding the other recommendations: the Department has enhanced teaching and supervision in the BA program and adjusted the requirements of the MA program. A mentoring program for junior faculty has been implemented, and the University has created a Cognitive Science program. While some progress has been made in expanding the horizons of student and faculty experience through international and inter-university cooperation and exchange, more could be done in this area. We recommend that the Department and university continue pursuing this avenue to strengthen their teaching and research missions.

Recommendation (essential): Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.

3.3 The Department/Study Program

The study program comprises research and teaching contributing to the BA, MA (research track and general track), and PhD, as well as a number of “outreach courses” directed towards students outside the Department.

The course offerings are well-balanced, addressing a wide range of topics in Analytic Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, History of Philosophy, and some Asian Philosophy. Students learn how these approaches can be fruitfully combined and brought into dialogue. The BA program is well-structured, with systematic training in both historical and thematic Philosophy and a well-designed sequence of opportunities to engage in philosophical research. Most BA students at BGU pursue a second major alongside Philosophy, exposing them to multiple disciplines.

The MA program has two tracks: a research track with a supervised thesis and a general track with only coursework. The program is thoughtfully constructed. At its heart is a series of research seminars focused on core philosophical topics where students engage in intense small-group discussions and receive detailed feedback on multiple drafts of their philosophical essays. The Department also offers a PhD program in which students pursue a four-year course of supervised research – culminating in a thesis – under the supervision of a Committee comprising a principal supervisor and two or three other advisors.

Overall, the study program appears to be working well, powered by outstanding research and teaching (see below). However, there are two non-trivial challenges confronting the Department.

The first challenge is that, given its small size, there are significant limits to the subject-area coverage that the Department can offer with regard to teaching and supervision. Two significant lacunae – in Continental Philosophy and Political Philosophy – have been addressed by the recent hire of Jacob Abolafia, a 2019 Harvard PhD graduate. But others remain, for instance, in the Philosophy of Language and Aesthetics. The Department also lacks a faculty member specialising in Islamic Philosophy.

To address this challenge, and given the Department's outstanding research and teaching and admirable track record in recruiting stellar candidates, the Committee recommends expanding the steady state of the Department from 9 to 10 FTE when resources permit. In addition, the Department should investigate and broaden its course offerings by incentivising faculty to develop courses outside their current areas of specialisation. The second challenge concerns the number of students. While the number of BA students in Philosophy is fairly high compared with most other humanities Departments at BGU, humanities as a whole remains under-enrolled. The number of MA students is small and decreasing; the Department describes this as "a serious concern." The number of PhD students is negligible.

The Department has been proactive in addressing these challenges. Efforts include an ambitious program of publicising the Department to prospective students by visiting high schools, deploying social media, producing a series of podcasts, and co-teaching courses with other areas such as Psychology and Cognitive Science. To increase the number of MA students, the Department has introduced significant changes, including reducing the MA course requirement from 28 to 24 credits, allowing outstanding undergraduate students to count courses in their third year towards the MA, and introducing a one-year research program. Still, the BGU program is primarily an "exporter" rather than an "importer" of graduate students. Its MA program is composed mainly of students who completed their BAs at BGU or nearby small colleges, with virtually no students who earned their Philosophy BA at other Israeli Universities, and a number of its own BA graduates who go on to pursue an MA do so at other universities, particularly TAU and HUJI. This situation – traceable to several factors, including the University's location in the Negev – is not necessarily a problem; it is just a fact to be observed.

A second effort to expand enrollment takes place through the "outreach courses" offered to students outside philosophy, most of whom take such a course as a one-off exposure to the field. Outreach courses come in two flavours: courses that are intended to be open and accessible to any interested student within the university; and courses that are developed for, and offered to, students from a specific field (such as engineering). The Department now offers two such courses annually. In 2022/2023,

these were “Philosophy of Science for Scientists” and “Introduction to the Structure of the World: Metaphysics for Non-Specialists,” each specifically designed to introduce Philosophy to an audience for whom it might be a first encounter with the field.

The development of these and other outreach courses provides a potentially effective way of reaching more students. It accords well with the Rector’s vision that all BGU students will be required to take a certain number of Humanities courses (conversely, students from the Humanities would take Science classes). While this is an admirable goal, it should be pursued judiciously and with care without compromising the quality of the core program in philosophy. As with all central mandates, the details of execution should be left to the Department. Outreach courses, especially those developed for particular groups of student majors, should be offered to students early in their university career so that those who find themselves intrigued by the method or subject matter have time to choose that discipline as their second major or to take additional courses in the Department. Such courses should have appropriate support, especially in the form of TAs, to help participants with limited backgrounds acquire reading and writing philosophy skills.

The Department should also consider introducing one or more cross-disciplinary degrees or programs that bring Philosophy together with one or more cognate fields. For example, the Department might consider offering a BA degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) (though such a degree is already available in Israel through TAU, HUJI, and the Open University) or - perhaps even better – in Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology (PEP). This combination would distinguish the Department at Ben Gurion yet offer many of the same professional options that other PPE programs provide, given the importance of Behavioural Economics both intellectually and professionally.

Recommendation (essential): Make sure that the provision and potential expansion of outreach courses involve all of the following: (a) details of execution should be left to the Department; (b) most outreach courses,

especially those developed for particular groups of student majors, should be offered to students early in their university careers; (c) such courses should have the appropriate support for their development and execution, especially in the form of TAs.

Recommendation (important): Investigate creative ways to expand coverage, including reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow BGU students to take courses at these other institutions for credit, and perhaps vice versa.

Recommendation (important): Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or program that makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the department and other cognate areas, such as, e.g. perhaps a Bachelor of Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology (BPEP).

Recommendation (desirable): Increase the steady-state size of the department from 9 to 10 FTE when resources allow

Recommendation (desirable): Recruit a specialist in medieval Islamic Philosophy.

Recommendation (desirable): Investigate and incentivise (e.g. by offering some teaching relief for preparation) ways to expand departmental course offerings by encouraging faculty to develop courses outside of their current areas of specialisation.

3.4 Teaching and Learning Outcomes

In the Committee's judgement, the Department does an excellent job of achieving its ambitious teaching and learning outcomes, despite the small size of the faculty. The BA program succeeds in providing both a historical as well as a thematic background to all students. At the same time, the department offers students (particularly in their third year) seminars that give a taste of research in Philosophy. In addition, the Department invests time and energy in improving the reading and writing skills of students entering the program. For that purpose, students take a first-year class of

four credits entitled “Philosophy, Reading and Writings Skills”, where they receive targeted advice on reading philosophical texts and regularly submit written assignments on these readings.

In addition to the specifically designed classes, writing skills are improved by the general preference for essays rather than in-class exams as final requirements. The relative percentage of essays to in-class and take-home exams is, respectively, 88%, 9%, and 3%.

Evidence of teaching excellence can be seen from the fact that members of the Department receive among the highest student evaluations in the university and have been awarded a number of competitive teaching awards. It can also be seen from the remarkably enthusiastic testimonies that we received from the students and alumni whom we interviewed (see section 3.4). It should also be noted that some of the students we interviewed began their studies in other Departments and were then exposed to Philosophy by taking a course in the subject. This resulted in their deciding to transfer and take one of their majors in the philosophy department. The Committee emphatically welcomes the emphasis the department places on training students to read and write Philosophy.

Achieving comparable outcomes for teaching and learning in courses provided for students outside the faculty (so-called “outreach courses”) has been more challenging. This is, for example, the case for students from the sciences and engineering who attend classes without significant philosophical backgrounds. It is clearly problematic for them to acquire the necessary reading and writing skills, especially when these are not at a premium in their own fields. Given that a conventional introduction to Philosophy class covering an extensive range of topics is not successful with these students, designing classes that cover less material in more depth might be more productive.

CHE requires all Israeli BA students to take two classes taught in English. The Department offers such courses, but we were told that although lectures are given in English, students are not required to participate in English in class discussions and can submit their written assignments in Hebrew. This compromise enables students to

readily satisfy the requirement. Still, clearly, it significantly reduces the effectiveness of the courses, which should also challenge and train students to read, write, and speak in English.

Recommendation (important): Integrate formal reading, speaking, and writing requirements in English into required courses.

3.5 Students

The Committee met current BA, MA, and PhD students and two alumni. The picture they painted of the student experience within the Department was uniformly glowing. The teaching was described by students as “phenomenal,” “transformative,” “inspiring,” “the way Philosophy is supposed to be taught,” and as having “changed my life.” The faculty were described as “passionate,” “enthusiastic,” “nurturing,” “going over and above,” as having a “personal connection” with students, and as instilling in students “a love of learning for its own sake.” All the students were at pains to emphasise that their experience in other Departments, even when positive, was nothing like their experience studying in the Department of Philosophy. The faculty should be commended for this remarkable achievement.

Another noteworthy aspect of the student experience is that unlike in other Departments the Committee visited, there is a vibrant sense of community among the students, among both the BA students and the MA students. While much of the impetus for community-building comes from the students themselves, the faculty can also take credit for this through their organisation of, and attendance at, the regular “Philosophy club” and their support for various forms of student innovation (including broadcasts on BGU radio). There is a culture among the students of talking Philosophy with one another and meeting to share and discuss written work. This has palpable pedagogical benefits. One MA student observed that his current MA thesis topic emerged from one such session. More generally, it provides students with additional opportunities to practise and fine-tune skills in reading, writing, and discussing Philosophy, skills that are notoriously difficult to acquire.

We only heard two mild complaints from the students with whom we met. The first was that the Department's course offerings are narrow in some respects. As noted above, the remedies here seem to involve some combination of recruitment and incentivising teaching outside the faculty's current areas of specialisation. The second was that there is minimal support for students in the Humanities going into the non-academic job market. In our view, this needs to be addressed at the Faculty level.

Recommendation (important): Extend the completion period for the research-track MA to three years.

Recommend (desirable): Do more to prepare students for the (non-academic) job market by establishing mechanisms at the university- or faculty-level to offer information and assistance to students regarding, e.g. relevant job opportunities and how to compose CVs and cover letters that emphasise the work-relevant skills such as close reading, analytical thought, effective communication that they have acquired through their academic training.

Recommendation (desirable): Secure contact information for the Department's alumni and invite them to participate in the University in an ongoing way through, e.g. public seminars and social gatherings.

3.6 Academic Faculty and Human Resources

The Department has an excellent track record when it comes to attracting and retaining outstanding faculty, doubtless aided by its highly professional and efficient leadership, collegiate atmosphere, and exemplary research culture. It was clear from our meetings with both senior and junior faculty that the department provides a good workplace with an atmosphere conducive to fruitful cooperation and academic exchange. The Faculty members convene at least twice a term for departmental meetings. Decision-making is open and highly consultative, information is available in a complete and timely manner, and we found ample evidence that all of the faculty,

including adjuncts, are and feel integral to the department. Even when there are robust disagreements, these are resolved respectfully.

However, the number of Philosophy faculty is small, which adds to the challenge of attracting outstanding new faculty. Unfortunately, Noa Schein will shortly be leaving the Department for a position at Hebrew University. Since she is in charge of some central teaching components, especially in Early Modern Philosophy, replacing her as soon as possible is crucial. The same goes for retiring faculty, as every reduction in the number of positions has an outsize impact in such a small Department.

There is a well-functioning system of support for new junior faculty. First, they are allowed reduced teaching during their first year. Second, they are provided with both formal and informal mentoring by the senior faculty. In addition, there are orientation meetings for all new faculty at the University level and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Junior faculty members said they have a good grasp of what is required for tenure. This is formalised by way of a letter co-signed by the Dean and the entering faculty member stating these requirements. Yet we also heard that some important information isn't readily available (such as the exact time frame of the tenure procedure), which should be rectified.

The Department of Philosophy hires 3-4 adjuncts per year. The adjuncts the Committee interviewed have been teaching in the Department in that capacity for three to ten years. They all praised the pleasant and respectful atmosphere and felt included in the Department. The Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences should be commended for budgeting this critical teaching component in such a small Department. In addition, while the Department's yearly budget is only finalised after the opening of the academic year, all adjuncts received, as far as possible, good advance commitment to teaching and were informed of potential problems in time for them to seek alternative means of support.

Special praise should be extended to the head of the Department, Prof. Andy German, for his dedication and skilful management of the Department's affairs. Undoubtedly,

the collegiality and smooth functioning reported to the Committee are also the result of many years of exceptional management by previous chairs.

The departmental administrator, Merav Ben Shushan Zach, has a 75% position but a 100% workload. She receives a 100% salary, but her other benefits belong to a 75% position. The Committee regards this as wholly unsatisfactory.

Recommendation (essential): Keep the Department from falling below the current number of FTE (9).

Recommendation (essential): Replace the two faculty positions vacated by the departure of Noa Schein and the imminent retirement of Yakir Levin without delay.

Recommendation (essential): Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.

Recommendation (essential): Ensure that all information pertaining to tenure is transparent and available to entering junior faculty.

Recommendation (important): Convert the secretary's position to a regular full-time job with full benefits.

3.7 Diversity

The climate of the Department is excellent, and until recently, there was a 50/50 gender split among the faculty. Retirements, as well as other contingencies, such as the fact that one member of the faculty is currently unable to teach due to illness, have affected this balance so that in the current roster, there is a gender imbalance. This will be made worse by the departure of Dr Noa Shein, who has accepted an offer from the Hebrew University. The Department is strongly motivated to remedy this situation. Indeed, many of the faculty members the Committee interviewed emphasised the importance of restoring the gender balance. They have made it a

priority in recent searches, even though these did not result in hiring female candidates.

The main concern expressed by faculty concerning diversity within the student body remains the small number of Arab students. Even though there is a relatively sizeable Bedouin population near Be'er Sheva, there are hardly any Arab students in the Philosophy Department. This is a problem that we encountered in all three Universities. We understand that it results in part from the orientation of many Arab students towards more vocationally oriented programs, as well as the challenge of acquiring English proficiency at the required level for work in the Humanities, English being the third language (after Arabic – both spoken and written – and Hebrew) for many Arab students. Hiring a specialist in Medieval Islamic Philosophy would contribute to the diversity of the Department's course offerings and, perhaps, its student body's diversity. (If there are faculty or adjunct faculty with the skills required to develop expertise in Islamic Philosophy, this could help pro tem.)

Recommendation (important): Improve the gender balance among faculty and students.

Recommendation (important): Find ways to increase the number of Arab students.

Recommendation (important): Add greater diversity to course syllabi.

3.8 Research

The measure of excellence in Philosophy is the quality of faculty research, which is generally indicated by publishing articles in highly-ranked journals and monographs by highly-ranked publishers, most of which are university presses. (Rankings reflect a consensus within the profession.) Citations do not provide a reliable measure of excellence in Philosophy because philosophers do not cite other work in the manner of natural and social scientists, and because – in addition to there being considerable variation in the size of research communities in different philosophical subfields –

some branches of study (e.g. Consciousness Studies) are interdisciplinary whereas others (e.g. Virtue Ethics) are not.

The Committee was impressed by the quality of research in the Department, as evidenced by publications in leading peer-reviewed journals and prestigious university presses, success in securing research grants, invitations to contribute to international workshops and conferences, and the extent to which faculty are embedded in international networks.

We were also struck by the breadth of research covered by very few faculty members, partly due to excellent hires and conditions favouring retention. The warm and collegiate atmosphere in the Department further contributes to an impressive and productive research environment. Although the faculty members are clearly highly invested in teaching and dedicate much time to their students, it is remarkable that this does not come at the expense of research.

To date, the Faculty and the University administration have provided the support necessary to achieve this excellent balance between research and teaching. This includes providing the Department with a budget that can be used to hire adjuncts who can cover some missing areas and teach introductory courses. The Department has made some judicious choices in managing the funding provided by the Faculty.

The Department holds regular colloquium meetings several times during the semester, which faculty members are committed to attending. Although there are regular visitors, the colloquia program could be further improved by cooperating with other Israeli Departments to share the cost of international visitors.

Recommendation (desirable): Coordinate with other departments in Israel to share the cost of international visitors.

3.9 Infrastructure

The Committee was given a tour of the facilities by Dr Ori Beck. The infrastructure in the Department and University, more broadly, is appropriate. The Department is

located in a relatively new building. Faculty members have their own offices. In addition, there is a space for post-docs as well as a large room for Teaching Assistants to prepare classes, conduct office hours, and work on their own research.

The Department has a seminar room in which the philosophy department and colloquia meetings are held. The Committee also visited the library. The head librarian for the Humanities collection gave us a tour of the facility, including student working spaces. The Philosophy collection includes some 16,000 books in print as well as online access to books and journals. The interlibrary loan service provides material within a couple of days. In general, we were favourably impressed by the library and other spaces where students can gather, all of which help to create a vibrant and lively atmosphere. In that respect, Ben Gurion stands out in relation to the other universities we visited.

Section 4: Recommendations

4.1 Essential recommendations:

1. Ensure frank and regular communication between the senior management and the Department and empower the Department to determine the specific ways in which it will implement University-wide recommendations and mandates.
2. Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.
3. Make sure that the provision and potential expansion of outreach courses involve all of the following: (a) details of execution should be left to the Department; (b) most outreach courses, especially those developed for particular groups of student majors, should be offered to students early in their university careers; (c) such courses should have the appropriate support for their development and execution, especially in the form of TAs.
4. Keep the Department from falling below the current number of FTE (9).
5. Replace the two faculty positions vacated by the departure of Noa Schein and the imminent retirement of Yakir Levin without delay.
6. Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.
7. Ensure that all information pertaining to tenure is transparent and available to entering junior faculty.

4.2 Important recommendations:

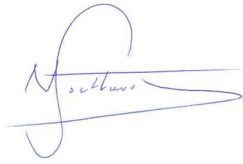
1. Investigate creative ways to expand coverage, including reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow BGU students to take courses at these other institutions for credit, and perhaps vice versa.
2. Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or program that makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the department and other cognate areas, such as, e.g. perhaps, a Bachelor of Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology (BPEP).
3. Integrate formal reading, speaking, and writing requirements in English into required courses.

4. Extend the *completion period* for the research-track MA to three years.
5. Convert the secretary's position to a regular full-time *job* with full benefits.
6. Improve the gender balance among faculty and students.
7. Find ways to increase the number of Arab students.
8. Add greater diversity to course syllabi.

4.3 Desirable recommendations:

1. Increase the steady-state size of the department from 9 to 10 FTE when resources allow
2. Recruit a specialist in medieval Islamic Philosophy.
3. Investigate and incentivise (e.g. by offering some teaching relief for preparation) ways to expand departmental course offerings by encouraging faculty to develop courses outside of their current areas of specialisation.
4. Do more to prepare students for the (non-academic) job market by establishing mechanisms at the university- or faculty-level to offer information and assistance to students regarding, e.g. relevant job opportunities and how to compose CVs and cover letters that emphasise the work-relevant skills such as close reading, analytical thought, effective communication that they have acquired through their academic training.
5. Secure contact information for the Department's alumni and invite them to participate in the University in an ongoing way through, e.g. public seminars and social gatherings.
6. Coordinate with other departments in Israel to share the cost of international visitors.

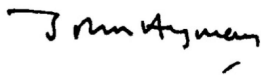
Signed by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Southwood". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial 'S' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Professor Nicholas Southwood

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamar Gendler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor Tamar Gendler

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hyman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor John Hyman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Friedlander". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Prof. Eli Friedlander

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon May". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor Simon May

Appendix 1 - Committee's letter of appointment

January 17, 2023

Prof. Nicholas Southwood,
College of Arts and Social Sciences,
Australian National University
Australia

Dear Professor,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging in this mission, the CHE seeks: to enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies, to provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, and to ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this important endeavour, we reach out to world-renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges confronting Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

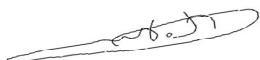
I therefore sincerely appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of **Philosophy** departments. Other members of the Committee will include Prof. Tamar Szabó Gendler, Prof. Eli Friedlander, Prof. John Hyman, and Prof. Simon May.

Ms. Keren Hrushev will be the coordinator of the Committee.

I wish you much success as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,



Prof. Edit Tshuva
Vice Chair,
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

cc: Ms. Sigal Mordoch, Acting Deputy Director-General for QA, CHE
Ms. Keren Hrushev, Committee Coordinator

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

Appendix 2 - on-site visit schedule

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Philosophy Studies - Schedule of site visit</u> <u>Ben Gurion University</u> <u>Wednesday 15 March, 2023, BGU Building 71, Room -136</u> Eve Lee Perelman QA coordinator – 08-6477149, 058-7357911 Merav Ben Shoshan Zach Department coordinator – 08-6472263</p>		
09:00-	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Rector – Chaim Haims QA Coordinator – Eve Lee Perelman
09:30-	Meeting with the Head of the Faculty of Humanities	Dean of Faculty- David Wettstein
10:15-	Meeting with the Chair of the Department	Head of Department - Andy German
11:15-	Break	Closed-door meeting of the committee
12:00-	Meeting with Senior Academic Staff (with tenure) * (up to 8)	Uri Leibowitz, Shlomo Cohen Participating by Zoom: Hagit Ben-Baji, Ido Geiger, Noa Shein
12:45-	Meeting with Senior/Junior Academic Staff (without tenure) * (up to 8)	Jacob Abolafia, Ori Beck, Eliezer Malkiel, Erez Joskovich, Dan Tenne
13:30-	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
14:15-	Meeting with B.A. Students * ** (up to 8)	Matan Horovitz, Boaz Ukelson, Gefen Klein, Maor Barsky
15:00-	Tour of Facilities	To be led by Dr. Ori Beck
15:30-	Meeting with MA and PhD students (including TAs) * ** (up to 8)	Julia Rose, Ben Shamlashvilli, Eviatar Gordon-Irshai, Alon Cohen, Yiftach Mor, Tamar Nakash Roth
16:15-	Meeting with Alumni (B.A., M.A., Ph.D.) * ** (up to 8)	Lilach Karsenty, Eden Malkiel, Yuval Shua (participating by Zoom)
16:45-	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
17:00-	Closing meeting with heads of institution , the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head of the History Department	Rector – Chaim Haims Vice Rector – Gal deBotton Dean of Faculty - David Wettstein Head of Department - Andy German QA Coordinator – Eve Lee Perelman