



# EVALUATION OF PHILOSOPHY STUDIES BAR ILAN 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 of<sup>1</sup>:

- [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;

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- 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;
- 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 Ramat Gan campus of Bar Ilan University on Tuesday, March 14th<sup>2</sup>. The Committee met with the Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Head of Department, senior and junior faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. The purpose of the visit was to assess the self-evaluation report undertaken by the department, assemble further information, provide our own assessment of the current and projected state of the department, and formulate concrete recommendations.

The Committee was of the view that, overall, the BIU Philosophy Department is doing an admirable job of delivering a high-quality programme under challenging circumstances. It produces internationally recognised research in its main areas of strength, including Applied Ethics (notably Bioethics), German Idealism, Metaphysics (notably Philosophy of Time), and Early Modern Philosophy. Its faculty offers a rigorous, intensive, student-centred programme of philosophical education, with coverage of important areas, while maintaining international-level research profiles that allow the students and the University to benefit from the presence of professors engaging in scholarship that reflects the field's most pressing current conversations. It has made some excellent hires, recruiting junior scholars who have already published outstanding work in highly-ranked journals. Philosophy faculty have enjoyed considerable success in applying for ISF grants, which they have used to fund a number of postdoctoral positions, thereby enriching the research and teaching of the department. While previously fractious and divided, the Department is now an impressively harmonious and collaborative place, aided by some retirements and the full administrative separation of the General Philosophy programme from the Jewish Studies programme. The Department is very well led by the Head of the Department.

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<sup>2</sup> The on-site visit schedule is attached as **Appendix 2**

The Department faces some significant challenges. The most serious challenge concerns the number of BA and MA students, which remains very low, in spite of some modest improvements and the Department taking proactive steps to boost student numbers. The scale of the challenge is augmented by the University's location and legacy. The Department is located in Ramat Gan. While bringing certain opportunities, this means that it sits in the shadow of TAU, which has breadth, depth, and a strong academic reputation in a wide range of disciplines. BIU is a religiously oriented institution with a tradition of strength in Jewish Studies, reflected in its distinctive set of coursework expectations, which require all undergraduate students, regardless of field, to take 12 hours in Jewish Studies. This means that BIU students are more constrained in their course choices, making pursuing double majors or significant out-of-area coursework more challenging. The University also has a strong tradition of practical education, which means that it may be difficult to attract students to certain abstract areas of study, including Philosophy, that are perceived to be less "practical."

The remainder of the report will describe the committee's specific observations about the state of the Department and enumerate its specific recommendations for how to help the Department navigate challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

## Section 3: Observations

### 3.1 The institution and the parent unit

According to its self-described mission, BIU aims to combine cutting-edge research with the finest standards of academic teaching. Its aims also include the promotion of Jewish studies and research. BIU's contribution to society is evident in its many community outreach projects involving both faculty and students.

Based on our meetings with the senior management, the Committee formed the impression that the Rector and Dean recognise the Department's achievements and are supportive of the Department's ongoing attempts to address the key issue of student numbers in a way that preserves its current strengths and takes account of its distinctive circumstances. There appears to be effective communication between senior management and the Department, including dissemination of relevant information and strategic priorities and concerted efforts to empower the Department to determine the specific ways in which it will implement University-wide recommendations and mandates.

**Recommendation (essential):** Continue to 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 self-report accurately documents both the Department's main successes and the main challenges it is facing. The main achievements mentioned are: the recruitment of post-docs, as a result of success in applying for ISF funding and their integration into the Department; an increase in the international profile of faculty; the introduction of a mechanism for assessing and adjusting curriculum; and a better balance between Analytic Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, and History of Philosophy. The main weaknesses are: the small number of faculty and

students; and the inadequate coverage of certain areas of philosophy. The self-report identifies several steps that the Department intends to take to address these challenges, including recruiting students from specific professional sectors, including local hospitals, for its program in Bioethics.

The four most important areas in which the 2009 report on the Division of General Philosophy (as it then was) made recommendations concerned: the relationship between Philosophy and Jewish Studies; the size of the faculty in Philosophy; the support of tenure-track faculty; and the content and structure of BA and (especially) MA courses. The specific recommendations in these four areas were as follows:

1. That the University Administration completes the process of granting Philosophy autonomy as an independent Department, separating it from the division of Jewish Philosophy.
2. That retiring faculty be replaced within a year of retirement and that the number of faculty be increased from 6.75 to 9 FTE within three years and 10 FTE within five years.
3. That the Faculty clarify requirements for tenure, ensure that the tenure evaluation process is transparent and effective and introduce a mentoring programme for tenure-track faculty.
4. That there should be more attention to writing and feedback on writing in both the BA and MA courses; that the MA course should introduce distribution requirements; that the number of courses required for the MA research tracks in General Philosophy and Bioethics should be increased, and that seminars designed for and limited to graduate students should be introduced.

Since 2009, the first recommendation has been fully implemented to benefit faculty and students in both subjects.

The second recommendation has been partly implemented. In 2013, faculty stood at 7.75 FTE, but the Vice-Rector stated in 2013: "If the Division succeeds in bringing excellent new candidates, it will be able to get additional faculty."



The number of FTE is now 8, with one retirement anticipated this year. Our understanding is that this faculty member will be replaced promptly, but budgetary constraints preclude increasing the faculty above 8 FTE.

The third recommendation has been partly implemented. A formal mentoring program for new faculty has yet to be introduced, but both recently appointed faculty members indicated satisfaction with the support they have received from senior colleagues in the Department.

The fourth recommendation has been partly implemented. Close attention is now given to writing and feedback on writing by BA and MA students; a mandatory course in research methods for research track MA students is in place, and the Bioethics MA offers a structured program with several mandatory courses, including one in the Faculty of Law. But the only mandatory course for non-research track MA students in General Philosophy is a course in C19-20<sup>th</sup> Philosophy, which is shared with the BA course. In effect, the non-research track MA is a loosely structured set of courses at the BA level, designed for mature students seeking to satisfy their curiosity about the subject.

### **3.3 The Department/Study Program**

According to its self-report, “the goal of the Philosophy Department is to cultivate the discipline of philosophical thinking and to present and illuminate a variety of philosophical traditions and schools”. The core of the programme involves teaching and supervision towards the BA, MA, and PhD. In addition, the Department works in cooperation with three interdisciplinary graduate programs: Hermeneutics, Science, Technology and Society, and Gender Studies. This configuration brings with it the standard set of challenges and opportunities associated with interdisciplinary structures: interpersonal and methodological differences – both productive and disruptive – abound. The Department is to be commended for allowing students to explore freely across boundaries, without judgement, as they seek the intellectual framework which best speaks to their interests and aims.

Since 2001, the BIU Department has offered an MA programme in Bioethics – the only one in Israel – focused on bringing philosophical analysis to bear upon Medical and Biological Sciences issues. The programme is open to students who have previously studied Philosophy and students with first degrees in other disciplines. Among the programme’s students are many from the Medical, Para-Medical or Nursing professions; others come from law, the life sciences or other disciplines. In the MA program, students are given the opportunity to study both General Philosophy and specific topics in Bioethics. Some complete their training with an MA degree; others go on to earn additional advanced degrees.

The Department operates under a set of relatively fixed constraints. Against this backdrop, it does an admirable job of making use of the resources available to it. Its faculty offer a rigorous, student-centred programme of philosophical education, with coverage of key areas, while maintaining international-level research profiles that allow the students and the University to benefit from the presence of scholars engaged in cutting-edge scholarship that reflects the field’s most pressing current conversations.

Two striking features of the study programme are its intimacy and flexibility. The first involves taking advantage of the ability of a small programme to maintain close and informal relations with almost every student in the Department. The second is the flexibility shown in concentrating courses for MA and PhD students over one day of the week and half a day on Friday. We fully concur with the Department’s assessment that these two features are distinctive strengths, representing healthy and positive responses to otherwise challenging circumstances that the Department faces in attracting students to its programmes. We commend the Department for its innovative approaches to the MA programme.

BIU also has a tradition of strength in Jewish Studies, reflected in its distinctive set of coursework expectations, which require all students to take 12 points in the area of Jewish Studies. This brings both opportunities and challenges. On the opportunity side, it means that BIU has a distinctive brand or niche, positioning it well to attract students for whom a robust Jewish education – surrounded by

others who share such values – is a priority. At the same time, it also means that BIU students are more constrained in their course choices, making it more challenging to pursue double majors or significant out-of-area coursework. In addition, BIU has a strong tradition of practical education, which means that well-articulated certificate programmes that provide and attest to the acquisition of market-based skills may be attractive to students, but also that it may be challenging to attract students to certain abstract areas of study, including Philosophy.

Though the Department does an admirable job in providing both breadth and depth to the programme through an ambitious curriculum, offerings of necessity remain narrow due to the department's size. As in other Departments, consideration should be given to creative ways to expand coverage, including collaboration with other Departments within and beyond the University.

As already noted, the most severe problem is the low number of students. The Department has made significant efforts to increase enrolment in its BA programme in recent years by “moving from the traditional passive way to recruit potential students to an active way that reaches out to suitable candidates” in high schools, industry, and community. The Department has made the sensible decision to articulate a clear goal of an entering cohort of 15-20 students; thus far, it has had success in meeting this aim.

In recognition of the connections between Philosophy and related disciplines, as well as the interest of students in exploring a wider range of topics during their time of study, the Philosophy Department has inaugurated several new academic programmes in conjunction with other Departments in the University, enabling students to combine a BA/BSC degree with an MA degree in Philosophy. At present, such programs exist with the Law Faculty and the Departments of Computer Sciences, Chemistry and Physics. While these programme possibilities exist on paper, enrolments remain quite modest.

Likewise, the Department has launched combined programmes with the Brain Sciences and Psychology Departments. In the near future, they intend to launch

a programme in environmental humanities – in collaboration with the History and Literature Departments - for students interested in pursuing such a course of study. These are admirable efforts, though it remains to be seen whether these programmes will attract the robust enrolments that the Department seeks and whether they can be sustained with the limited number of FTE in the Department.

The Department is also considering the possibility of developing a degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. While this represents one promising direction for the unit to explore, Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology may be another – allowing students to explore a set of questions in behavioural economics, game theory, rationality, persuasion, and motivation.

The Committee also notes that the Bioethics MA provides a promising way of boosting student numbers. Bioethics at BIU plays an essential role in the Israeli ecosystem. In contrast to the Department's other offerings, student interest in the Bioethics programme is not the rate limiter. Rather, the challenge comes from the limited number of faculty associated with the programme, compounded this year by the impending retirement of one of the two key senior figures. Care should be taken to ensure that the programme receives the resources needed for its continued operation.

Another concern is that BIU has no resources available to hire Teaching Assistants at the graduate or undergraduate level. The Department has come up with a creative solution for teaching its students to read and write effectively: a tutorial system whereby small groups of students engage in guided reading under the tutelage of a faculty member. However, it means that faculty are involved in extensive feedback and grading, limiting the size and range of courses that can be offered. Furthermore, graduate and advanced undergraduate students at BIU have no opportunity to develop teaching skills crucial for professional development in Philosophy.

**Recommendation (essential):** Ensure that the Bioethics programme remains adequately staffed so that BIU can continue to offer this valuable training to the Israeli medical community.

**Recommendation (important):** Encourage and support the Department's efforts to reach prospective students in professional sectors by articulating and publicising the ways in which the skills acquired through philosophical training are applicable both within and beyond the academy.

**Recommendation (important):** Look creatively for opportunities to support a Teaching Assistant programme which would simultaneously benefit faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.

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

**Recommendation (important):** Continue to explore opportunities for joint BA and/or MA programmes.

**Recommendation (important):** Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or programme that makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the Department and other cognate areas.

### **3.4 Teaching and Learning Outcomes**

As it stands, the Department's intended learning outcomes for BA and MA students are identical, namely, that:

- Students can explain the main problems in core areas of Philosophy such as ethics, epistemology and metaphysics.
- Students can outline the history of Western Philosophy and describe its significant periods, movements, and figures.

- Students can represent the formal structure of an argument.
- Students can use predicate logic to formalise statements and arguments.
- Students can write an analytical philosophical essay, analysing a philosophical idea or argument, evaluating its soundness and persuasiveness, and developing a counter-position.
- Students can articulate their own thoughts clearly in discussion and in writing.

While these are admirable and worthwhile goals, the lack of differentiation between the ambitions for the BA and MA programs is indicative of a more general underarticulation of the aims and structure of the post-BA training. While the programme is small enough for individual students to receive the guidance they need, there should be a more precise formal separation of MA training from BA training.

Regarding teaching expectations, publications of syllabi and grades, and other centrally-mandated features of the teaching programme, the Philosophy Department operates in accordance with the University's regulations. We have no grounds for concern in this domain. Indeed, all of the faculty we spoke to seemed conscientious and committed to effective pedagogy and the students and alumni we talked to offered praise for the training they had received.

As part of the evaluation packet, we were provided with syllabi from a range of introductory and specialised courses. Every syllabus we examined was well-composed and professional, displaying a sound understanding of the material to be covered and an ambitious vision for student learning. Particular enthusiasm was expressed – by students and faculty alike – for the department's Guided Reading courses, in which a small group of students works closely with a faculty member over the course of a semester to read a text of enduring philosophical significance; throughout the tutorial, students write regular (weekly or bi-weekly) essays, on which the faculty member provides detailed feedback.

As at other Israeli Universities, training of new faculty in teaching at BIU takes place through a central office rather than at the Department level – in this case,

through the university's Center for the Promotion of Teaching, which sits under the Office of the Vice-Rector. Each new faculty member participates in a 6-hour workshop about syllabus design and teaching methods, accompanied by a short teaching simulation. On an ongoing basis, the Center also offers workshops and advice for new and continuing faculty on topics such as the use of illustrations in instruction, creating effective presentations, group guidance, increasing motivation, active teaching, introduction to technologies such as perusal and ment.io, and many other topics. Faculty are encouraged to attend these workshops. We received no feedback, positive or negative, about this programming, though we were pleased to learn that faculty have access to such resources should they wish to make use of them.

Finally, teaching evaluation surveys are conducted by the Office of the Vice-Rector for every course. For the year 2020/21, the average response rate for Philosophy classes was 31%. This response rate seems low.

**Recommendation (essential):** Identify and articulate aims for the MA programme (distinct from the BA programme), and ensure that course offerings and mentorship opportunities support those aims.

**Recommendation (desirable):** Encourage students in their courses to complete the teaching evaluation surveys so that they have the opportunity to provide, and faculty have the opportunity to receive, feedback on effective pedagogical practices.

### **3.5 Students**

The self-report notes that "General admission criteria are set by the University, and more specific admission criteria are determined by the Department members, usually under unanimous agreement. The minimum grades for admission to the BA Degree are 515 in the Psychometric Exam and an average of 8 in the matriculation exams." These scores are somewhat lower than for the other Departments that we visited. In general, the Department faces the

challenge of having too few – rather than too many – applicants for its programmes. Under these conditions, there is no reason to alter the admissions criteria as currently articulated.

Advancement through the programme year-over-year is contingent on the successful completion of required courses with a score of 75 or higher. Again, this score is slightly lower than we observed at some of the other Departments we visited. But we have yet to hear any complaints from either students or faculty about the value of these criteria, and hence see no reason (as far as we know) to alter the grounds on which promotion is offered.

In the case of the BA programme, students receive thorough training in the programme's first years in a set of core areas. In subsequent years, students choose among a range of electives. While the limited size of the faculty, exacerbated by the absence of adjunct faculty and teaching assistants, means that the program is limited, the department does a good job with the available resources.

Students in the BA and MA programmes receive detailed written feedback on their writing, often in several drafts. In tutorials, students meet regularly with the supervising instructor to review their papers in detail. In the case of seminar papers, students receive close supervision from the initial phase of defining the subject to the final polishing of the essay. Students undergo a multi-step process of handing in outlines and preparing oral presentations, which are reviewed and criticised in a constructive and respectful way. Such teaching methods are both highly effective and highly labour-intensive. The Department faculty are to be lauded for the deep dedication and generosity that this sort of teaching represents.

The Department recognises the value of training students in progressively more demanding writing assignments. By the time students reach upper-level courses, previous tutorial work has prepared them to write original papers of 8-12 pages (15-20 pages in the case of seminar papers) in which they engage in analysis, synthesis, and argumentation. These skills prepare students for a



lifetime of precise thinking and writing, skills that are useful both within and beyond the academy. The self-report notes that: “Students report that by the end of the study programme, they have improved their critical writing skills in a way which also affects their other study programmes, especially in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Law.”

The demographic composition of the student body at BIU is quite different from that at the other Universities we visited, with a much higher percentage of students who are retired or mid-career or returning from time spent caregiving; many are drawn from a community of nearby medical professionals. The student body is – and is likely to remain – heterogeneous, with students who bring a wide range of intellectual backgrounds, life stages, and extra-scholastic obligations to the community.

The Committee was struck by the fact that there seems to be no actual cohort or a sense of community among the undergraduate and graduate students. Though this is not a formal element of the training of students, it is an integral part of their education, and progress is greatly aided by opportunities for interacting with a cohort of students at the same stage, especially in the case of research students. The Committee strongly recommends focusing concerted attention on creating a community – both intellectual and co-curricular – among students within the Philosophy programme, providing the encouragement, infrastructure, and resources to enable students to self-assemble in various formal and informal configurations during their years of study.

Finally, there appear to be no mechanisms in place to provide students with information and support in identifying non-academic job opportunities; or keeping in touch with alumni.

**Recommendation (important):** Focus concerted attention on creating a community – both intellectual and co-curricular – among cohorts of students within the Philosophy programme, providing the encouragement, infrastructure, and resources to enable students to self-

assemble in various formal and informal configurations during their years of study.

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

**Recommend (important):** 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, e.g., public seminars and social gatherings.

### **3.6 Academic Faculty and Human Resources**

The Bar Ilan Philosophy Department is the smallest of all the Departments we reviewed. It currently has 8 FTE and faces the upcoming retirement this year of Noam Zohar. The size of the Department makes it very difficult to cover all essential teaching demands of the BA and MA programmes. For example, the Department has no faculty member specialising in the Philosophy of Language or Ancient Philosophy.

An added challenge in covering a teaching programme demands that, due to budgetary constraints, the Department is unable to recruit adjunct faculty to assist with teaching. Sometimes post-doctoral fellows offer courses on a voluntary basis, but these do not meet the teaching needs of the programme. As a result, senior and junior faculty must take it upon themselves to cover all introductory classes, which leaves insufficient time for seminars directly related to their research areas.

The Department has made two excellent recent hires. The hires have reinforced the Department's existing strengths in Philosophy of Religion, Early Modern Philosophy, and Applied Ethics while adding to its range. To ensure its continuing strength, the Department must maintain its existing number of FTE, and in particular, it must replace retiring faculty without delay.

The faculty is overseen by the Chair of the Department, who is elected by tenured members of the Department for a renewable two-year term. The Chair has exclusive responsibility for running the programme. As is often the case, the appointment as Chair is seen as a service to the Department, which all eligible faculty take up in turn. The Committee received uniformly glowing reports about the current chair.

There is only one Department secretary, who is overworked. Since it is not realistic to have another administrative position for the Department, employing a student assistant on an hourly basis would greatly assist. This also holds for the librarian in charge of the Department's Philosophy library. The secretary of the Department plays an essential role in conveying the needs of the Department to the administrative and technical staff in the University.

Opportunities for professional development by way of travel and participation in international conferences are covered by the yearly budget that each faculty receives for fostering international research cooperation. The pedagogical development of the faculty is provided for by the University's Center for the Promotion of Teaching (under the Office of the Vice-Rector). The Center offers workshops and personal training to new and existing faculty. Every new faculty is required to participate in a 6-hour workshop about syllabus design and teaching methods.

There appear to be effective informal mechanisms in place for supporting junior faculty. Both recent junior faculty members (Noam Hoffer and Dan Baraz) expressed satisfaction with the onboarding process and their incorporation into the Department. The University holds orientation meetings for newly appointed faculty, in which issues such as grants application and preparation for tenure are

addressed; some report that these tend to cater to the Sciences and are of limited use to Humanities and Philosophy junior faculty. There is no formal mentoring programme for entering faculty, but both Hoffer and Baraz stressed the high quality of the informal mentoring they have received from colleagues in the Department.

**Recommendation (essential):** Keep the department from falling below the current number of FTE.

**Recommendation (essential):** Ensure that retiring and departing faculty (such as Noam Zohar) are replaced without delay.

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

**Recommendations (important):** Provide resources to employ a student assistant on an hourly basis to assist the Department secretary.

### **3.7 Diversity**

Bar-Ilan's gender policy commits it to working toward advancing women from all social groups regardless of religion, race, and nationality, and to appointing women to senior positions, with a view to achieving parity with men. Currently, the proportion of women is higher in the Social Sciences (50%) and the Humanities (49%) than in the Exact Sciences, Engineering, Life Sciences or Jewish Studies. Still, it is relatively low in Philosophy (25%). (This is a common problem in Anglophone Philosophy Departments throughout the world.) The Department's self-evaluation report promises that addressing the gender gap will be "a major consideration" in future hires.

Notably, there is no gender gap at the student level: nearly 50% of the undergraduate cohort and over 50% of the graduate cohort are women. However, the number of Israeli Arabs and Ultra-Orthodox Jews in the Department is very small. The Department plans to address this in various ways,

including a designated scholarship and workshops on diversity for faculty members and students.

It is notable that the Department's syllabus in Early Modern Philosophy includes some work by women philosophers, but there remains considerable scope to include more work by women philosophers in other syllabi. There is also a notable gap in Medieval Islamic Philosophy, which the Philosophy Department should aspire to offer, ideally in conjunction with Medieval Jewish Philosophy and possibly in collaboration with the Faculty of Jewish Studies.

**Recommendation (essential):** Ensure that the university notes and supports the Department's commitment to gender parity and its importance to this commitment in future hires.

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

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

### **3.8 Research**

The measure of excellence in Philosophy is the quality of faculty research, which is usually indicated by the publication of 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 Department's principal research strengths are in Applied Ethics (notably Bioethics), German Idealism, Metaphysics (notably Philosophy of Time), and Early Modern Philosophy. In these areas, the Department is producing research that is recognised internationally. Members of the Department have published

monographs and edited volumes with leading academic presses in the UK and the US, including OUP and MIT Press, and articles in highly ranked journals, such as *Synthese*, *Analysis*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, and *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, as well as highly regarded specialist journals such as *Bioethics* and *Kantian Review*. Members of the Department have also demonstrated their excellence and contributed to Philosophy at an international level by winning grants and developing and maintaining international collaborations.

The 2009 report on the Department comments on the difficulty of maintaining “the critical mass needed to sustain the research profile of a graduate-degree granting department” with such a small number of faculty. While the recent additions noted above have helped the department’s research as well as its teaching profile, it remains crucial for the continuing strength of the Department to at least maintain its existing number of FTE.

One barrier to achieving outstanding research performance is the high teaching expectations, made even more challenging by the absence of teaching adjuncts. Faculty are expected to teach 8 hours per week; up to two hours of teaching each semester may take the form of advising MA and PhD students. The Committee is concerned that these high teaching expectations bring a real risk of burnout. To mitigate these risks, faculty should be allowed to discharge their mandatory academic teaching hours in flexible ways. Additional and desirable is that it recruit TAs, as recommended in section 3.3.

**Recommendation (essential):** Allow faculty to discharge their teaching mandatory teaching hours in appropriately flexible ways.

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

### **3.9 Infrastructure**

The Department has six offices (of which five are allocated to the academic staff and one to the administrative staff), seven classrooms, an auditorium, and a small meeting room, large enough for a departmental colloquium but not for a conference session. As the Department's self-evaluation report points out, a meeting room suitable for this purpose would enable it to raise its profile as a research-led Department and enhance its graduate programme and research.

At present, all of the members of the Department share offices. The Humanities Faculty has promised to make alterations in the building that will enable faculty to have individual offices, which are an essential resource for research and graduate supervision. However, to our knowledge, there has yet to be an agreed timetable for making these alterations. The equipment in offices and teaching rooms is basic. Neither the academic staff nor the Head of the Department are provided with computers, and only one of the teaching rooms (the auditorium) is equipped with AV equipment that enables Zoom meetings and online teaching. A lecturer who wants to use a multimedia projector for his lecture collects it from a Faculty office and returns it afterwards.

The University has a dedicated Philosophy library with a highly impressive (and dedicated) librarian. In principle, the library is open to all the students at the University, but in practice, the Philosophy Department shares it with the Faculty of Jewish Studies and the programme for Hermeneutics and Culture. The library occupies most of the first floor of the building and consists of two main reading rooms and a small room for study, with a total capacity of 30 or so seats. Wi-Fi enables students using the library to access the electronic resources of the Central Library. New acquisitions mostly take the form of digital subscriptions, but the library has recently acquired valuable collections of gender studies and rabbinic literature.

**Recommendation (important):** Ensure that the University commits to a timetable for changes to the physical infrastructure of the Department.

## Section 4: Recommendations

### 4.1 Essential recommendations

1. Continue to 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. Ensure that the Bioethics programme remains adequately staffed so that BIU can continue to offer this valuable training to the Israeli medical community.
3. Keep the department from falling below the current number of FTE.
4. Ensure that retiring and departing faculty (such as Noam Zohar) are replaced without delay.
5. Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.
6. Ensure that the university notes and supports the Department's commitment to gender parity and its importance to this commitment in future hires.
7. Allow faculty to discharge their teaching mandatory teaching hours in appropriately flexible ways.

### 4.2 Important recommendations

1. Encourage and support the Department's efforts to reach prospective students in professional sectors, by articulating and publicising the ways in which the skills acquired through philosophical training are useful both within and beyond the academy.
2. Look creatively for opportunities to provide support for a Teaching Assistant programme, which would simultaneously benefit faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.
3. Investigate creative ways to expand coverage, including reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow BIU students to take courses at these other institutions for credit, and perhaps vice versa.

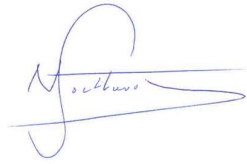


4. Continue to explore opportunities for joint BA and/or MA programmes.
5. Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or programme that makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the Department and other cognate areas.
6. Focus concerted attention on creating a community – both intellectual and co-curricular – among cohorts of students within the Philosophy programme, providing the encouragement, infrastructure, and resources to enable students to self-assemble in various formal and informal configurations during their years of study.
7. Extend the completion period for the research-track MA to three years.
8. 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.
9. Provide resources to employ a student assistant on an hourly basis to assist the Department secretary.
10. Add greater diversity to course syllabi.
11. Ensure that the University commits to a timetable for changes to the physical infrastructure of the Department.

#### **4.3 Desirable recommendations**

1. Secure contact information for the department's alumni and invite them to participate in the university in an ongoing way, e.g., public seminars and social gatherings.
2. Recruit a specialist in Medieval Islamic Philosophy.
3. Coordinate with other Departments in Israel to share the cost of international visitors.

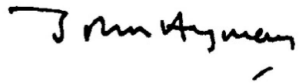
**Signed by:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Southwood', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Professor Nicholas Southwood

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

Professor Tamar Gendler

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

Professor John Hyman

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

Prof. Eli Friedlander

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon May', 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.

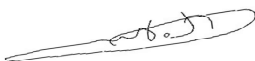
I therefore sincerely appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

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

<u>Philosophy Studies - Schedule of site visit</u>		
<u>Bar Ilan University</u>		
<u>14 March, 2023, location 1002 room 405</u>		
<u>Contact person 052-2222458 Vered</u>		
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Amnon Albeck Prof. Arie Reich
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Head of the Faculty of Humanities	Prof. Daniela Dueck
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the Chair of the Department	Prof. Pini Ifergan
<b>11:00-11:15</b>	<b>Break</b>	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b>
11:15-12:00	Meeting with Senior Academic Staff ( <b>with tenure</b> )* (up to 8)	Prof. Yoval Dolev Prof. Alon Chasid Dr. Ram Tiktin Efrat
12:00-12:45	Meeting with Senior/Junior Academic Staff ( <b>without tenure</b> )* (up to 8)	Dr. Dan Baras Dr. Noam Hoffer
<b>12:45-13:30</b>	Tour of Facilities	Philosophy Library Department Administration Lecturers' rooms
<b>13:30-14:15</b>	<b>Lunch (in the same room)</b>	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b>
14:15-15:00	Meeting with B.A. Students * ** (up to 8)	Itay Lapidus Rom Golan
15:00-15:45	Meeting with MA and PhD students ( <b>including TAs</b> ) * ** (up to 8)	Roy Meltzer Yael Gruzman Binyamin Eisner Rachel Kontorovich
15:45-16:15	Meeting with Alumni (B.A., M.A., PhD.)* ** (up to 8)	Mayron Lahmany Elad Dotan
<b>16:15-16:30</b>	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b>	
16:30-17:00	Closing meeting with heads of institution, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head of the History Department	Prof. Amnon Albeck Prof. Arie Reich Prof. Daniela Dueck Prof. Pini Ifergan