



EVALUATION OF PHILOSOPHY STUDIES

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

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 to evaluate study programmes in the field of Philosophy in Israel.

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

- 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 Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Sunday, March 12th². The Committee met with the President, Rector, Head of the Office of Academic Assessment and Evaluation, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Head of the Department of Philosophy, senior and junior faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the self-assessment process 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 formed the view that the Department is excelling in the fulfilment of its core mission with regard to research and teaching. The Department is producing a high volume of world-class and impactful publications; securing numerous external research grants; providing a high-quality undergraduate and graduate student experience; and consistently placing MA students into the very best Philosophy PhD programmes in the English-speaking world (such as NYU, Oxford, and Rutgers). These activities are supported by an open, supportive, and collaborative culture of intellectual exchange, generally effective and participatory modes of decision-making and leadership, and a commitment to principles of equity and diversity. The Department is characterised by a genuinely international outlook, which can be seen by the number and range of renowned international visitors it attracts; the extensive, high-prestige international collaborative networks in which HU philosophers are embedded; and its vibrant and popular programme of student exchange.

The Committee was also impressed by the extent to which the Department, with the strong support of the Faculty and University leadership, has been able to

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

address and make significant progress with regard to the main challenges that were enumerated in the previous self-evaluation report (see section 3.2).

The self-evaluation report candidly documents important challenges that remain. These include the failure of the MA programme to fulfil its full potential; a narrowing of the Department with regard to areas of specialisation and competence, resulting in unfortunate gaps and omissions in the Department's teaching; a gender ratio that remains far from parity (despite significant improvement on this score); and the virtual absence of Arab students from the programme. Some additional areas of concern include the volume of teaching being done by faculty, which is likely to get even more demanding, given plans to boost the numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, potentially endangering the Department's capacity to maintain its current outstanding record of teaching and research; and a tendency to rely upon informal practices and mechanisms in a range of contexts. Nonetheless, the Committee strongly believes that addressing these challenges is eminently achievable with a combination of flexible and commonsensical arrangements, more transparent procedures, and innovative and creative decision-making.

The remainder of the report will describe the Committee's observations about the state of the Department and enumerate its specific recommendations for making this very strong Department even stronger and more secure.

Section 3: Observations

3.1 The institution and the parent unit

The Committee observed with satisfaction that the relationship between the Department and senior management (the President, Rector and Dean) appears to be in good shape, characterised by trust, respect, and significant overlap with regard to many important values and priorities. The President, Rector, and Dean all expressed the view that they regard the Department as among the highest performing of those in the humanities at HU, one that has succeeded in achieving the aim of being comparable to leading Departments worldwide in its research output and in its provision of a first-rate academic training. In addition, they expressed strong support and admiration for the Department's role in interdisciplinary programmes such as PPE (philosophy, political science, and economics), LEP (Law, Economics, and Philosophy), and Philosophy and Cognitive Science. Conversely, the Department spoke of feeling generally well-supported by senior management.

That said, there is scope and need both for greater transparency and more effective communication between the Department and senior management (in both directions). The Department should be consulted in the development of important initiatives that affect it, such as a) the quality index currently being developed by the Rector to measure the quality and not merely the quantity of research outputs in different disciplines; b) the Faculty-wide changes to the MA programme being developed by the Dean to boost numbers of MA students; and c) "outreach" teaching of philosophy to students from other disciplines. Substantive involvement of the Department in such changes is likely to result in much better outcomes that better serve the interests of all parties.

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 Department's self-report, prepared by the Department and submitted to the CHE in October 2022, was provided to the Committee in electronic form before our campus visit. The Committee found the self-report – some 100 pages in length – to be admirably clear, thorough, forthright, and accurate. While the campus visit provided valuable additional information and context, the Committee found nothing to contradict the main findings of the self-report and much to confirm these findings.

The self-report notes that the current state of the Department had improved considerably since the last evaluation exercise in 2009 when the Department was “on the brink of catastrophe” due to (a) several retirements of faculty members and (b) the threat of being merged with the Department of Jewish Studies (thereby losing autonomy). Since then, the number of faculty members has increased due to several strategic hires, with additional hires planned. Moreover, the merger with Jewish Studies has fortunately been taken off the table.

Strengths and successes that are highlighted in the self-report include the excellent research performance and reputation of the Department, as measured by, e.g. the volume and quality of research outputs and success in applications for external grants; the quality of the undergraduate and graduate education; the placement record (especially of MA students to top international PhD programmes); the level of internationalisation; and the climate of the Department, which is described as “professional and collegial.” Finally, the self-report describes generally productive, supportive, and trusting relationships with senior management at both the Faculty and University levels. Overall, the report paints a highly favourable picture of the state of the Department in absolute (and not merely comparative) terms.

At the same time, the self-report highlights two main challenges.

The first concerns the MA programme, which is described as not “fulfil[ing] its potential” due to a confluence of factors: (a) the lack of clear structure to the

programme (which the Department hopes to address); (b) the divergent preparation levels of the students – some well-prepared and extremely able; others without the requisite background to perform at the graduate level. These challenges are compounded by (c) the limited funding available for students, which means that most of the MA students are able to participate in the programme only part-time, which in turn results in (d) slow progress towards a degree for many students, running counter to the ambition that students complete the programme in two years.

The second challenge concerns the increasing focus of the Department on analytic philosophy in part due to its own choice to strengthen fields in which it excels in conditions of a limited Faculty size under the “steady state” agreement reached with the University and Faculty.

The self-report does not directly identify particular actions to be taken in response to its main findings. Rather, the Department has opted to defer the formulation of an action plan until after it has received the Committee’s report. This strikes us as a sensible approach.

Finally, the Department has proven itself to have been highly responsive to the recommendations of the previous evaluation Committee. For example, it has made a number of excellent hires, implemented valuable changes in response to the recommendation to “revise the MA programme so as to make it more structured” and “improve the level of guidance in academic writing for MA students”, by introducing an optional guided reading course and a yearly research seminar where MA students have the opportunity to present work in progress; improved its gender ratio; and ensured that the number of part-time Faculty members does not exceed 49%.

A number of the previous Committee’s recommendations have not been implemented in full, primarily due to factors beyond the control of the Department. For example, the Department has not been able to assume control of the PhD programme or introduce a direct-track PhD programme (as was recommended); however, it does not have the authority to do so. Nor has the

Department implemented the recommendation to hire a philosopher of language, which we consider to be essential. However, they have made a genuine attempt to do so and will try again next year (subject to authorisation).

The key recommendation to “ensure an adequate number of tenure track hires to replace retired faculty, and ultimately achieve a steady state of 16 appointments” has been partly implemented. Since 2009, the Department has made nine new hires (three of them through the Centre for Moral and Political Philosophy (CMPP). The steady state is now 11.5 FTE (it was listed as 10.5 FTE in the self-report, but the Dean confirmed that an additional FTE had been added since the self-report was drafted). The Department also has the benefit of an additional 3.5 FTE who are part of the Center for Moral and Political Philosophy and who expect to remain affiliated with the Department until their retirement (they are all relatively young). These faculty are not included in the steady state headcount. Still, the Committee believes that it is essential that they be retained or replaced upon departure by comparable faculty in order to maintain the strength of the Department.

3.3 The Department/Study Programme

The Department describes its core mission regarding undergraduate and graduate education as providing “a solid academic training” in philosophy at a level comparable to Departments in the best universities worldwide. It includes teaching and supervision towards the BA, MA, and PhD as well as programmes of study that include philosophy alongside other subjects such as PPE (Philosophy, Economics and Political Science) and LEP (Law, Economics and Philosophy); and some teaching within “cornerstone courses” designed for, and offered to, students in other faculties.

The BA programme aims to equip students with a working knowledge of the main branches of philosophy and the key texts in the history of Western philosophy from antiquity to the present day. It further aims to teach students to think critically about concepts and arguments and to articulate coherent arguments themselves. The MA programme aims to deepen and widen students’

philosophical knowledge and skills. The courses in the programme are all delivered in small seminars, which allow students to participate in philosophical discussions and give individual presentations. The programme has two tracks: a research track, which includes an MA thesis, and a teaching track, which does not. The PhD programme aims to train students to teach philosophy and pursue research in philosophy at the highest level judged by international standards.

The Committee formed the impression that HU Philosophy's core programmes are highly successful in achieving their stated goals. There is a well-chosen selection of courses in analytic philosophy, history of philosophy, and a small choice of courses in continental philosophy (albeit with some gaps; see below). Students from all the main programmes with whom we met reported very high satisfaction with regard to the quality of teaching and supervision they are receiving. They also emphasised that faculty go to considerable lengths in providing detailed feedback and helping them acquire and improve core philosophical reading and writing skills. The Department's record of placing MA students into the world's top PhD programmes is remarkable. It is worth noting that many recent hires in Israeli Departments have been of former students from this category. The Committee was also impressed by the degree of internationalisation within the study programme, a key priority for the University as a whole. Over the last three years, 12 students in the BA and MA participated in exchange programmes, benefiting both the students themselves and the norms and expectations of the programme as a whole upon their return. Unsurprisingly, there is high demand for undergraduate studies in philosophy at HU; admissions are competitive, and enrolment numbers are consequently strong.

One area of concern for the Department is the issue of *coverage*. The Committee agrees that the most significant coverage gap is in the philosophy of language. We note that the Department has the support of the Dean to recruit a philosopher of language within the following year. It is worth highlighting that, in the view of the Committee, this is indeed an urgent priority. We strongly recommend that it proceeds as planned.

There are other significant gaps, including in aesthetics, continental philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology, medieval philosophy, and Islamic philosophy. We agree with the Department that there is a case for additional positions to help fill some of these gaps, especially given the Department's outstanding performance in research and teaching and the prospect of recruiting distinguished scholars in light of the Department's reputation, unimpeachable record in recruitment, a depressed job market, and the high student-faculty ratio. However, the President, Rector, and Dean made it clear that the University will not be in a position to provide further positions within the foreseeable future. The Committee, therefore, believes that it is desirable to investigate the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow HU students to take courses for credit in their philosophy Departments.

A further challenge concerns the *number* of undergraduate and graduate students. As noted above, the numbers of BA and MA students are relatively high. However, increasing student numbers is a major priority of the Dean. The Dean described seeing the potential for expansion in the number of BA students from 325 to 425 (overall). He is keen to see more students from natural sciences take courses in philosophy -- particularly in view of the Department's strong philosophy of physics and biology capabilities. He is also keen to expand the number of MA students, particularly in the programme's coursework track.

While it is certainly worth looking at ways of increasing student numbers, this must be done with considerable care and in coordination with the Department. For example, attracting students from outside the Faculty to philosophy courses has apparent benefits, but such students may need more support in the form of additional TAs (to avoid overburdening faculty). Moreover, any attempt to increase the number of MA students within the coursework-track MA must not compromise the extraordinarily high quality of the research-track MA. Indeed, while increasing the number of coursework-track MA students makes sense in some Departments and disciplines, the Committee is not persuaded that it makes sense in the case of the HU Philosophy Department in particular.

Other, potentially more effective and appropriate ways of increasing student numbers may exist. For example, the Committee discussed with the Head and other senior faculty members the possibility of introducing a new cross-disciplinary degree or programme capitalising on current and/or projected disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) strengths, such as Philosophy and Cognitive Science, or Philosophy and Computer Science. Another possibility would be a Master's degree in PPE. This is another excellent example where we believe that effective and open communication between the Department and senior management and active participation of the Department in decision-making are likely to result in better outcomes for all concerned.

Recommendation (essential): Ensure that the approved recruitment process to hire in the philosophy of language goes ahead within the next 12 months.

Recommendation (essential): Introduce measures to ensure that increasing the number of students does not overburden faculty, such as providing additional TAs to provide support to students from other Faculties (e.g. in the “cornerstone” programme).

Recommendation (desirable): Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or programme that will be genuinely academically valuable, which makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the Department and other cognate areas.

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

3.4 Teaching and Learning Outcomes

The Department has a well-articulated set of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for its BA, MA, and PhD programmes. These ILOs are ambitious and well-

conceived, appropriate for a programme that aims to train its students with rigour and breadth in the areas of philosophy where the Department has expertise.

In addition, there are appropriate University-wide institutions to evaluate teaching and support and train teachers. For example, the Unit for Teaching and Learning at the University offers a wealth of teaching skill improvement courses and workshops. All recently appointed Faculty members must take the basic teaching workshop before their tenure procedure is opened. Faculty who receive relatively low grades in the teaching (student satisfaction) survey are invited to take a personal mentoring programme given by the Unit for Teaching and Learning. The professional staff of the unit visit and record several lecturers and then meet with the lecturers to pinpoint where they can improve their teaching. The University has also formulated a policy regarding online teaching as part of its efforts to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Based on the evidence presented to us, the Department is delivering excellent teaching and learning outcomes. Departmental course offerings are well-aligned with the unit's stated learning objectives. Given the constraints in Faculty size, the Department has made excellent use of its resources in developing its academic programme and modes of evaluation, offering a combination of exams and written exercises. Grades are accompanied by detailed comments, and students – in both BA and MA programmes – indicated that these comments had contributed significantly to their understanding of and engagement with the material. The Department organises a TA-conducted course entitled “Critical Reading in Philosophical Texts” to assist undergraduate students in improving both their writing skills and ability to read a text, identify an argument, and engage critically with it. These sections are led by MA students or third-year undergraduates and comprise group meetings of about 5-10 students and one-on-one sessions to discuss writing assignments.

In general, there appears to be a culture of faculty going above and beyond in their willingness to meet with students and give detailed feedback and advice.

That the Department regularly produces students who are good enough to gain entry to the world's most selective PhD programmes – many of which offer admission to only 5-10 applicants from a pool of 400+ – is further evidence of the quality of the study programme. It is important that the University and Faculty avoid placing additional demands on the Department that might compromise this admirable record.

However, a concern raised by the Department was about the *mode of teaching* offered within the MA. Unsurprisingly, the Department believes that the most effective modes of teaching at the MA level are small, targeted courses, such as guided reading and writing courses and one-on-one supervision. Unfortunately, the latter does not currently count towards the faculty's fulfilment of their formal teaching obligations. One solution is to recognise the work of overseeing a series of such supervisions as equivalent to conducting a weekly lab meeting. (There are precedents for this approach at leading universities, including Yale.)

The Committee was also somewhat concerned that some other teaching practices within the Department, while delivering excellent teaching and learning outcomes, may be unduly burdensome to faculty. For example, we learnt that, with the exception of extensive introductory courses, marking or grading is done by faculty. This level of involvement with undergraduate teaching is admirable. Still, it could make it challenging for faculty to pursue a research programme at a pace comparable to their colleagues at international institutions where teaching expectations are less intense.

Recommendation (essential): Ensure that whatever changes are implemented with regard to undergraduate and/or graduate education at HU do not compromise the Department's capacity to continue to deliver excellent teaching and learning outcomes.

Recommendation (important): Ensure that supervisions count towards the faculty's fulfilment of their formal teaching obligations, e.g. by

recognising a series of such supervisions as equivalent to conducting a weekly lab meeting.

3.5 Students

Students are admitted to the BA programme through a standardised application process administered through a centralised Admissions Office. The process takes into consideration three factors: high school averages and matriculation examination grades, psychometric test scores, and scores obtained on standardised English-language competency exams. This process is in keeping with University admissions criteria at selective Israeli institutions of higher education and – given this context – seems appropriate to the aims of the HU programme. In addition to admission through the Philosophy application process, students may take classes in the Philosophy BA programme through one of the highly-selective interdisciplinary degree programmes, including Philosophy, Economics, and Politics; Law, Economics, and Philosophy; and Philosophy and Cognitive Science. Students who receive a passing score of at least 60 in each course are permitted to advance from year to year in the programme. These criteria appear to be serving the programme well.

An ongoing challenge regarding BA students is how to assist students who are struggling and prevent them from dropping out. Our impression was that the majority of students in the programme are well-prepared to benefit from the rigorous curriculum. However, students with limited English proficiency tend to struggle somewhat, as do students who did not benefit from writing and analytical thinking training during their high school years. For students who are struggling, there is a mentoring programme for which “Critical Reading in Philosophical Texts” serves as a gateway. TAs “are asked to identify students with difficulties who show signs of potentially dropping out. The names of these students are then passed on to the mentoring programme.” Despite these efforts, there remains a high dropout rate, and the Department has recently initiated a rigorous, case-by-case analysis to determine what factors are at play. The Committee strongly supports this investigation.

Students are eligible for admission to the MA based on the mark they receive for the BA: 80 or above is required for the coursework track; 90 or above for the research track. However, most students who wish to progress to the MA on either track meet the higher standard. At present, most students choose the research track in their MA studies.

MA and PhD students warmly praised the supervision they received from the faculty of the Department, without exception. This applied in particular to the supervision of their thesis or dissertation, but they also stressed the availability of faculty to discuss drafts of papers and research proposals. The Committee was impressed by the devotion of members of the Department to this important aspect of the training of graduate students, both formally and informally.

That said, the Department's self-report and our meetings with faculty and MA students highlighted a number of challenges. One familiar challenge concerns the completion period. The official completion period for the MA is two years, but the MA students we met agreed that this is an unrealistic time frame for the research track, given that most students work to support themselves and many have families. The self-evaluation report states that most students take three or even 3.5 years to complete the course requirements, including the MA thesis. This discrepancy is a matter of concern in view of the relationship between the funding received by the University and the number of years taken to complete programmes of study.

There are only so many scholarships available for MA students. A very small number of students from the Department receive support from the Mandel Institute for the Humanities. Advisors who hold grants, mainly ISF grants, often use them to support their advisees. Much more financial support is available for PhD students through various named fellowship programmes. When such resources are unavailable, faculty in the Department often contribute from their research grants to support PhD students.

Even though teaching constitutes an integral part of the training of research students, there are no opportunities for PhD students in the HUJI Philosophy

programme to teach. This is due to contractual constraints, which make employing PhD students both expensive and inflexible. We understand that negotiations between senior management and the union are addressing this impediment.

A rather different issue concerns the absence of clear norms and expectations concerning supervision. (We observed a similar issue with regard to, e.g. mentoring of junior faculty and selection of TAs). While the quality and devotion of the supervisors to their students are remarkable, the Committee was struck by the fact that there do not appear to be clear expectations concerning how supervisors are allocated, how often students are expected to meet with supervisors, how continuity of supervision is ensured during leaves and sabbaticals of Faculty members, and so on. We did not receive complaints about this, but it would be desirable to establish explicit norms rather than relying entirely on informal practices.

The Committee was also struck by the absence of a cohort, or a sense of community, among the graduate students. Though this is not a formal element of training for research students, the Committee believes it is an important part of their education. Interacting with a cohort of others simultaneously makes an essential contribution to students' intellectual and academic progress. This is especially true in Israel, where many graduate students have commitments (work, family) that limit their ability to participate in activities on campus. Still, it is tough to achieve without a dedicated common room, study space, or lounge where students can meet.

Finally, whilst the Department does an excellent job of offering guidance to undergraduate and graduate students who are applying for programmes to continue their study of philosophy and to graduate students who are on the academic job market, it plays a minimal role in identifying job opportunities for students who choose to pursue careers outside of academia. The Department and Faculty hope to develop "some more general plan of helping with job placements (not in academia)." An advisory service at the level of the Faculty or

University would be a welcome addition to the support offered to students. Relatedly, there appears to be no mechanism established to track data about former students and to remain in contact with alumni. The only alumni with whom the Department usually keeps in touch are those outstanding students who continue their studies in top programmes abroad.

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

Recommendation (important): Clarify and formalise expectations surrounding activities such as supervision of graduate students, mentoring of junior faculty, and selection of TAs.

Recommendation (important): Find a way for PhD students to gain some teaching experience that is affordable for the Department.

Recommendation (important): Encourage the development of a student cohort or community, e.g. by organising or funding social events and providing a common space for students to meet.

Recommendation (desirable): Try to find some creative and fiscally responsible way of increasing the number of scholarships for MA students, perhaps through a donor.

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 is to be commended for its exemplary faculty recruitment and retention, resulting in a first-rate Department that includes many highly accomplished and distinguished scholars.

As noted in section 3.2, the Department's so-called "steady state," i.e. the number of positions it has officially allotted to it and which it can expect to maintain, is a fixed number: 11.5 FTE. Of this number, 8.25 FTE are currently filled. Moreover, one senior member of Faculty will shortly be taking up a position in the UK, retaining a half-time position divided between philosophy and law, meaning that the Department will have a quarter of his time.

However, the Faculty also makes fully available to the Department three philosophers hired by the Center for Moral and Political Philosophy (CMPP), as well as 1.5 FTEs who formerly belonged (in part or in full) to the Programme in the History and Philosophy of Science, and who, it was made clear, would continue to be dedicated to the philosophy of science and not deployed to achieve other Departmental objectives. This means that, in practice, the Department currently has 12.75 filled positions. A specialist in early modern philosophy will also join the Department in 2023, increasing the "official" number of filled posts to 9 (taking the senior move to the UK into account) and the unofficial number to 13.5. The Department hopes to make an additional official hire in analytic philosophy of language next year, giving it ten official filled positions (14.5 total, including non-steady-state positions). Finally, assuming that the Department can fill the projected remaining 1.5 FTE allotted to it as part of the steady-state within the next two years, this would bring the total number of filled FTE to 16.

In the view of the Committee, while this projected unofficial number of FTE is workable, the steady-state is manifestly inadequate for running a Department of this size, quality, and complexity. This mismatch is unfortunate. When resources permit, it would be best to increase the steady-state (preferably to 16, but at least to 14.5) to reflect what is required to run the Department. Until that time, it is essential that the unofficial positions not be counted towards the

Department's steady-state: The Department must be permitted to fill its remaining allocated steady-state positions by recruiting new colleagues.

The faculty is overseen by the Head (or Chair) of the Department, a senior tenured member of the Department who is elected by the Departmental members. Once ratified by the administration, the chair is usually appointed for three years and has responsibility and oversight of the Department as a whole. Based on meetings with the Chair and the Dean of the Faculty, the Committee formed the impression that the Department is generally run in an admirably efficient and democratic fashion. The chair consults widely with colleagues on important matters concerning the Department, and significant decisions are typically made by the Department. For example, in response to various suggestions made by the Committee, the Chair emphasised that he would need to take these suggestions to the Department as a whole. Important information is shared at Departmental meetings (at least two such meetings are held annually) and via regular email updates. Based on our conversations, it is clear that the Chair enjoys the support and respect of his colleagues.

This governance structure reflects the general tone of the Department: formal meetings are a relatively rare occurrence; most matters are settled through conversation. While such a system works well against a backdrop of trust and inclusion – indeed, it may even help to create and sustain such a climate – the Department should remember that formal structures can be a helpful way to ensure a sense of belonging and participation among those who are newer to a unit, or those whose status is more precarious. Compared to most universities of equivalent standing in, say, the US, UK, and Australia, the culture at HU is highly informal. In addition, a more structured culture might enhance general governance and transparency, giving everyone a firmer sense of belonging to a collegiate body that systematically cares for the intellectual development of all, regardless of their circumstances, talent, and motivation. Similarly, it might benefit the Department to foster a culture of oversight and training for TAs – especially as they are still drawn primarily from the ranks of BA students – as

well as of mentorship for junior faculty that would provide more systematic support for their career development.

The administration of the Department sits in the hands of the Departmental Secretary, a single staff member who also coordinates the administration for the Institute of Linguistics, Philosophy and Cognitive Science. The Departmental Secretary handles much of the direct communication with students concerning registrations, courses, and graduations. She is also responsible for the logistics of all the events and conferences organised and sponsored by the Department. In addition, the Departmental Secretary coordinates the yearly Departmental course offerings and arranges the scheduling for the various introductory courses vis-a-vis other Departments in different faculties. The Departmental secretary sits in on all Departmental meetings and all Committee meetings.

The Committee formed the clear view that the amount of work required of the Departmental Secretary – whose performance was uniformly praised by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates alike – is excessive for one person and that, given the size of the Department and the number of other programmes to which it provides services (such as the PPE and LEP programmes), the faculty should provide her with an assistant as a matter of urgency.

The Department has implemented a number of formal arrangements to assist the professional and pedagogical development of junior faculty. First, each junior Faculty member is appointed a senior Faculty member as a mentor. Second, going forward, junior faculty teaching expectations will be reduced during their first year of teaching. Third, each junior Faculty member has a senior Faculty member observe their teaching to provide advice and input. In addition to these formal arrangements, certain senior Faculty members make a point of making themselves available to provide professional and pedagogical advice. The Department Chair also makes a particular effort to allow junior faculty to teach in areas of research specialisation and to minimise the extent to which they are asked to teach outside their areas of pre-existing competence.

While these measures appear well-structured in principle, their effectiveness in practice seems to be variable. Mentoring programmes work only if the roles and expectations are clearly defined – particularly those concerning the initiation of contact between the mentor and the mentee – and if conformity to those expectations becomes part of the Departmental culture. This does not yet seem to have happened universally in the Department. Moreover, while there are certain University-wide onboarding seminars for newly arrived faculty, the junior faculty the Committee met described these as primarily targeted at faculty working in the sciences. In our view, introducing Faculty-specific onboarding measures would make more sense.

Recommendation (essential): Ensure that the 4.5 additional unofficial positions that scaffold the “steady state” hires are supplementary to – rather than counted towards – the steady state headcount for the foreseeable future.

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

Recommendation (essential): Provide an assistant to help the Departmental Secretary.

Recommendation (desirable): Increase the steady-state FTE allocation of the Department to 16 to align with the Department’s projected FTE.

Recommendation (desirable): Introduce Faculty-specific onboarding.

3.7 Diversity

While the Department has made modest increases in the gender ratio of its faculty, it recognises that it still has a long way to go with regard to both the student body and the faculty. The Committee formed the impression that this will be a significant factor in its projected recruitment processes over the next few years.

The Department has not progressed in recent years in increasing the number of Arab students studying philosophy. While the percentage of Arab Israeli and East-Jerusalem students in the Hebrew University as a whole (20%) is close to their share in the general population, the percentage of Arab students in philosophy is 1.64%. There are no Arab Faculty members, and the Committee recommends that the Department consider recruiting a scholar with expertise in Islamic philosophy.

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

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 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 Moral Philosophy, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, and Jewish Philosophy. In these areas, it is on par with leading philosophy Departments worldwide. The Department also has notable strengths in Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, and Philosophy of Mathematics and covers Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, and 20th-century German

Philosophy. Members of the Department are leaders in their fields at an international level. Their publications include monographs and edited volumes with leading UK and US academic presses, such as OUP, CUP, and MIT and articles in top-ranked journals, such as *The Journal of Philosophy*, *Noûs*, *Ethics*, and *Synthese*.

As well as publications, current and recent members of the Department have also demonstrated their excellence by being awarded numerous grants (e.g. by ISF and the John Templeton Foundation); honours, such as election to the Israel Academy of Science; and prizes, including the coveted Israel Prize and the EMET Prize. In addition, members of the Department have extensive international collaborations and serve on the editorial boards of several leading journals.

The breadth and strength of the Department's research activity allow it to provide teaching that reflects research excellence across a broad range of subjects, including the main branches of philosophy and the key texts in the history of Western philosophy from antiquity to the present day. The Committee was impressed by how conducive the culture among senior and junior faculty is to producing outstanding research, as evidenced by publications in leading journals and top University presses and an informal culture of intellectual exchange among faculty.

The main challenge facing the Department is to ensure that the faculty is not overburdened, resulting in an inevitable decline in research performance, even burnout. This requires implementing the kinds of changes recommended above, such as: maintaining the current size of the Faculty; ensuring that faculty are given formal credit for what they are already doing; providing TAs to help with marking; and allowing faculty to discharge their teaching obligations in appropriately flexible ways.

Recommendation (essential): Allow faculty to discharge their mandatory teaching hours appropriately and flexibly.

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

3.9 Infrastructure

Most of the Department's teaching is done in the humanities wing of the Mt Scopus campus. Several courses are offered on the Givat Ram campus, catering to students who combine philosophy with the natural sciences. The Departmental and Faculty offices are located on the Mt Scopus campus in blocks 5 and 6. Every Faculty member has their own office. The physical infrastructure of the Humanities building, in general, and the Philosophy Department blocks, in particular, is out-of-date. This includes the state of the toilets and the lack of adequate air-conditioning in the offices. The Wi-Fi is patchy.

The Department does not have its own seminar room. The Department primarily uses the facilities of the Humanities Faculty, including meeting rooms in the main wing and the Rabin Building and occasionally the Mandel Center for the Humanities. The main library for the use of the Department is the Bloomfield Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The library includes a large number of computers and work areas for students, as well as a resting lounge. Most new publications are available online by way of the library site. In addition, the National Library located at the Givat Ram campus has an extensive collection, including titles that might not be available online or in the Humanities and Social Sciences library. The access to databases and journals in philosophy is adequately covered by the library. The absence of a dedicated common room, study space, or lounge where students can meet is one of the reasons for the lack of a sense of community and cohort noted above.

Recommendation (important): Improve the WIFI.

Recommendation (desirable): Install air-conditioning in all offices.

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. Ensure that the approved recruitment process to hire in the philosophy of language goes ahead within the next 12 months.
3. Introduce measures to ensure that increasing the number of students does not overburden faculty, such as providing additional TAs to provide support to students from other faculties (e.g. in the “cornerstone” programme).
4. Ensure that whatever changes are implemented with regard to undergraduate and/or graduate education at HU do not compromise the Department’s capacity to continue to deliver excellent teaching and learning outcomes.
5. Ensure that the 4.5 additional unofficial positions that scaffold the “steady state” hires are supplementary to – rather than counted towards – the steady state headcount for the foreseeable future.
6. Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.
7. Provide an assistant to help the Departmental Secretary.
8. Allow faculty to discharge their mandatory teaching hours appropriately and flexibly.

4.2 Important recommendations

1. Ensure that supervisions count towards the faculty’s fulfilment of their formal teaching obligations, e.g. by recognising a series of such supervisions as equivalent to conducting a weekly lab meeting.
2. Extend the completion period for the research-track MA to three years.

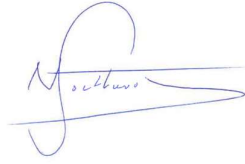
3. Clarify and formalise expectations surrounding activities such as supervising graduate students, mentoring junior faculty, and selecting TAs.
4. Find a way for PhD students to gain some teaching experience that is affordable for the Department.
5. Encourage the development of a student cohort or community, e.g. by organising or funding social events and providing a common space for students to meet.
6. Improve the gender balance among faculty.
7. Find ways to increase the number of Arab students.
8. Add greater diversity into course syllabi.
9. Improve the WIFI.

4.3 Desirable recommendations

1. Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or programme that will be genuinely academically valuable, which makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the Department and other cognate areas.
2. Investigate creative ways to expand coverage, including reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow HU students to take courses at these other institutions for credit, and perhaps vice versa.
3. Try to find some creative and fiscally responsible way of increasing the number of scholarships for MA students, perhaps through a donor.
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. Increase the steady-state FTE allocation of the Department to 16 to align with the Department's projected FTE.
7. Introduce Faculty-specific onboarding.
8. Coordinate with other Departments in Israel to share the cost of international visitors.
9. Install air-conditioning in all offices.

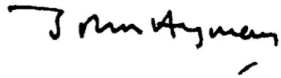
Signed by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas Southwood". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'N' and a long horizontal stroke.

Professor Nicholas Southwood

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamar Gendler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor Tamar Gendler

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hyman". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor John Hyman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eli Friedlander". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Professor Eli Friedlander

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "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.

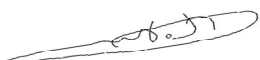
I therefore sincerely appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

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>12.3.2023 - Hebrew University</u></p> <p><u>12 March, 2023, location</u></p> <p><u>Contact person: 02-5882919 Yifat Hoss; Limor Eilon - 052-8138804</u></p>		
8:30-9:30	Closed-door meeting of the committee (Conference room 4 th Floor)	
9:30-10:00	Opening session with the heads of the institution (President Office 5 th Floor)	Prof. Asher Cohen – President Prof. Tamir Sheafer – Rector Prof. Avihai Hovav – Head of the Office of Academic Assessment & Evaluation
10:00-10:45	Meeting with the Head of the Faculty of Humanities	Prof. Nissim Otmazgin
10:45-11:30	Meeting with the Chair of the Department	Dr. Naly Thaler
11:30-11:45	Break	Closed-door meeting of the committee
11:45-12:30	Meeting with Senior Academic Staff (with tenure) * (up to 8)	Prof. Dannie Attas, Prof. David Enoch, Prof. Hilla Jackobsn, Dr. Michael Roubach, Prof. Sharon Krishek, Dr. Aaron Segal
12:30-13:15	Meeting with Senior/Junior Academic Staff (without tenure) * (up to 8)	Dr. Anastasia Berg, Dr. Oded Naaman
13:15-14:00	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
14:00-14:45	Tour of Facilities	Prof. Daniel Attas
14:45-15:30	Meeting with B.A. Students * ** (up to 8)	Maya Rosen, Maor Cohen, Shay Eizenstadt, Noam Nizri, Yotam Rosen, Daniela Yoeli, Ziv Reichert
15:30-16:15	Meeting with MA and PhD students (including TAs) * ** (up to 8)	Amir Liron, Shmuel Mintz, Amiya Heshkes, Lior Nissim Grinman, Daniel Binenboym, Noam Oren
16:15-17:00	Meeting with Alumni (B.A., M.A., Ph.D.) * ** (up to 8)	Dar Trifon Reshef, Dr. Shlomit Wigoda, Dr. Jonathan Najenson, Dr. Rona Dinur, Eli Golan, Aya Gilad, Merav Kaplan, Yair Negrin
17:00-17:30	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
17:30-18:00	Closing meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head of the Philosophy Department	Prof. Nissim Otmazgin, Dr. Naly Thaler