



June 23, 2022

To the Council of Higher Education

Response to the CHE's Committee's Report, General History and History of the Jewish People, June 2022

Below, please find the responses to the committee's report.

By way of background (that is relevant to several of the responses), it may be useful to note the following about the Faculty of Humanities' position in general and in these two departments: The Faculty of Humanities is divided into 27 departments home to 191 tenured or tenure-track professors. The faculty's development program determines the minimum number of positions needed to present a complete teaching program in each of the departments, taking into account the specificities of each department and field. These are called "positions at the steady-state". Because resources are limited, appointments above the steady-state level are extremely rare and hard to justify. At the General History Department, there are currently 12 tenured or tenure-track professors (12 positions at the steady-state), and at the Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism, there are now 16 (9 positions in the stable state). It is important to note that historians are also based in other departments in the faculty, including at the Dept. of Islam and Middle East Studies, Dept. of Asian Studies, Dept. of Latin American Studies, and Dept. of Comparative Religion so the total number of historians is much bigger.

A correction from the General History Department: In section 3.4, 2nd paragraph (pp.6-7 of the committee's report), regarding our introductory courses, it is stated that "the courses are large and taught by teaching assistants (TAs) rather than senior instructors". This seems to be a misunderstanding. All of our introductory courses are taught by senior faculty, who are assisted by TAs mainly for grading.

	The Committee's Recommendations	Comments and Steps towards Implementation
1.	Recommendation (essential): Future self-evaluation reports should be edited, proofread, and paginated, and then distributed to faculty members, prior to their submission to the CHE.	To be implemented starting with the next report

2.	<p>Recommendation (essential): Create transparent and clear guidance for promotion to all ranks, not just promotion to tenure. Untenured faculty require greater precision regarding what they specifically need to meet departmental tenure expectations. What is now provided is too general. The department chair, perhaps in consultation with other senior faculty, should meet separately with each untenured faculty member to discuss the specific requirements of their case. The department should create clear guidelines about expectations for promotion to associate and full professor and that these be made available to the entire department.</p>	<p>We are currently compiling a document clarifying the criteria for promotion at the Faculty of Humanities, taking into account the differences between – and even within – departments and disciplines. This document – which we plan to complete at the beginning of the next academic year – will allow chairs and mentors to give better advice to faculty members at all levels. Additionally, the head of the department will be in constant contact with the mentors of the new faculty members, who are appointed by the dean, as well as with the new faculty members in order to closely monitor the processes of inclusion and promotion.</p>
3.	<p>Recommendation (essential): Hire faculty in both East European and Early Modern Jewish history as well as in Holocaust history.</p>	<p>See general comment above about the number of faculty members compared to the steady-state plan. Nevertheless, we are happy to report that a new Chair in Holocaust Studies will be established based on a designated donation that was secured just several days ago.</p>
4.	<p>Recommendation (essential): Proactively include and integrate the newer faculty and develop a departmental culture by reinvigorating the mentorship program. Mentors should meet periodically with their mentee, explain how promotion works, discuss teaching norms, and answer other questions. The department might also consider creating more in person social events which might include informal research talks by members of the department, picnics or other events so that junior members have the opportunity to informally interact with their colleagues.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department:</i> The department's efforts in this area have been interrupted by the pandemic, but are now being gradually restored. We have a special departmental event at the beginning of the academic year, an end-of-year picnic for teachers and students, departmental seminars, and two departmental evenings each year that include the allocation of prizes for excellent students. We also encourage mentors to meet regularly with their mentees, and the chair makes sure that all class visitations among the non-tenured faculty take place as required.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism:</i> We look forward to implementing these fine ideas, which have been part of the department's procedures to some extent and were interrupted by the Corona epidemic. The department chair has already had an initial conversation with the department's new appointee, to discuss the mentoring program.</p>
5.	<p>Recommendation (essential): Facilitate co-teaching by offering full credit for faculty members choosing this important pedagogical tool.</p>	<p>Our faculty encourages joint teaching. Taking into account the effort it takes to prepare a new course, in the first year of teaching both professors receive full credit for the course. Starting in the second year, professors can receive only half the credit for the same course. This applies to all departments in the faculty.</p>

		Seeing that any joint-teaching arrangement has to be Faculty-wide, our resources do not allow us to encourage joint-teaching in ways that go beyond those just described. The hiring of additional teachers will be examined according to future needs and the ability of the university to employ them.
6.	Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching as a way of modeling dialogical interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Such co-teaching should receive full course credit and not half, as is currently the case (except for the first year).	See #5 above.
7.	Recommendation (essential): Find (or create) a dedicated space close to faculty offices for history department meetings and regular seminars.	Unfortunately, we do not have common space to allocate exclusively to each department. Nevertheless, we designated space for the <i>Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i> in the Rabin Building (Mandel Institute of Judaic Studies). The Seminar rooms, venues and other common spaces are available to all departments equally upon reservation. We will clarify this policy in the next faculty meeting.
8.	Recommendation (essential): Create more formal and informal in-person department events and re-new the annual end of the year picnic, a Purim historical costume party, and other social events to help create a sense of the history department as a community.	<p><i>The General History Department:</i> The department's efforts in this area have been interrupted by the pandemic, but are now being gradually restored. We have a special departmental event at the beginning of the academic year, an end-of-year picnic for teachers and students, departmental seminars, and two departmental evenings each year that include the allocation of prizes for excellent students.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism:</i> Such positive activities will be renewed next year, as was the practice prior to the pandemic. The department is planning Hanukkah and Purim events for next year, among other activities.</p>
9.	Recommendation (important): Designate a faculty member in charge of collaboration who would meet with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities to discuss a strategic plan for integrating at the level of hiring more faculty with dual positions in History and regionally specific departments.	<p><i>The General History Department:</i> The department already has such dual positions, which have their advantages and disadvantages. The department will consider making more hiring of this kind in the coming years.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism:</i> This is the responsibility of the head of the department who discusses these matters on a regular basis with the Dean.</p>

10.	<p>Recommendation (important): Invite adjuncts to departmental meetings that involve teaching, increase research funds for adjuncts, and invite them to departmental seminars and social events.</p>	<p>The adjuncts are perceived as an integral and highly valuable component of the department. We encourage our departments to think of themselves as an inclusive academic community and invite emeriti professors, adjuncts, postdocs, graduate and undergraduate students to seminars, meetings and other activities. Adjuncts are of course invited to departmental seminars and we will recommend the departments to invite them also to meetings concerning teaching. The faculty does not provide research funds from its own resources to its faculty members (adjunct or otherwise). Rather, it encourages them to apply for funding sources. We will consider holding a workshop for adjuncts that will assist them too in doing so. Furthermore, for adjuncts, competitive research funds are available from the Mandel-Scholion Center, Polonsky, Buber, Truman and other centers in the university and beyond. We will explore other funding possibilities, such as through ISF grants from senior professors.</p>
11.	<p>Recommendation (important): Clarify and adjust the allocation of positions according to the actual needs in research and teaching.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department:</i> The department has a well-thought-out plan for future hiring, which is meant to cover all its needs in research and teaching. When the Faculty of Humanities suggests the opportunity to hire someone in a dual position the department's faculty members consider the offer not only in light of the candidate's excellence but also with regard to departmental needs. The official plan of the department's future hiring is at the Dean's office, based on the Faculty's steady-state plan. The rationale of the plan is that the department currently has a well-balanced state of faculty members, and future hiring is basically meant to replace members that go to retirement.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism:</i> We are aware that the faculty development plan requires periodic reevaluation and we intend to peruse these matters with the dean's office.</p>
12.	<p>Recommendation (important): Consider giving BA students the option of not choosing a specialization. This will encourage them to enroll in a wider range of courses, exposing them as well to a wider range of teachers.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department:</i> We have considered the suggestion and its advantages. We believe, however, that choosing a specialization is important in order to provide a more coherent framework for the BA degree. That said, it is important to understand that specialization only requires 10 additional credit points in the period of specialization, so that the students still have adequate exposure to many teachers and subjects in the department.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism:</i> This would mean a significant change in the structure of the program. The program as it stands now offers BA students a number of elective credits outside of their specialization. Students</p>

		wishing to study Jewish Studies broadly without a specialization currently have the option of registering for the general Jewish Studies program. However, the department considers this matter to be important and it will be considered in future meetings of the department.
13.	Recommendation (important): Develop a strategic long-term plan for the study program in both departments	Reviewing the studying program is the responsibility of the heads of the Institute of History and the Institute of Jewish Studies and this is done annually. Following your recommendation, we will appoint a faculty-committee to review the teaching program in each department once every five years.
14.	Recommendation (important): Consider integrating language learning with historical and scholarly materials so that students continue to develop their research skills.	At our Faculty, we teach no less than 34 languages, both modern and ancient. Seven of the modern research languages are taught at the faculty's language center which serves all students (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian). While language teaching is an integral part of the curriculum in our regional studies departments (Middle Eastern Studies, Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, Russian Studies, Romanian Studies), at the history and Jewish history departments the themes and languages are too broad and varied to allow us to offer integral language teaching at the BA level. Nevertheless, we encourage each BA student to study a language of his/her choice.
15.	Recommendation (important): Clarify responsibilities and obligations of all concerned among the various history departments and the multiple centers and institutes.	Headed by the vice dean for research, we started mapping, integrating, and sometimes closing some of the centers in our Faculty. We are currently compiling a document defining the responsibilities and functions of each center and the role of the heads of the seven institutes in our Faculty.
16.	Recommendation (important): It should be noted that pioneering historians and major publishers have been encouraging more multi-regional and transnational approaches to major historical issues and periods. The department needs in its own teaching and research to emphasize the globalized contexts of European history. This was also a recommendation of the Evaluation Committee of 2007.	<i>The General History Department:</i> Over the past years considerable progress has been made in this direction. For example, the BA students are obliged to take 2 introductory courses on topics related to global history (within the framework of our Historical Institute), faculty members in our department teach courses that integrate European and non-European history (e.g. India, Japan, US, etc.), and students are obliged to take courses (10 credit points) also from other departments, including Asia Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Latin America. It is important to note that our mandate is confined to Western history, whereas histories of other parts of the world are covered by historians situated in other, usually regional departments, such as those mentioned above. We would also like to emphasize the considerable change that has been made since 2007, when a considerable number of our faculty members specialized in German history. In comparison, today the department is much more diverse in this regard.

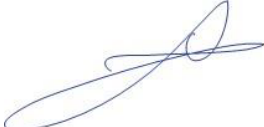
		<p>The <i>Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i>: This positive approach is part and parcel of our teaching program as noted in the department's report. The history of the Jews in the Diaspora is studied in the local historical context of each Jewish space or community. The vast geographical area of the Diaspora from the Middle East through Asia Minor, the Balkans, Europe to the Americas inhibits any Eurocentric bias.</p>
17.	<p>Recommendation (important): Consider a reduction in the teaching load of junior faculty.</p>	<p>While we strongly support this recommendation, given our limited resources and our commitment to maintaining a full teaching program in all fields taught at our faculty, this is not feasible at the moment. We will consider this in two years once the steady-state in the whole faculty is completed.</p>
18.	<p>Recommendation (important): Provide more financial support for PhD students to enable them to do independent research or attend academic conferences. In addition, some require editorial assistance.</p>	<p>There are 365 Ph.D. students in our Faculty, approximately 110 receive full scholarships and access to travel grants and editing assistance. A few times a year we offer competitive conference/travel research grants for Ph.D. students. In the coming years, we plan to secure more funding for Ph.D. students. Earlier this year, we appointed a senior professor (Prof. Yael Levin) to be in charge of the Faculty's strategic thinking about Ph.D. students.</p>
19.	<p>Recommendation (important): Add regularly taught courses on General and Jewish historiography, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels so students can better understand that historiography is more than just telling the story of the past.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department</i>: We offers obligatory historiographical courses in both the BA and MA level. At the BA level, students at their second year are required to take the course "Trends in Historiography: Basics to Cutting Edge", offered in several groups each year by the Historical Institute at the University. The course (2 credit points), "aims to introduce the B.A. students to some of the central, and influential, approaches toward the study of history as they evolved in the 19th and 20th century in the discipline of history, without preference to any region or period of time" (full description of aims and syllabus can be found online in the department's study program (<a href="http://shnaton.huji.ac.il/index.php/NewSyl/27056/2/2022">shnaton.huji.ac.il/index.php/NewSyl/27056/2/2022</a>)). At the MA level, students are required to take the course "Research Methods in History" (4 credit points) during the first year of their studies. The course includes "reading the major philosophical, political and sociological texts that have shaped historical thinking and methodology over the last 150 years," and aims at "Enriching students' knowledge of main texts in modern Western thought and their influence on approaches to the study of History" (full description of aims and syllabus can be found online in the department's study program (<a href="http://shnaton.huji.ac.il/index.php/NewSyl/39821/2/2022">shnaton.huji.ac.il/index.php/NewSyl/39821/2/2022</a>)).</p>

		<p>The <i>Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i>: The following courses (2022-2023) of our department addressed these needs: "From Lachrymose History to Social History: The Jews of Medieval Europe" (Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten). "Ottoman Jewish &amp; Sephardi Autobiographies" (Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh). "Ottoman Jews Write History" (Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh). "Microhistory and Jewish History" (Prof. Manuela Consonni). "Jewish History and Historical Methods: Intersections and Limitations" (Dr. Oded Zinger).</p>
20.	<p>Recommendation (important): Bring together graduate students (MA and PhD) in an entry level seminar to create a sense of a cohort.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department</i>: Starting next year, we will offer a course that will facilitate the research and writing of academic papers. It will be obligatory for the research-oriented MA students, but will also be open for Ph.D. students and students of the non-research-oriented MA track. In addition, both MA and Ph.D. students are invited to the departmental seminar and to all other departmental events.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i>: We will encourage cohort-based academic meetings for graduate students as suggested. A series of such meetings with the department's faculty members will be held next year, both within the general framework of the department and will continue, as has been done this year, at the Research Institute for Contemporary Jewry.</p>
21.	<p>Recommendation (important): The department should support the promotion of all junior faculty by protecting them from heavy service, by allowing them to teach a rotation of fewer new courses, and by offering pre-tenure course release.</p>	<p><i>The General History Department</i>: We are doing our best to protect junior faculty from heavy service, and will continue to do so in the future. Junior faculty are required to put together a pool of new courses during the first two years of their position, after which they can start rotating them. As the BA seminars are offered to both the second-and third-year students (and the MA seminars over a period of two years) it is crucial that there be no overlapping courses from one year to the consecutive one. As for course release, please see #17 above.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i>: We completely agree with this suggestion. We do not require new course development every year. New lecturers are only asked at times to undertake the role of advising undergraduate students and are not tasked with further service functions.</p>
22.	<p>Recommendation (desirable): Create thematic reading groups that involve graduate students and faculty that meet periodically (over a meal, for instance).</p>	<p><i>The General History Department</i>: There are already several initiatives of this kind (e.g. a reading group in the field of Renaissance and early modern history, another in early medieval history, etc.) and we will be happy to continue and support such initiatives in the future.</p> <p><i>The Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i>: We plan to encourage such reading groups starting next fall. Also, some reading groups of doctoral</p>

		students (such as one in Israel Studies) currently exist. For next year, as a possible model for the coming years, a series of meetings ("Historian's Workshop" - twice a semester, around lunch) is planned for graduate and doctoral students together with the faculty members. Such meetings will also afford an opportunity to invite emeriti to join the conversation
23.	Recommendation (desirable): Structure more of the interaction around guidance to students – both graduate and undergraduate – regarding post-degree professional opportunities within and beyond the academy and particularly about careers in education.	Starting next year, we will offer a number of classes that are oriented toward the job market: we will have 6 courses that combine internships in companies and organizations (museums, libraries, NGOs, governmental agencies, high-tech firms etc.). We will launch a new project to promote entrepreneurship in the humanities including opening an "entrepreneurship club" at the faculty, and we are expanding the possibilities for our students to receive a teaching certificate acknowledged by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, starting next year, all MA students will be required to take at least one course (2 credits) in digital humanities. Additionally, <i>The General History Department</i> holds a yearly meeting for 3 <sup>rd</sup> -year BA students where they meet with the MA advisor and receive information on the MA program. MA and doctoral students are usually advised on an informal, individual basis by the MA/ Ph.D. advisors and – if they are part of the Faculty's honorary programs for graduate students – also by the heads of these programs. The <i>Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i> intends to offer graduate students the opportunity to do internships in active historical centers such as the Ben Zvi Institute and the Zalman Shazar Center. From the beginning of next year, the head of the department will include the topic of employment opportunities among things to be discussed at meetings with third-year and graduate students.
24.	Recommendation (desirable): The chair should meet with new history postdocs, who feel disconnected, to introduce them to the department and invite them to departmental seminars and events.	There are approximately 120 postdocs on our faculty, and about one-third are from abroad. Our new postdoc initiative aims to better connect them academically and socially to fellow postdocs and professors from the faculty. Headed by the vice dean for research, we organize meetings and social gatherings between our postdocs and send information about funding and job opportunities. Starting next year, we will allocate the Rabin Building Library (48 cubicles) as a working space for postdocs. <i>The General History Department</i> will make sure to send a group email at the beginning of every academic year inviting all relevant post-docs to schedule personal meetings with the chair. The <i>Department of History of the Jewish People and Contemporary Judaism</i> will make sure to contact all the postdocs at the beginning of the year and we will add them to our mailing list. Postdocs will be invited to the departmental seminars scheduled for next year.



Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping loop followed by a smaller loop and a final horizontal stroke.

Prof. Avi-Hai Hovav  
Vice Rector