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פרופ' גיא מירון - משנה לנשיאה לעניינים אקדמיים
البروفيسور غاي ميرون - نائب رئيسة الجامعة للشؤون الأكاديمية

כ"א תמוז, תשפ"ב

20 יולי 2022

לכבוד:

גב' פאר בריס-ברנע

האגף להערכת איכות והבטחתה

המועצה להשכלה גבוהה

שלום,

מצורפת תגובת האוניברסיטה הפתוחה להמלצות הוועדה להערכת איכות תחום היסטוריה.

בברכה,

גיא מירון
פרופ' גיא מירון

OUI Response to History Committee Recommendations

I would like to begin by thanking the committee for the comprehensive and thorough report. The OUI acknowledges and looks forward to implementing the majority of the recommendations offered by the committee.

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Essential (p. 6):</p> <p>Encourage and facilitate a certain degree of teaching by senior faculty in both the BA and MA program in order to achieve the goal of diversifying and expanding the thematic range of courses. In addition to the current curriculum, establish courses devoted to themes that cross the boundaries between specific historical periods.</p>	<p>The OUI welcomes this recommendation.</p> <p>From its very inception, the MA program has been taught by senior faculty. The OUI administration is seriously considering having senior faculty teach BA courses as well; for instance, regular courses taught in English, as required by the CHE.</p> <p>The MA program will emphasize co-teaching by senior faculty members specializing in different historical periods. This will afford students greater opportunities for reflection and experiencing various methods and historical materials.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Essential (p. 6):</p> <p>Establish a new position for the teaching and research in the history of Jews in Muslim countries.</p>	<p>While the OUI recognizes the importance of this subject, our resources allow us to recruit only one new senior faculty member. Our priority at the moment, therefore, is for a researcher whose focus is Islam.</p>
<p>Essential (p. 9):</p> <p>Hire more coordinators to cover areas not currently taught.</p>	<p>We will endeavor to implement this as much as possible, along with our current efforts to expand the curriculum. Budget constraints, however, have unfortunately severely limited the prospects of hiring more coordinators. The OUI will, however, encourage senior faculty to teach BA courses, thus adding coverage of new areas.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Essential (p. 8):</p> <p>Form a committee of internal and external faculty who can review these lacunae and consider ways to develop courses that would fill them.</p>	<p>In order to achieve this goal, Prof. Iris Shagrir will serve as the head of a committee that will re-examine and revise our curriculum (both BA and MA).</p> <p>The committee will begin working in October 2022, with implementation planned to start in the 2023-2024 academic year.</p> <p>One of the ways to address the lacunae of the curriculum is by outsourcing the writing of textbooks to scholars outside the OUI.</p>
<p>Essential (p. 8):</p> <p>Offer a workshop that teaches students how to write academic papers.</p>	<p>This is in process.</p> <p>Certain advanced courses already offer workshops that hone students' research and writing skills. The department is in the process of offering such workshops in additional courses. This process is supported by the professional expertise of the Department for Teaching and Learning.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Essential (p. 9): Find ways to secure the position of tutors, and to create a sense of academic community among them and course coordinators.</p>	<p>Tutors at the OUI are employed according to a collective agreement with the tutors' union. The agreement is reviewed and revised periodically. The department has already begun opening its doors to tutors, inviting them to participate in departmental activities, and thereby creating an inclusive academic community.</p>
<p>Essential (p. 11): Continue and strengthen recruitments, admissions, and support of students from disadvantaged populations.</p>	<p>This is consonant with the vision and aims of the OUI. Our department welcomes greater inclusion and will cooperate with university-level initiatives in this direction, including teaching in remote centers and offering learning support.</p>
<p>Essential (p. 12) Coordinate centralized language offerings among Israeli universities.</p>	<p>The current budget allocated to the OUI by the CHE does not allow a project of this magnitude.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Important (p. 4):</p> <p>Keep the multi-disciplinary composition of the department, which works perfectly as a coherent whole. At the same time, enrich the department with historians and disciplines not covered by the current faculty, such as Ancient Near Eastern History, Asian History, Latin American History, African History, and Economic History. This will also satisfy interests expressed by students, and it will enrich the global historical perspective of the courses offered by the department.</p>	<p>This will be accomplished.</p> <p>The OUI aspires to preserve and increase the multi-disciplinary composition of the department. This depends partly on recruiting faculty, and partly on revising the subjects taught, as mentioned above.</p>
<p>Important (p. 7):</p> <p>Make greater and systematic use of outsourcing the writing of textbooks for a broader range of topics by external experts in fields currently not covered by existing faculty.</p>	<p>Although recruiting scholars who can write high-quality textbooks in a timely manner is challenging, the OUI accepts this recommendation and will direct efforts and resources towards this goal.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Important (p. 7):</p> <p>Strengthen the practice of academic writing by offering more opportunities to write seminar papers at earlier stages.</p>	<p>Students write short essays as part of the standard requirements in all of our courses. Obviously, this does not provide sufficient preparation. The department does encourage students to write seminar papers at earlier stages, but this also depends on the course and timing of their studies. The department aims, however, to expand our offerings of the aforementioned workshops, and will encourage students to participate in them.</p>
<p>Important (p. 8):</p> <p>Provide a certain number of Arabic translations of study material or sections thereof in order to enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of the student community.</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Such material already exists in certain courses. The OUI plans to prepare translations for additional courses (e.g. The French Revolution).</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Important (p. 8): Introduce English-language academic articles earlier in the BA curriculum.</p>	<p>While it is possible to include some articles in English in every course, these cannot be considered required reading until students attain a sufficient command of English. Our efforts towards this goal are currently being bolstered by a number of courses taught in English by members of the senior faculty, in accordance with the CHE program.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Important (p. 8):</p> <p>Offer opportunities for students to meet in person once or twice during the “operation” of the course where they would discuss the materials. Consider offering Zoom conferences with scholars for students studying in those lecturers’ areas of expertise.</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation, and in fact, has already begun implementing it.</p> <p>The department conducted two open zoom meetings for all students, in which the faculty conveyed a variety of content. Following the success of these meetings, the department is planning on offering such meetings on a regular basis.</p> <p>In BA courses, the department will consider holding open zoom meetings in which the course coordinator will not teach materials, but instead, will provide a forum for open discussion.</p> <p>The administration of the MA program has already established a forum in which scholars discuss topics in their areas of expertise. All faculty and MA students are invited to attend.</p>

<p>Important (p. 9):</p> <p>Adopt measures, i.e. research funding, to ensure that junior faculty members are active researchers, the very basis of promotion. The criteria for promotion should be transparent, and candidates should be informed on the status of their promotion process.</p>	<p>The OUI Research Authority encourages course coordinators to engage in research and supports the funding of various research activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research grants: Funding various research needs • Funding travel expenses for active participation in conferences for the purpose of presenting research. • Language editing of articles and research proposals. • Support for course coordinators pursuing doctoral studies: Assistance in financing various research needs for doctoral research. • Grants designed to encourage teaching faculty members to submit research proposals to competitive external funds. • Scholarship to enable teaching faculty members to take a sabbatical of one semester in order to concentrate solely on research. <p>In addition, the Research Authority supports Level 4 course coordinators through scholarships for graduate students under their guidance.</p>
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Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
	<p>Level 4 course coordinators receive an annual stipend from the Science Relations Fund</p> <p>All of these funding sources are published on the Open University Research Authority website.</p>
<p>Important (p. 11)</p> <p>Encourage faculty to apply for international competitive or collaborative funding such as GIF, ERC, and DFG.</p>	<p>This will be accomplished.</p> <p>Since the writing of the self-evaluation report, several faculty members have participated in successful submissions for these collaborative funding opportunities (for example, ERC and DFG).</p> <p>The Research Authority will publicize relevant opportunities and encourage faculty to apply.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Important (p. 11)</p> <p>Continue to address the problem of the drop-out rate.</p>	<p>This is in process.</p> <p>The BI team of the OUI IT department has recently finished implementing a digital tool that provides accurate data about each student's study progress. The department will use that tool to better identify students in the department, and will take measures to keep them on track.</p>
<p>Important (p. 11)</p> <p>Continue to expand the integration of general, Jewish, and Middle Eastern history.</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation.</p>
<p>Desirable (p. 4)</p> <p>Reformulate the categories of MA course offerings to make them less arbitrary and more rational.</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>The aforementioned committee will address this issue.</p>
<p>Desirable (p. 14)</p> <p>Create a national language-learning center which would benefit all students</p>	<p>See response to essential recommendation (p. 12.) above.</p>
<p>Desirable (p. 4)</p> <p>Distinguish between refereed and non-refereed publications in future self-evaluation reports</p>	<p>This will be accomplished.</p>

Committee recommendation	Steps taken towards implementation (including timetable)
<p>Desirable (p. 7)</p> <p>Establish a PhD program and secure its prospects by systematically strengthening the MA program and preparing local students for academic studies beyond their MA.</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>It is the department's aim to prepare its MA students for PhD studies by helping them improve their research skills and by providing more diverse course offerings.</p>
<p>Desirable (p. 9)</p> <p>Offer senior faculty the opportunity to give lectures to BA students</p>	<p>The OUI accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>In some of the courses, this already happens, albeit sporadically. As noted above, more comprehensive teaching by senior faculty in undergraduate courses is being deliberated by the OUI administration.</p>