



EVALUATION OF HISTORY DEPARTMENTS AT BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF HISTORY IN ISRAEL

June 2022

Section 1: Background and Procedures

1. In the academic year 2021-2022 the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programs in the field of History in Israel.
2. The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:
 - Bar-Ilan University
 - Ben-Gurion University
 - The University of Haifa
 - The Hebrew University
 - The Open University
3. To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of¹:
 - [Prof. Steven Fraade](#) – Chair, Yale University, USA.
 - [Prof. Yitzhak Hen](#) – Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.
 - [Prof. Tamara Loos](#) – Cornell University, USA.
 - [Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum](#) – Technische Universität Berlin, Germany.
 - [Prof. Michael Seidman](#) – University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA.
 - [Prof. Michael Zakim](#) – Tel-Aviv University, Israel.
 - [Prof. Dr. Christian Wiese](#) – Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Ms. Pe'er Baris-Barnea served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

4. The evaluation process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (February 2019). Within this framework the evaluation committee was required to:
 - Examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in History.
 - Conduct site visits at 5 institutions participating in the evaluation process.
 - Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of departments participating in the evaluation.
 - Set out the committee's findings and recommendations for each department.

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.
5. The evaluation committee examined only the evidence provided by each participating institution which they considered alongside the distinctive mission set out by each institution in terms of its own aims and objectives. This material was further elaborated upon and explained in discussions with senior management, faculty members, students and alumni during the course of one-day visits to each of the institutions.
 6. This report deals with the **departments of Jewish and General History at Ben-Gurion University**. The Committee's visit to **Ben-Gurion University** took place on **12.06.2022**. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Section 2: Executive Summary

The Israel History Evaluation Committee physically visited two universities during the period of June 12-14, 2022: Ben-Gurion University (June 12), and Bar-Ilan University (June 14). In March 2022 the committee visited and assessed The University of Haifa, The Hebrew University, and the Open University.

At both universities, the committee reviewed both General History and Jewish History Departments.

At each university, the committee met with the top university administrators, department heads, senior (tenured) faculty, junior (un-tenured) faculty, adjunct instructors, BA students, MA students, PhD students, and alumni, for about forty-five minutes per group. Our purpose was mainly to better understand the departments' self-assessment of a year ago, see where progress had been made toward the self-assessment's recommendations, and to formulate new recommendations to better serve the department's mission.

The committee met with the Rector, Vice Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Chairs of the Jewish History and General History Departments, senior (tenured) faculty, junior (non-tenured) faculty, adjunct instructors, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni.

The committee was impressed with the levels of enthusiasm, commitment, appreciation, and intellectual maturity of the students and alumni, and the dedication, accessibility, and caring of the faculty, at all levels.

Substantial time was spent discussing the need, especially as expressed by the students, for greater integration between the two history departments (as well as other history units) at both the structural/institutional levels and at the level of class-room pedagogy –There was some hesitancy expressed by the faculty, especially in General History, largely evidencing fears of a “merger” of the two departments that would threaten the identity of the General History Department, in part due to its smaller size compared to Jewish History. In recognition of these legitimate, but possibly exaggerated, concerns, integration of the two departments should proceed gradually and incrementally with the participation of all the stake-holders.

Section 3: Observations

3.1 Management and Administration

The consistent and worrisome decline in the number of students choosing to major in either Jewish history or general history has effectively frozen the size of these two departments, a situation which, in turn, limits their ability to develop new fields of scholarship and to vary and widen their course offerings to students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. In the Department of Jewish History this lacuna is especially pronounced in regards to the modern era, including Holocaust studies. In the Department of General History, this problem finds expression in the absence of a member of the department who specializes in either American history or Russian history – two areas of considerable academic importance and of increasing interest to students – together with almost all aspects of non-Western world history. The university recognizes this serious shortcoming at the heart of its humanities program and has addressed it, albeit through stop-gap measures, namely, by hiring adjunct faculty on a year-to-year basis who are capable of offering courses in some essential fields.

Part of the problem arises from the “political arithmetic” used by the CHE itself in prioritizing the distribution of academic resources. Counting the (falling) number of student majors – rather than, say, the number of students from across the university who are actively enrolled in the departments’ courses – has weakened history's claims to a bigger piece of the pie. At the same time, however, there is no sense in denying that the state of the numbers issues from a widespread decline of interest in the study of history, and in the humanities more generally,

not only at Ben-Gurion University but throughout the university system in Israel and, indeed, in all of the western world. And so, attempts to think about these matters and offer solutions require a more structural approach. This is a daunting task but also an opportunity to strengthen history programs, not only in administrative but also in pedagogical and intellectual terms.

All solutions must begin by acknowledging that the current state of affairs cannot be sustained. Various efforts to reverse the declining enrollments have had a modest effect, at best. As such, more ambitious ideas need to be explored in order to change the situation.

The committee's conversations with administration and history faculty at Ben-Gurion University about these subjects were extremely fruitful, helping the committee to think creatively in generating proposals for change. The goal is to take advantage of current strengths in order to enhance the quality of history studies while addressing the larger "demographic" issues.

The committee's goal is to institutionalize a level of collaboration among the departments which might, if proven effective and satisfactory, lead to a degree of integration of one kind or another, to be determined, of course, by those directly involved. The committee recognizes past efforts to achieve inter-departmental cooperation. The committee commends these efforts and seeks to develop them in a more effective fashion.

Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching, that is, the design of interdisciplinary courses led jointly by members of different departments across the humanities (and perhaps beyond them). These courses should be offered at all levels of study, that is, as introductory and elective courses as well as seminars. This entails giving faculty members full course-load credit for such co-taught classes.

Recommendation (essential): Cross-list a greater number of courses among the various history departments. With revised procedures for counting enrollments, this practice should also cause less anxiety among the respective departments.

Recommendation (essential): Make joint appointments of new faculty who are able to satisfy the needs of more than one department, for instance, an expert in

American Jewry who has earned a PhD in the general field of American history, and a Holocaust scholar who can teach Eastern European history.

Recommendation (essential): Design distinct tracks of study with respective emphases on Jewish, General, or Middle Eastern history but with a “minor” field in one of the other tracks. These tracks can also be based on an inter-disciplinary approach organized thematically or chronologically, for instance, the ancient world; gender and sexuality; or imperialism. These tracks would encompass courses in all three history departments.

Recommendation (essential): Merge forces and resources across departmental boundaries at the graduate level, and particularly in MA studies. This should entail at the very least a joint seminar for MA students in methodology.

Recommendation (essential): Establish a faculty-wide committee to explore these ideas and offer new ones – collaborations that can also reach beyond the formal bounds of history to include programs in African studies, European studies, and government and politics, among others.

Recommendation (essential): Convene a curriculum committee charged with the task of creating inter-disciplinary and/or inter-departmental programs spanning all historical studies at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

Recommendation (important): Offer a shared set of introductory courses to be required of all history majors which then might include extra weekly sessions led by graduate students offering a more specific thematic focus for undergraduates in, say, Jewish or General History.

Recommendation (important): Introduce curriculum changes that would require history students in one department to enroll in at least two introductory courses in another history department. In effect, the committee includes here courses in Middle Eastern history and not just Jewish and General History.

Recommendation (important): Establish an overarching administrative unit for coordinating collaboration and cooperation among historians and the separate departments of history within the faculty, or what is usually referred to as a “school of history” as instituted in other research universities in Israel.

Recommendation (important): Explore options for cooperating with other universities. Much as the library system often operates as a nation-wide resource for students and scholars, the same might be said of the country's various history departments, which are in a position to take advantage of each other's respective strengths so that students might register for a day of courses each week on another campus in subjects that are unavailable at their home campus. The intent here is to encourage face-to-face and not virtual learning. In parallel fashion, faculty exchanges might also help resolve some of the lacunae.

3.2 QA & Self-Evaluation Process

The 2021 – Ben-Gurion University Self-Evaluation Report calls attention to the many strengths and several weaknesses of the departments of General and Jewish History. Taken together, both departments offer a wide variety of courses to students reflecting the diverse research interests of their faculty. Although unification of the two departments was attempted and did not succeed in 2003, both departments are aware of the need to cooperate among themselves and other disciplines in both teaching and research. Both have adopted a meritocratic approach to new hires but are also cognizant of the need for diversity.

Library facilities seem to have improved since 2007 when the previous committee noted their deficiencies. Also, since 2007 more assistance to faculty who wish to ameliorate their pedagogy has been provided. Standards for the composition of student seminar papers have been established. The department has reached out to help students with special needs, i.e. non-native Hebrew speakers and Arab students.

Despite the seeming popularity of newly-offered introductory workshops, both departments lamented low undergraduate enrollments but did not offer a plan in the report to address this problem.

The lack of adequate courses in foreign language instruction was noted. Perhaps coordination with the online offerings of the Open University can help to correct this problem. As the 2007 report indicated, the General History Department knows it must broaden its perspectives beyond Eurocentrism but only some progress has been made on this issue.

Recommendation (important): As recommended in the 2007 report, continue to improve the library's collection of relevant books and broaden its databases to

include WorldCat and other resources. If possible, expand the library's opening hours.

Recommendation (important): Globalize the research of those General History faculty who focus on "Western Civilization" to expand their teaching offerings as well as make their publications more attractive to editors of prestigious journals and presses.

3.3 Study program

Jewish History:

Despite the separation between General History and Jewish History, the Jewish History Department is determined to conceptualize Jewish History as a phenomenon fully integrated in world history and to teach it as an integral part of "other global histories" (p. 93). The main focus is on European and Middle Eastern history, with a methodological emphasis on the comparative study of the diverse cultures of the Jews and their relationship to the non-Jewish political, social, religious, and cultural environment.

The Department offers three study programs:

- a) A three-year BA program (54 credits) and BA minor (28 credits) in Jewish history. The focus of year one is on the fundamentals of critical inquiry and method as well as on a survey of the entire scope of Jewish history from antiquity to the present. This knowledge is mainly acquired in introductory courses and in a course entitled "The Historian's Workshop." Students can also choose more specialized elective courses. Years two and three allow students to participate in courses designed to teach them the critical examination of primary sources and to present their own work orally and in writing.
- b) An MA program (80 credits) with both a non-research MA track, and a research MA track with a thesis. While all MA students are expected to enhance their analytical skills and to acquire an in-depth knowledge of methods and historiographical traditions, those students continuing with a thesis are trained to design their own research project in keeping with the latest historiography.
- c) A PhD program that prepares students to carry out and publish independent research on a complex and innovative historical topic.

In order to diversify the courses offered within the different study programs the department collaborates with other departments and encourages students to take courses from Israel Studies, Jewish Thought, General History, and Middle Eastern Studies among others.

The Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University has an effective system allowing it to adapt and revise study programs. Decisions are made in the BA Teaching Committee, the MA Teaching Committee, and the Doctoral Committee on the Faculty level. In addition, the Jewish History department discusses the study programs in their regular department meetings and adjusts them in light of changing teaching experiences. Faculty members are given the opportunity to redesign courses and introduce new courses on a regular basis.

The Jewish History department is not in the position to offer a satisfying program in the modern period. The study program does not cover important aspects of modern and contemporary Jewish history such as the emancipation period in Europe, religious and cultural trends in modern Jewry, American Jewish history, World War I, the post-war period, the Holocaust, or the post-Holocaust Jewish experience. The introductory course devoted to the modern period does, in fact, merely or mainly cover the early modern period. The list of courses provided in the self-evaluation includes a number (Holocaust; Jews in global armies) offered by retired colleagues who, in fact, no longer teach. The limitation of the number of courses on modern and contemporary topics, particularly at the undergraduate level, is therefore, much more serious than it might seem at first glance. The committee recognizes the effort of faculty members in this department to partially address some topics of modern and contemporary history. The curriculum also includes several courses on Jews in the modern Middle East and the Americas. However, the committee agrees with the self-evaluation report that the lack of courses in the modern period constitutes a serious lacuna and thus one of the department's most obvious weaknesses that needs to be urgently addressed.

The department has begun considering internationalizing its study program in order to enhance its success on an international level and attract international students. It remains unclear, however, whether and to what extent these plans have already materialized.

General History:

The students in the BA program were uniformly effusive about the support and encouragement they receive from the faculty. For their part, the faculty have revised the study program which is now more diverse, coherent and structured. Still, the department suffers from a lack of specialists in American and Russian history, as well as other areas such as East Asia. They have temporarily resolved this by employing two adjuncts who cover the Americas and Russia, but require careful budgeting to ensure they can continue to hire these adjuncts until a long-term solution is found.

The department also created a curriculum committee which convenes each semester to consider issues such as course sequencing and overlap. The department offers three different study programs.

- a) A 3-year BA Program. Undergraduates can complete their degree in General History in one of three ways. They can major exclusively in history (80 points); double major in history and another field (54 points); or minor in history (28 points). The curriculum is divided into three periods: ancient, medieval and modern. Depending on how they affiliate, BA students begin with taking introductory courses in each of these periods plus a course in historical research and writing. They then can take more focused thematic courses, which require them to read primary sources and conduct basic historical research and writing. They must take 1 to 3 seminars, which are advanced courses that emphasize discussion, reading and writing (20-25 pages). These are usually taken in the third year and need to be offered by faculty in the department of General History. Students majoring in General History can take courses in Jewish History but have to request that these courses count towards their major. Undergraduate history majors are not required to take a foreign language.
- b) An MA program (36 credits). There is a non-research MA track and a research MA track with a thesis. While all MA students are expected to enhance their analytical skills and to acquire an in-depth knowledge of methods and historiographical traditions, those students continuing with a thesis are trained to design their own research project in keeping with the latest historiography –The department recently introduced two mandatory courses for MA students to be taken during their first year: A

Guided Reading course with the thesis advisor who helps students define their thesis topic, and a Research Workshop that requires students to write a research proposal. This has been a resounding success according to MA students in General History. Even so, the master's degree with a thesis in General History takes most students longer than the ideal two years because many work to support themselves while they write. MA students felt they received excellent professional training through monthly meetings at which they presented their research to history faculty and guest lecturers and also discussed job opportunities. Finally, the MA students receive funding from the General History department to host an annual conference with MA students from Ben-Gurion and other Israeli universities, which they appreciate and have found beneficial.

- c) A PhD Program (6-10 credits). A PhD program that prepares students to carry out and publish independent research on a complex and innovative historical topic. PhD students take a workshop in Academic Writing in English and finish their degrees in 3 to 4 years depending on their grants. The PhD students present at the meetings expressed a desire to have offered a Guided Reading course, a Research Workshop course, and a professionalization colloquium similar to that offered to MA students.

One issue raised by faculty and graduate students was concern about language learning. There are no formal language requirements for graduate students. However, in many historical fields, language training is essential to conducting original research in primary sources. It is perhaps as essential to historians as math is to engineers. Yet the graduate student curriculum is currently set up in a way that prevents graduate students from taking the necessary foreign languages, which indirectly shapes their choice of intellectual projects. Graduate students are less inclined to study topics that require the use of a foreign language.

Recommendation (essential): Discuss and formulate a plan to enable more flexible cross-listing of all undergraduate historical courses. Undergraduates in General History should not have to specially request that historical courses taught in other departments count towards their major. This will enable students to have an even more global and less Eurocentric education in history.

Recommendation (essential): Create a plan to stabilize long-term offerings in geographic and chronological areas considered essential but that are not

currently offered by faculty in the two departments. Solutions could include hiring new faculty as joint appointments, assigning more courses to adjunct teachers, inviting visiting scholars on a regular basis, or providing students the opportunity to take courses at other Israeli universities.

Recommendation (essential): Integrate the study of foreign languages into the graduate student package, and eliminate it as an additional expense for graduate students.

Recommendation (essential): Invite (but do not require) PhD students to join the two thesis preparatory courses offered to MA students and to the monthly professionalization meetings.

Recommendation JH² (essential): Establish a field of teaching in modern and contemporary Jewish history as an integral part of the department's program despite the restrictions regarding faculty positions.

Recommendation JH (important): Consider creating an introductory course devoted specifically to the period from the 19th century to the present.

Recommendation JH (desirable): Implement plans – at least on the MA level – to create an international program in order to attract international students.

3.4 Teaching and Learning

The committee recognizes the importance of offering students a wide selection of courses that expose them to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary methods of learning. This approach is currently being ambitiously tested at Ben-Gurion University with the introduction of new distribution requirements for students enrolled in the sciences, obligating them to register for six hours of study in the Humanities. While this step is designed to counter the dire decline of majors in the Humanities, it is to be commended as well for advancing the general mission of higher education.

Recommendation (important): Strengthen the remedial learning program designed to assist students otherwise struggling with university-level studies to persevere and succeed.

² Jewish History

Recommendation (important): Increase the amount of writing assignments required for completion of introductory and thematic courses.

Recommendation (desirable): Increase the number of required undergraduate seminars to 12 or 16 hours, at the expense of thematic or introductory courses.

3.5 Faculty

The committee met with a wide range of faculty from both the General History (7) and Jewish History Departments (5), including both tenured and non-tenured faculty, as well as with one adjunct faculty. In the case of the tenured faculty the committee met separately with those in General History and those in Jewish History. It also met separately with the chairs of both departments. As mentioned in the report on students, faculty in both departments were lauded for their accessibility to students and their responsiveness to their needs, both professional and personal.

Several subjects came up in all of the committee's discussions with faculty. There was broad acknowledgment of and concern for the decline in enrollments in the humanities in general and in history (and Jewish history) in particular. Even though this is a near universal trend, faculty were eager to find ways to attract and retain more students, in part out of fear that such drops in student enrollments and majors could lead to decreases in the size of the respective departmental faculty, for example, by not replacing retired or retiring faculty. At what point do such decreases, both of students and faculty, threaten the integrity and excellence of the departments? This led to extensive discussion of the merits and risks of greater integration of the departments of General and Jewish history, including the possibility of combining them into one department, with possible other components such as Middle Eastern Studies and Israel Studies. Fears were expressed that this would be an opportunity (or excuse) for cutting faculty positions, or for larger departments to swallow up smaller ones, e.g., Jewish History and General History respectively. Reservations were also expressed with regard to the potential collision of differing methodological approaches. Existing examples of efforts toward integration were stressed as was the need for the expansion of such integrative initiatives.

Faculty articulated needs similar to those expressed by PhD students, such as the weakness of foreign language learning opportunities and support for professional research and travel needs.

Recommendation (essential): Strengthen and undertake initiatives to better integrate the study of Jewish History with that of General History as well as with other departments and fields, e.g. encourage double majors, visiting faculty in under-served fields, co-taught courses, and joint appointments.

Recommendation (important): Strengthen foreign language instruction through creative uses of electronic media and cooperation with other institutions.

Recommended (desirable): Offer greater availability of funding to support faculty research and travel.

3.6 Research

The Department of Jewish History engages in research and teaching based on an understanding of Jewish history as embedded in and entangled with its non-Jewish environment. It aims at demonstrating the diversity of Jewish experience throughout the ages and at revealing “how the kaleidoscopic cultural expressions of the Jews are variations of recurring themes and local improvisations of a shared melodious legacy” (p. 140). A major focus is on Jewish interaction with non-Jewish cultures in different periods, including phenomena of cultural translations in their various forms. However, as a small department, it lacks a specialist in Holocaust studies and, equally important, in relevant fields concerning modern and contemporary Jewish history. The department is strongest in ancient, medieval and early modern history in Middle Eastern and European contexts. Research devoted to modern phenomena is limited mainly to the history of Zionism and the history of Jews in the Middle Eastern context. The broad spectrum of historical approaches is especially notable, ranging from cultural, social, economic and intellectual history to gender history and digital humanities.

The department’s research achievements are impressive across the board and make it a successful and internationally visible research center for Jewish history. Faculty members publish in top-tier international journals and presses, contribute to international conferences and workshops, and are invited to a variety of prestigious international universities and centers for advanced studies. Some of them lead international and interdisciplinary research projects which transcend disciplinary boundaries and offer original methodological approaches. This is, for instance, the case with regard to the research project on “Jewish Translation and

Cultural Transfer in Early Modern Europe” (JEWTRACT), funded by the EU, which focuses on the rich number of translations of non-Jewish texts into Jewish languages, makes them accessible via digital databases and explores further new ways to employ digital tools for the study of Jewish history.

The General History department’s excellent research impact is attested by the numerous prestigious research grants and prizes awarded to many of its members, including non-tenured faculty. Some of the funded research projects offer rich opportunities for early career researchers, including doctoral fellowships and post-doctoral positions.

The list of selected publications by doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in the department documents their successful work. This impression is corroborated by the fact that several PhD students and recent graduates received prestigious Israeli and international research fellowships in recent years.

The record of research accomplishments of both the General History and Jewish History departments is impressive. Both departments include outstanding scholars who have won major grants from the ISF and other funding agencies.

Overall, MA students, PhD students and postdoctoral researchers expressed satisfaction with the level of support for their research, particularly in terms of supervision and funding. There is, however, a need for more adequate funding (fellowships, funding for travel etc.). In the conversation with the committee, the adjunct teachers desired to receive more support for research. PhD students and post-doctoral researchers would like to be offered more professional support when writing grant applications.

Recommendation (desirable): Offer more advice and specific support to young scholars who submit their first grant applications.

Recommendation (desirable): As did the Jewish History Department, the General History Department should offer more precision concerning the dates of members’ research awards and publications.

Commendation: The Jewish History Department’s accomplishments are especially remarkable. This department provided a precise account of the dates of its

members' recent publications, a good number of which are placed in some of the most prestigious venues of the profession.

3.7 Students

The committee met with a wide range of students, including BA, MA, and PhD students, as well as alumni, around fifteen in total. Each session included students of both General History and Jewish History.

Overall, the students impressed the committee with their commitment to their studies, appreciation of the university and its faculty, and intellectual maturity. At a time of general, even near universal, decline in humanities enrollments and majors, the Ben-Gurion University students with whom the committee met spoke eloquently about the broad-reaching value of the study of history, in particular, regardless of their career paths. This was also evidenced by the frequency of "double majors" among the undergraduates, often combining General History or Jewish History with a major in STEM subjects. Similarly, the students especially appreciated courses that integrated the study of General History and Jewish History with other disciplines, as between General History and Jewish History themselves. They would benefit from more such integration, without diluting the strengths of either General History or Jewish History. Examples given were courses taught by visiting faculty, co-taught courses, and joint appointments that would strengthen and deepen the connections between General History and Jewish History and other disciplines and subjects.

The students, undergraduate and graduate alike, bemoaned the relative dearth of language study and language requirements as essential tools for the study of history and Jewish history of all time periods. Foreign language acquisition and use are essential components of success in the humanities, as in other areas of the university's curriculum.

The graduate students expressed the need for greater professional research and travel funds.

The students spoke eloquently of the accessibility and caring nature of their professors, with examples of professors who had gone "beyond the letter of the law," in reaching out to students in need of support, whether strictly academic or more personal.

A further indication of the enthusiasm of the students for their learning at Ben-Gurion University was that fact that most of the alumni with whom we met had traveled from as far as northern Israel to meet with the committee for thirty minutes.

Finally, more can and should be done to be inclusive of non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs and Bedouins.

Recommendation (essential): Strengthen or undertake initiatives to better integrate the study of Jewish History with that of General History as well as with other departments and fields, e.g. encourage double majors, visiting faculty in under-served fields, co-taught courses, and joint appointments.

Recommendation (important): Strengthen foreign language instruction through creative uses of electronic media and cooperation with other institutions.

Recommended (important): Create greater availability of funding to support graduate student research and travel.

Recommended (important): Create greater inclusivity of non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs and Bedouins.

3.8 Infrastructure

The faculty in both General and Jewish History each have their own offices, a secretarial office, a dedicated seminar room, and a shared space for graduate students on the same floor of their respective buildings (building 74 and 72). The Jewish History department also has a shared space for the project JEWACT. This enables serendipitous encounters and fosters community, which satisfies the members of both departments. However, that these two departments are in different buildings hinders interaction and community building between them.

Faculty in General History note that the building materials such as doors and carpets are of inferior quality, and that the windows are difficult to clean. The university has not responded to requests for refurbishing cheaply made doors or for cleaning dirty windows, even when the department suggests paying for these out of departmental funds.

The poverty of the Aranne Central library holdings aroused the loudest complaints from both graduate and faculty researchers. While faculty, adjuncts and graduate students noted that the head librarian has generously accommodated their requests and that their access to books and journal articles has improved through interlibrary loan and scanning, they still see room for improvement. The library is the equivalent to the scientist's lab, so faculty and graduate student research and productivity suffers when the library is poorly resourced. For instance, the General History department budget for ordering books is US\$7000 for all ten faculty which is insufficient to cover even essential books. Graduate students and faculty instead must use other libraries such as the National Library in Jerusalem. They also mentioned that access to books in languages other than Hebrew and English is very poor, and that sometimes it can take up to a month to receive books through interlibrary loan. In addition, the library does not employ history specialists so the labor of regularly ordering books essential for teaching and research falls to the faculty themselves. Finally, there are few digital Arabic language sources and textbooks which makes it difficult for Bedouin students, many of whom are first generation, to excel.

Recommendation (essential): Disseminate information to adjuncts regarding research and travel funds available to them.

Recommendation (essential): Make essential renovations and maintain them through either University or department funds.

Recommendation (important): Hold each semester a joint colloquium in a common space for faculty and graduate students in both departments to share their research.

Recommendation (important): Survey the faculty in both history departments for the most important data bases in their field and consider purchasing access to those identified as most essential.

Recommendation (important): Order Arabic texts for courses that attract Arabic-speaking students.

Recommendation (important): Expand opening hours of the library.

Recommendation (desirable): Hire a librarian who is a history specialist who could routinely order books for the discipline.

Recommendation (desirable): Provide more adequate funding for graduate student research.

Section 4: Recommendations

Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching, that is, the design of interdisciplinary courses led jointly by members of different departments across the humanities (and perhaps beyond them). These courses should be offered at all levels of study, that is, as introductory and elective courses as well as seminars. This entails giving faculty members full course-load credit for such co-taught classes.

Recommendation (essential): Cross-list a greater number of courses among the various history departments. With revised procedures for counting enrollments, this practice should also cause less anxiety among the respective departments.

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bounds of history to include programs in African studies, European studies, and government and politics, among others.

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Recommendation (essential): Create a plan to stabilize long-term offerings in geographic and chronological areas considered essential but that are not currently offered by faculty in the two departments. Solutions could include hiring new faculty as joint appointments, assigning more courses to adjunct teachers, inviting visiting scholars on a regular basis, or providing students the opportunity to take courses at other Israeli universities.

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Recommendation (essential): Make essential renovations and maintain them through either University or department funds.

Recommendation (important): Offer a shared set of introductory courses to be required of all history majors which then might include extra weekly sessions led by graduate students offering a more specific thematic focus for undergraduates in, say, Jewish or General History.

Recommendation (important): Introduce curriculum changes that would require history students in one department to enroll in at least two introductory courses in another history department. In effect, the committee includes here courses in Middle Eastern history and not just Jewish and General History.

Recommendation (important): Establish an overarching administrative unit for coordinating collaboration and cooperation among historians and the separate departments of history within the faculty, or what is usually referred to as a “school of history” as instituted in other research universities in Israel.

Recommendation (important): Explore options for cooperating with other universities. Much as the library system often operates as a nation-wide resource for students and scholars, the same might be said of the country’s various history departments, which are in a position to take advantage of each other’s respective strengths so that students might register for a day of courses each week on another campus in subjects that are unavailable at their home campus. The intent here is to encourage face-to-face and not virtual learning. In parallel fashion, faculty exchanges might also help resolve some of the lacunae.

Recommendation (important): As recommended in the 2007 report, continue to improve the library’s collection of relevant books and broaden its databases to include WorldCat and other resources. If possible, expand the library’s opening hours.

Recommendation (important): Globalize the research of those General History faculty who focus on “Western Civilization” to expand their teaching offerings as well as make their publications more attractive to editors of prestigious journals and presses.

Recommendation JH (important): Consider creating an introductory course devoted specifically to the period from the 19th century to the present.

Recommendation (important): Strengthen the remedial learning program designed to assist students otherwise struggling with university-level studies to persevere and succeed.

Recommendation (important): Increase the amount of writing assignments required for completion of introductory and thematic courses.

Recommendation (important): Strengthen foreign language instruction through creative uses of electronic media and cooperation with other institutions.

Recommended (important): Create greater availability of funding to support graduate student research and travel.

Recommended (important): Create greater inclusivity of non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs and Bedouins.

Recommendation (important): Hold each semester a joint colloquium in a common space for faculty and graduate students in both departments to share their research.

Recommendation (important): Survey the faculty in both history departments for the most important data bases in their field and consider purchasing access to those identified as most essential.

Recommendation (important): Order Arabic texts for courses that attract Arabic-speaking students.

Recommendation (important): Expand opening hours of the library.

Recommendation JH (desirable): Implement plans – at least on the MA level – to create an international program in order to attract international students.

Recommendation (desirable): Increase the number of required undergraduate seminars to 12 or 16 hours, at the expense of thematic or introductory courses.

Recommendation (desirable): Offer greater availability of funding to support faculty research and travel.

Recommendation (desirable): Offer more advice and specific support to young scholars who submit their first grant applications.

Recommendation (desirable): As did the Jewish History Department, the General History Department should offer more precision concerning the dates of members' research awards and publications.

Recommendation (desirable): Hire a librarian who is a history specialist who could routinely order books for the discipline.

Recommendation (desirable): Provide more adequate funding for graduate student research.

Signed By:

Steven D. Fraade

Tamara Loos

Prof. Steven Fraade

Prof. Tamara Loos

Michael Seidman

Christian Wiese

Prof. Michael Seidman

Prof. Dr. Christian Wiese

Michael Zakim

Prof. Michael Zakim



Appendix 1 – Letter of appointment

November 2021

Prof. Steven Fraade
Department of Religious Studies
Yale University
USA

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 upon 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 endeavor we reach out to world renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges that confront the 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 deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as the chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of **History** departments. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Yitzhak Hen, Prof. Tamara Loos, Prof. Miri Rubin, Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, Prof. Michael Seidman, and Prof. Christian Wiese.

Ms. Pe'er Baris-Barnea will be the coordinator of the Committee.

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

Sincerely,



Prof. Ido Perlman
Vice Chair,
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

cc: Dr. Varda Ben-Shaul, Deputy Director-General for QA, CHE
Ms. Maria Levinson-Or, Senior Advisor for Evaluation and Quality Enhancement
Ms. Pe'er Baris-Barnea, Committee Coordinator

Appendix 2 – visit schedule

History Evaluation Committee – Visit Schedule
Ben-Gurion University
Committee Meeting Room: Building 74 Room 301

Sunday, June 12th, 2022

*Meetings are conducted in a Q&A format

Time	Subject	Participants
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Haim Haims Rector Gal DeBotton Vice Rector Eve Lee Perelman QA coordinator
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities	Prof. David Wettstein
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:00	Meeting with the Head of the General History Department	Prof. Ruth Ginio
11:00-11:30	Meeting with the Head of the Jewish History Department	Prof. Cana Werman
11:30-12:15	Meeting with senior academic staff (General History) * (with tenure) (up to 8)	Dr. Uri Shachar Prof. Yulia Ustinova Dr. Hanan Yoran Prof. Hillay Zmora
12:15-13:00	Meeting with senior academic staff (Jewish History) * (with tenure) (up to 8)	Prof. Iris Idelson-Shein Prof. Eduard Fram Prof. Haviva Pedaya Dr. Menashe Anzi Dr. Amram Tropper Prof. Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin
13:00-13:45	Lunch	
13:45-14:45	Meeting with senior academic staff * (Both Departments) (without tenure) (up to 8)	Dr. Merav Haklai Dr. Nathan Marcus Jewish History: not applicable
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Adjunct academic staff * (Both Departments) (up to 8)	Dr. Yael Mabat Jewish History: not applicable
15:30-16:15	Tour of the School	
16:15-16:30	Break	

16:30-17:15	Meeting with BA students (Both Departments)** (up to 8 students)	Alon Jak (General History) Guevara Bader (General History) Dan Gil (General History) Maya Attias (General History) Amit Even Haim (General History) Yotvat Rubenstein (Jewish History) Shiran Rabayev (Jewish History) Yehuda Pava (Jewish History) Adiella Hen-Feiner (Jewish History)
17:15-18:00	Meeting with MA and PhD students** (including TAs) (up to 8 students)	Gili Kirschen (General History) Ariel Cohen (General History) Lior Yaary-Dolev (General History) Jean-Lemon Kone (General History) Avishag Ben-Shalom (Jewish History) David Borabeck (Jewish History) Ahuvia Goren (Jewish History) Mellanie Plewa (Jewish History)
18:00-18:30	Meeting with Alumni** (up to 8)	Fadi Jiryis (General History) Tamara Sher (General History) Dvir Alexander (General History) Shahar Taller Livne (General History) Niva Yair Shemesh (Jewish History) Elichay Kahanah (Jewish History) Hadas Chen (Jewish History) Gelena Ioffe (Jewish History)
18:30-19:00	Break	
19:00-19:30	Closing meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head of the History Department	Haim Haims Rector Gal DeBotton Vice Rector Eve Lee Perelman QA coordinator Prof. David Wettstein Prof. Ruth Ginio Prof. Cana Werman