



EVALUATION OF HISTORY DEPARTMENTS AT BAR-ILAN 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 the 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 Bar-Ilan University**. The Committee's visit to **Bar-Ilan University** took place on **14.06.2022**. 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.

Section 3: Observations

3.1 Management and Administration

Almost every person at Bar-Ilan University with whom we met, from the Rector to individual faculty members of the Department of General History and the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, including students from both departments, strongly supports the notion of increased collaboration between the two departments. We endorse this approach and believe, in fact, that such collaboration and cooperation should be extended to other units in the two faculties (Jewish Studies and the Humanities) such as Land of Israel Studies, Archaeology, Middle Eastern Studies, Classics, and perhaps to the social sciences as well, guided by the common rubric of the study of the past.

At the present time, several administrative obstacles prevent such collaborative efforts and disciplinary and pedagogical integration. These include not cross-listing courses for students outside of their respective departments and the utter absence of any co-taught courses. There are no joint seminars spanning the departments for either graduate or undergraduate students, even regarding shared topics such as methodological and historiographical issues. There is barely any co-supervision of research students at the MA and PhD level even when their subjects have a strong cross-disciplinary character. There is also no general culture in which cross-departmental cooperation is encouraged beyond occasional academic events such as conferences.

These obstacles need to be addressed and overcome by various steps. The university should 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 in the process.

Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching, namely, the design of joint inter-disciplinary courses led by members of different departments across Jewish Studies and the Humanities (and perhaps beyond them). These joint courses should be offered at all levels of study but especially for advanced undergraduate and graduate 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 CHE procedures for counting students, placing the emphasis on class enrollments rather than the respective number of majors, this practice should also provoke less anxiety among the respective departments.

Recommendation (essential): 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, this would include courses in Middle Eastern Studies and Israel Studies, not just Jewish and General History.

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 in methodology.

Recommendation (essential): Expand general history course offerings. The current curriculum is insufficient to support a basic program of study.

Recommendation (essential): 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, for instance, Jewish or general history.

Recommendation (essential): Establish a cross-faculty committee to explore changes and collaborations that can also reach beyond the formal bounds of history to include programs in Asian studies, the interdisciplinary program, government, and politics, among others. This committee can become the nucleus of a new School of History, an overarching administrative unit for coordinating collaboration and cooperation among historians and the separate departments of history. Among its other tasks, this School of History should establish a curriculum committee charged with creating inter-disciplinary and/or inter-departmental programs spanning all historical studies at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Such an organizational structure will be the most effective means of implementing the various recommendations made above.

Recommendation (important): Design distinct tracks of study with respective emphases on Jewish, General, or Middle Eastern history but with a strong “minor”

field in one of the other tracks. These tracks can also be based on an interdisciplinary approach organized thematically or chronologically, for instance, the ancient world, gender and sexuality, or imperialism. These tracks would encompass courses in all history departments.

Recommendation (desirable): Provide necessary funds to invite guest scholars from abroad to come to the campus and give condensed mini-courses of two to three weeks duration in fields of study that are currently not covered by the university's faculty.

Recommendation (desirable): Design year-long courses that are divided by semester between lecturers from the respective departments but which offer an integrated survey of the subject under study.

3.2 QA & Self-Evaluation Process

The 2020/21 Bar-Ilan University Self-Evaluation Report of both departments offers much important information on many aspects of the respective departments and the university. The interactive process of preparing and writing the Report on the Faculty and Department level is adequately described. The Jewish History Report emphasizes the participation of all faculty and staff members in the process; however, it appears that mainly the professors were involved in the decisive stages of writing (see p. 12). The Report is accessible to all faculty and staff via Google docs.

The Reports call attention to the various strengths and weaknesses of the departments of General and Jewish History.

The 122-page Jewish History Report includes a helpful table comparing the recommendations from the 2007 Evaluation Report and the progress made since then. There has been progress with regard to the Jewish Studies library, improved teaching methods, particularly in the MA program, the introduction of historiographical courses and the establishment of a teaching committee that ensures the academic quality of courses and syllabi. The Report is candid in addressing issues that have not been resolved (infrastructure and supporting students' writing skills) as well as those where only partial or unsatisfactory solutions have been found. The main aspects identified as problematic refer to

elements that had been strongly emphasized in the 2007 Evaluation Report and that continue to be of crucial relevance:

- a) The Report, although it acknowledges that Jewish history is “embedded in the context of general history”, suggests that the recommendation to consider establishing a School of History “was not envisioned, as the Department of Jewish History, which in 2015 became the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, has always considered history, both past and present, to be its own discipline.” (p. 15) The Report does not include more detailed and systematic reflections upon the relationship between General History and Jewish History nor upon ways to strengthen the collaboration between them. On the contrary, while the Report mentions rather sporadic and ad hoc joint events and initiatives, the emphasis is more on separation, particularly in the area of teaching. Even though the department has attempted to “broaden the exposure of our students to courses in the General History Department, in both BA and especially graduate students,” the Report cites “the relative weakness of the General History department in various areas of historical inquiry” (pp. 15-16) rather than discussing the more relevant structural problems preventing cooperation.
- b) The Report states that junior faculty are still not fully involved in departmental committees and their opinions have only been partially considered. This should be remedied as soon as possible.
- c) Considerations regarding the appeal of the department for students and strategies to improve student numbers are limited to marketing measures in public and social media, whereas reflections on structural reforms that might remedy the situation are missing.

The Department of General History submitted an introspective 104-page Self-Evaluation Report. Since 2006 the department has not sufficiently increased the numbers of its full-time faculty. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty has grown slightly to 9, which remains too few to offer a range of courses which would satisfy either academic needs or student demands. The department would like to offer a “wider view of the West” and more globalized history. Thus, both more instructors and a more collaborative relationship between the General, Jewish, and other relevant departments is necessary.

The Report asserted that “all our students” acquired a solid historical understanding of Western Civilization in a global context. Positive student

teaching surveys and the committee's conversations with students indicate that the Report's assertion has a factual basis.

The department encourages students to publish their research and offers financial support for editing and translation. It actively seeks contacts with alumni. Faculty have been awarded a significant number of research grants in the past three years. During the same time period a number have published in respectable venues; nevertheless, the Report's list of recent publications does not consistently provide page numbers nor does it break down the venues mentioned into refereed and non-refereed journals and presses.

As had the CHE evaluation Report of 2007, this year's Self-Evaluation Report remarked that the library's opening hours remain "totally inadequate."

Recommendation (essential): Expand library hours significantly.

Recommendation (essential): Categorize publications according to their refereed status and provide corresponding page numbers or lengths.

Recommendation (important): Consider involving all faculty at all stages of planning, drafting and writing the Report and also consult students with regard to passages concerning the study program and teaching.

Recommendation (important): Discuss more systematic strategies and tools for increasing enrollments.

3.3 Study program

The Department of Jewish History bases its study program on a self-understanding of Jewish history as a foundation of the national identity of the Jewish people and of individual Jews. The main emphasis is on the experience of the Jewish people throughout history as a distinctive element within the broader context of general history. Although the Report indicates the need for additional faculty in certain fields, particularly the Biblical period, the Second Temple period, and the Mishnah and Talmud period, as well as contemporary Judaism, it can offer a comprehensive study program on the BA, MA and PhD level in all historical periods, from antiquity through the Middle Ages and the modern period. Lectures and seminars treat all aspects of the political, social, cultural and religious history

of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora, including topics such as gender, family, historiography of the Holocaust, as well as the history of Zionism and the State of Israel.

The Department offers three study programs:

- a) A three-year BA program in Jewish history whose overall goal is to enable students to undertake independent critical reading of historical sources. Mandatory courses in years one and two include introductions to all historical periods, an introduction to bibliography, and a course entitled "Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking in History". Elective courses can be chosen from a program that includes a range of periods and thematic approaches.
- b) An MA program in which students specialize in a particular period of Jewish history and, where appropriate, in a particular geographic region. They are supposed to acquire thorough knowledge in the events, processes and trends of their chosen period and become familiar with primary sources, secondary literature, historiography and relevant methodology.
- c) A PhD program that prepares students to carry out and publish research on a complex historical topic and to become fully independent and original scholars.
- d) In 2015, a graduate program in Contemporary Jewry was introduced, both for MA and PhD students. According to the Report, the program focuses on the areas of "religion, religious life and contemporary Jewish identities" (p. 5). The Report emphasizes that the effectiveness of this new MA is limited by the lack of experts on contemporary issues and its reliance on faculty focusing on modern, not contemporary history.

The undergraduates in Jewish History praised their faculty but noted that some professors were not very successful in teaching introductory courses. They focused most of their attention on graduate students enrolled in their classes, and adopted a narrow approach in their area of specialty without making any effort to broaden the context sufficiently for non-experts.

To a very limited extent, the department allows but does not encourage individual students upon making a specific request, to register in courses from other departments, including the General History Department. During the committee's visit, students strongly emphasized their wish to extend these options and to be given more flexibility to take courses in general history. Other ideas for

cooperation and exchange between the two departments were raised during the committee's discussions with students as well as faculty.

The Jewish History Department Report indicates the importance of "positioning Bar-Ilan University as an international center for the education for Judaism and Zionism through a unique international program for foreign students" (p. 42). However, neither the Report nor conversations during the visit revealed to what extent the strategic process of developing and implementing such a program has even begun. At this point, it appears to be a vague idea.

The General History Department seeks to provide an overview of the history of Western civilization, from antiquity to the late modern era. In addition to histories of religious beliefs, social and cultural life, politics, warfare, and the economy, the department offers methodological and writing courses. They teach students different historical methodologies, primary source interpretation in historical context, analytical skills, logical argumentation, and persuasive writing with supporting documentation. They also teach undergraduates how to present historical work with concision and clarity. These goals are only partially met because the size of the faculty is too small, with nine faculty and several adjuncts. They lack, for instance, a historian of France, a tenured American historian, and other specialists. In fact, the majority of the historians in the department also focus on or were trained in Jewish history. This limits the perspectives and global vision of the courses offered.

General History offers three study programs:

- a) A BA Program. It has three options: an expanded major (46 credits), a double major (26 credits), and an unplanned major (28 credits). The credits stem from a combination of mandatory courses, elective courses, elective pro-seminars and elective seminars. They all take a mandatory course called "historian's tools" that teaches research methods, the use of theories, and the identification of relevant sources and their contextualization. There is no language requirement other than English.
- b) An MA Program with (12 credits) or without a thesis (18 credits), comprising mandatory seminars, elective courses and elective seminars. MA students without a thesis take three years on average to complete their degree and five years if they write a thesis, which is a bit longer than other Israeli universities. All master's students are required to take 1-2

courses in Jewish Studies and those writing a thesis also must have advanced training in a foreign language. However, MA students who want to learn a language other than English for their research must pay extra.

- c) PhD Program is a 1-to-4-year program of elective courses (6 credits). All graduate students (MA and PhD) participate in a weekly colloquium led by the department chair where they present their work, discuss and prepare for academic careers, and learn how to conduct research abroad. PhD students who want to learn a language other than English for their research must pay extra unless the chair asks the Rector for an exemption. The latter is not institutionalized.

General History undergraduates, graduate students and alumni uniformly praised their professors for being accommodating and making them feel like they “were family.” Undergraduates in both departments wished that more of their courses involved discussion in addition to lecturing, which appeared to be the standard method of teaching. Graduate and undergraduate students also emphasized that they would like to take more courses in all history departments – General, Jewish, Middle Eastern and others. The course offerings in General History, they noted, were too limited. It makes sense, then, to make it easier for students to enroll in courses from different departments. Yet, the General and Jewish History departments belong to two different faculties, not just two departments, which creates a supposed impediment to collaborating. Moreover, co-teaching and cross-listing courses in different departments and faculties is disincentivized under the current administrative system. Students must request the dean or head of the department to take courses outside of their department that will “count” towards their major. Also, the administration in effect disincentivizes faculty members who co-teach by counting team-taught courses as only half a course.

Recommendation (essential): Count cross-listed courses towards requirements to facilitate students and departments who, respectively, want to take and offer such courses. Do not make students specially request this but advertise and authorize such offerings a-priori.

Recommendation (essential): Create a centralized source of information for graduate students about professional opportunities, funding and scholarships for travel, research, and study that may be available to them.

Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching, namely, the design of interdisciplinary courses led by members of different departments across Jewish Studies and the Humanities (and perhaps beyond them). These joint courses should be offered at all levels of study but especially for advanced undergraduate and graduate seminars. This entails giving faculty members full course-load credit for such co-taught classes.

Recommendation (essential): Introduce curricular 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 Studies and Israel Studies, not just Jewish and General History.

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 in methodology.

Recommendation (essential): Expand general history course offerings. The current curriculum is insufficient to support a basic program of study.

Recommendation (important): Make foreign language study available as part of the graduate curriculum rather than requiring extra payment.

Recommendation (important): Specify possible measures to internationalize the teaching program in order to enhance its success and visibility and to attract international students. A variety of options could be explored, ranging from introducing a substantial number of English-language courses to establishing an international MA program in Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry. One option would be to internationalize the existing MA in Contemporary Jewry.

Recommendation (desirable): Design year-long courses that are divided by semester between lecturers from the respective departments but which offer an integrated survey of the subject under study.

3.4 Teaching and Learning

The Committee recognizes the central role of teaching in the student's university education. This includes both the quality and quantity of undergraduate course

offerings, the relationship between graduate students and their research advisers, as well as the range of tasks required of students for successfully completing each course.

The university has recently introduced a mid-term requirement to most courses, coming in addition to the final exam or end-of-semester task. That is a most positive development and should be further encouraged by offering faculty members pedagogical guidance (and assistance in the case of heavily-enrolled courses).

Recommendation (important): Increase the number and amount of writing assignments at all levels of study, beginning with undergraduate introductory courses.

Recommendation (important): Keep the number of online courses to a minimum. These offerings are no substitute to the classroom learning experience, as the students themselves attest, and so should not by any means be made integral to the departments' course offerings.

3.5 Faculty

The Department of Jewish History has eighteen tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Additionally, there are a few adjunct lecturers who were recruited to teach topics not covered by the Jewish History faculty members. Thematically there are several lacunae in the topics covered by the faculty, such as American Jewish history. As far as promotion is concerned, their promotion process proceeds at an acceptable pace. Still, some of the faculty members complained that it is not always clear what the exact criteria for promotion are.

The Department of General History has nine tenured or tenure-track faculty members, one who has not been promoted for more than a decade, and four of whom have not been promoted for more than five years. This situation is problematic. It has a negative impact on the standard of research undertaken by the faculty. It also impairs teaching, supervising research students, the ability to apply for and receive external grants, and the overall academic reputation of the university. At least in one case, the promotion procedure has dragged on for a long period without communicating the reasons for this delay to the faculty member in question.

Recommendation (essential): Implement plans to strengthen the position of untenured faculty and to facilitate their full participation in departmental committee and decision-making processes.

Recommendation (essential): Adopt strict, straightforward, and uncompromising measures to ensure that faculty members are active researchers. These should include explicit incentives, for instance, research funding and course reductions. The criteria for promotion should be transparent, and candidates should be informed of the status of their promotion process.

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 (important): Take into consideration gender balance when recruiting faculty in both departments. Similar efforts should be made in overcoming social inequalities inhibiting access to academic careers.

Recommendation (important): Hire adjuncts on multi-year contracts, which will increase job security and, in turn, provide enough stability to enhance the quality of their courses. At the same time, create a mechanism for the input of adjuncts to departmental life and decision making.

3.6 Research

Senior faculty of the General History Department asserted that whereas Jewish History was considered a “need,” General History is regarded to be a “luxury,” if not superfluous. This perception does not help to advance research and scholarship. Junior faculty claimed that bureaucratic obstacles interfered in their discretionary use of grant money.

The Self-Evaluation Report did not categorize members’ publications as refereed and non-refereed. Thus, it is difficult to judge with desirable precision the research creativity of the department. Nonetheless, the publication list and the IEC 2022 Progress Table make clear that the department contains a number of excellent and internationally recognized scholars.

The Jewish History Department is internationally renowned for excellence in research, both in its breadth and depth. The committee was deeply impressed by the department's outstanding accomplishments. Yet the self-evaluation report conveys a degree of complacency regarding the pursuit of research innovation. This impression, however, was partly belied by conversations with faculty members in which a few expressed openness to new trends in historiography, such as visual culture, gender, interdisciplinary and global studies.

The committee noted that the Report mentions only three colleagues who had successfully applied and received a major research grant in the last three years, with no international ones among them.

Recommendation (essential): Enhance the support for younger scholars provided by the university's research authority.

Recommendation (important): Encourage faculty to apply for competitive international research grants.

Recommendation (important): Provide opportunities and funding to promote international research collaborations.

Recommendation (important): Mitigate the bureaucratic hurdles to the spending of grant monies.

3.7 Students

The committee met with a wide range of students, including BA, MA, and PhD students, as well as alumni. 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 their intellectual maturity. At a time of general and even nearly universal decline in humanities enrollments and majors, the Bar-Ilan University students with whom the committee met spoke eloquently about the far-reaching value of the study of history regardless of their future career choices. This was also manifest in the frequency of "double/dual majors" among the undergraduates, often combining history or Jewish history with a major in another department in the Humanities or Social Sciences, but not (among the group with whom we met) in STEM subjects.

Similarly, the students most appreciated those courses that integrated the study of general history and Jewish history with other disciplines. They would benefit from more such integration, which will strengthen the study of both general history and Jewish history. They would also benefit from courses taught by visiting faculty, from co-taught courses, and from joint appointments that will also doubtless strengthen and deepen the obvious connections between General History and Jewish History, as well as other disciplines and subjects.

Undergraduate and graduate students alike bemoaned the dearth of opportunities and support for language study. These are essential tools for the study of history components of success in the humanities, as in other areas of the university's curriculum.

Graduate students in both history departments have no office space in the department, receive no travel or research funds, do not benefit from any professionalization workshops, are generally unaware of scholarships or other funds that might be available to them, and have little idea regarding future job opportunities. They also were not given practical experience teaching, as teaching assistants or otherwise. Finally, they expressed a desire to have joint methodological seminars and colloquia with graduate students from the Jewish History department.

The students spoke eloquently of the accessibility and caring nature of their professors, giving examples of professors who had gone well beyond their formal obligations in reaching out to students in need of support, whether strictly academic or more personal. They had reason to believe, through discussion with friends at other universities, that their positive experiences at Bar-Ilan University exceeded those of students of other universities. In academic terms, some were disappointed with professors who lectured too exclusively and had not refreshed their courses in a long time.

One area in which the students at all levels were particularly critical was the physical condition of their class and dormitory rooms, which often suffer from poor or uneven internet reception. They also criticized the limits of the library system, both the hours and range of the collections, the unavailability of courses in some areas (e.g., American history), and expressed the desire for a joint seminar between the two history departments.

Further indications of student enthusiasm for their learning experience at Bar-Ilan University were that most of the alumni with whom the committee met had traveled from far and near to meet for only thirty minutes.

Finally, more can and should be done to include non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs, in academic life. This might entail a program of remedial courses in order to better prepare these students for the efforts required for success in university studies. What's more, such success will of benefit to the university community as a whole by creating a more diverse cultural and intellectual experience for all.

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 underserved 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): Provide funding to support graduate student research and travel.

Recommended (important): Enhance inclusivity by recruiting non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs and international students from various backgrounds.

3.8 Infrastructure

There are three main challenges regarding infrastructure: the library, department offices and classrooms, and the Internet.

Library:

Bar-Ilan campus hosts over 20 physical libraries which are centralized electronically. Most faculty agreed that their access to sources has improved because of the free interlibrary loan system and access to electronic journals. However, they and graduate students would like access to certain databases (like Proquest and Galenet among others) that are not currently available. Some graduate students had to purchase books when they could not get them through the library system. Both the General History library and the Jewish Studies library

(where the Jewish History collection is located) require renovation and updating with regard to both their physical space and their collections. However, the General History library is in far worse condition – one described by many as “deplorable.” Both libraries offer quiet spaces only: there are no work or study rooms for students to use for group projects. The General History library also has shortened hours (9am-4pm) because they have no extra funds to hire student workers. Some portions of the Jewish Studies Library have been renovated, but not all. Although the Jewish Studies library is one of the best of its kind in the world, according to the head of the library, the computer terminals are outmoded and the space for books is too small to accommodate additional books without “weeding out” others. The libraries also continue to use either the Dewey Decimal system or the Scholem system, rather than that of the Library of Congress, to organize their books – this may be the last university library in the country to use these outdated systems which present a challenge to integration into a national library system.

Internet:

Throughout the day of meetings, the Internet worked intermittently, disrupting conversations with those Bar-Ilan faculty and alumni who joined by Zoom. Throughout our meetings with various groups, we learned about (and personally experienced) erratic access to the Internet. One pair of faculty members who share a small office noted that the internet was accessible in only one corner of their office so they had to move to that corner when they need access. Even classrooms had internet difficulties, which makes it hard to run classes.

Department facilities:

The history departments at Bar Ilan have some of the world’s leading scholars yet some of the worst department office spaces and facilities. Staff are asked to work on campus in person three days a week but do this in a condition of squalor: their offices are small yet shared by at least two faculty members; the furniture, sometimes stained or broken, dates from half a century ago; they do not have access to a printer; and they are not provided a computer as part of their contracts. Instead, they purchase these with their own funds. In General History, the copy machine remains behind a locked door except during daytime office hours. There is no kitchen facility beyond a sink and the bathrooms are deplorable, with some toilets missing seats. At some point, these leading scholars will stop coming to Bar-Ilan in preference for other universities that offer them basic amenities that are a given at peer universities.

Recommendation (essential): Update the university internet infrastructure to provide reliable internet.

Recommendation (essential): Until renovations can be made, provide updated and functional office furniture to faculty.

Recommendation (essential): Provide a shared printer and copy machine in the secretariat's office and give faculty a key so they can access that section of the secretarial offices to print or make copies after hours.

Recommendation (essential): Renovate the bathrooms so they are functional and have toilet seats.

Recommendation (important): Provide a kitchen area with a refrigerator, coffee maker and sink.

Recommendation (important): Provide staff members with individual offices.

Recommendation (important): Renovate the rest of the Jewish Studies library. This should include updated computer stations and dedicated group study rooms.

Recommendation (important): Close the present location of the General History library rather than renovate it and move the collection in its entirety to the Jewish Studies library structure. This will effectively extend the hours of access to the general history collection.

Section 4: Recommendations

Recommendation (essential): Encourage co-teaching, namely, the design of joint inter-disciplinary courses led by members of different departments across Jewish Studies and the Humanities (and perhaps beyond them). These joint courses should be offered at all levels of study but especially for advanced undergraduate and graduate 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 students,

placing the emphasis on class enrollments rather than the respective number of majors, this practice should also provoke less anxiety among the respective departments.

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Recommendation (essential): Count cross-listed courses towards requirements to facilitate students and departments who, respectively, want to take and offer such courses. Do not make students specially request this but advertise and authorize such offerings a-priori.

Recommendation (essential): Create a centralized source of information for graduate students about professionalization opportunities, funding and scholarships for travel, research, and study that may be available to them.

Recommendation (essential): Implement plans to strengthen the position of untenured faculty and to facilitate their full participation in departmental committee and decision-making processes.

Recommendation (essential): Adopt strict, straightforward, and uncompromising measures to ensure that faculty members are active researchers. These should include explicit incentives, for instance, research funding and course reductions. The criteria for promotion should be transparent, and candidates should be informed of the status of their promotion process.

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): Enhance the support for younger scholars provided by the university's research authority.

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 underserved fields, co-taught courses, and joint appointments.

Recommendation (essential): Update the university internet infrastructure to provide reliable internet.

Recommendation (essential): Until renovations can be made, provide updated and functional office furniture to faculty.

Recommendation (essential): Provide a shared printer and copy machine in the secretariat's office and give faculty a key so they can access that section of the secretarial offices to print or make copies after hours.

Recommendation (essential): Renovate the bathrooms so they are functional and have toilet seats.

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

Recommendation (important): Consider involving all faculty at all stages of planning, drafting and writing the Report and also consult students with regard to passages concerning the study program and teaching.

Recommendation (important): Discuss more systematic strategies and tools for increasing enrollments.

Recommendation (important): Make foreign language study available as part of the graduate curriculum rather than requiring extra payment.

Recommendation (important): Specify possible measures to internationalize its teaching program in order to enhance its success and visibility and to attract international students. A variety of options could be explored, ranging from introducing a substantial number of English-language courses to establishing an international MA program in Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry. One option would be to internationalize the existing MA in Contemporary Jewry.

Recommendation (important): Increase the amount of writing assignments at all levels of study, beginning with undergraduate introductory courses.

Recommendation (important): Keep the number of online courses to a minimum. These offerings are no substitute to the classroom learning experience, as the students themselves attest, and so should not by any means be made integral to the departments' course offerings.

Recommendation (important): Take into consideration gender balance when recruiting faculty in both departments. Similar efforts should be made in overcoming social inequalities inhibiting access to academic careers.

Recommendation (important): Hire adjuncts on multi-year contracts, which will increase job security and, in turn, provide enough stability to enhance the quality of their courses. At the same time, create a mechanism for the input of adjuncts to departmental life and decision making.

Recommendation (important): Encourage faculty to apply for competitive international research grants.

Recommendation (important): Provide opportunities and funding to promote international research collaborations.

Recommendation (important): Mitigate the bureaucratic hurdles to the spending of grant monies.

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

Recommended (important): Provide funding to support graduate student research and travel.

Recommended (important): Enhance inclusivity by recruiting non-Jewish students, especially Israeli Arabs and international students from various background.

Recommendation (important): Provide a kitchen area with a refrigerator, coffee maker and sink.

Recommendation (important): Provide each staff member with their own office.

Recommendation (important): Renovate the rest of the Jewish Studies library. This should include updated computer stations and dedicated group study rooms.

Recommendation (important): Close the present location of the General History library rather than renovate it and move the collection in its entirety to the Jewish

Studies library structure. This will effectively extend the hours of access to the general history collection.

Recommendation (desirable): Provide necessary funds to invite guest scholars from abroad to come to the campus and give condensed mini-courses of two to three weeks duration in fields of study that are currently not covered by the university's faculty.

Recommendation (desirable): Design year-long courses that are divided by semester between lecturers from the respective departments but which offer an integrated survey of the subject under study.

Signed By:



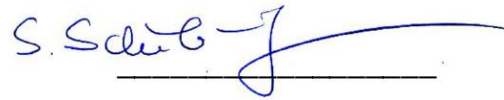
Prof. Steven Fraade



Prof. Yitzhak Hen



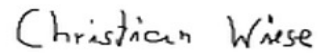
Prof. Tamara Loos



Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum



Prof. Michael Seidman



Prof. Dr. Christian Wiese



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

<u>History Evaluation Committee – Visit Schedule</u> <u>Bar Ilan University</u>		
Tuesday, June 14th, 2022 Building 410, Room 312 *Meetings are conducted in a Q&A format		
Time	Subject	Participants
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Amnon Albeck Prof. Arie Reich
09:30-10:00	Meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities	Prof. Eliezer Schlossberg
10:00-10:30	Meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies	Prof. Shmuel Refael
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-11:15	Meeting with the Head of the General History Department	Prof. Doron Avraham
11:15-11:45	Meeting with the Head of the Jewish History Department	Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim
11:45-12:30	Meeting with senior academic staff (General History) * (with tenure) (up to 8)	Prof. Avraham Faust Prof. Efrat Aviv Dr. Hilda Nissimi Dr. Zohar Maor
12:30-13:15	Meeting with senior academic staff (Jewish History) * (with tenure) (up to 8)	Prof. Kimmy Caplan Dr. Yitzhak Conforti Prof. Shmuel Feiner Prof. Adam Ferziger Prof. Debra Kaplan Prof. Yigal Levin Prof. Adiel Schremer
13:15-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:45	Meeting with senior academic staff * (Both Departments) (without tenure) (up to 10)	Dr. Yosi Yisraeli (Jewish History) Dr. Yehiel Weizman (Jewish History) Dr. Tal Tovy (General History) Dr. Pnina Levi (General History) Dr. Yaniv Fox (General History)
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Adjunct academic staff * (Both Departments) (up to 10)	Dr. Maya Shorer-Kaplan (Jewish History) Dr. Pnina Steinberger (Jewish History) Dr. Elia Bartal (Jewish History) Dr. Uri Bar Noi (General History) Dr. Arie Geiger (General History)

15:30-16:30	Tour of the Departments	
16:30-16:45	Break	
16:45-17:30	Meeting with BA students** (up to 10 students)	Shira Bracha Attias Netanel Engelman Tahani Abed El Gafer Bat Sheva Arghey Tehila Grossman Harel Rosenberg Hadas Markovitch Yosef M. Horowitz
17:30-18:15	Meeting with MA and PhD students** (including TAs) (up to 8 students)	Revital Pollack Mohammad Shukrie Khalaf Fanny Yonish Raphael Thurm ----- Chen Yanai Chagit Buchbinder Rivka Putchebutzky Ekaterina Oleshkevitz Rami Jaegerman
18:15-18:45	Meeting with Alumni** (up to 8)	Zvi Swisa Avihay Arbitman Natan Erez Ayelet Koor Odesser ----- Dan Shina Elisheva Friedlander Dr. Tordjeman Lilach Dr. Eviatar Zanbar
18:45-19:15	Break	
19:15-19:45	Closing meeting with heads of institution, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head of the Department	Prof. Amnon Albeck Prof. Arie Reich Prof. Eliezer Schlossberg Prof. Shmuel Refael Prof. Doron Avraham Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim