



י"א בתשרי תשפ"ד
26 בספטמבר 2023

לכבוד
גב' סיגל מורדוך, מ"מ סמנכ"ל
האגף להערכת איכות והבטחתה
המועצה להשכלה גבוהה

שלום רב,

מצ"ב תגובת החוג לפילוסופיה והפקולטה למדעי הרוח לדו"ח הוועדה להערכת איכות בתחום
פילוסופיה.

בברכה,

אבי-חי חובב

העתק:

גב' פאר בריס-ברנע, האגף להערכת איכות והבטחתה
גב' קרן חרושצ'וב, ממונה הערכת איכות והבטחתה



Replies to the Council of Higher Education International Committee's Recommendations

To the Council of Higher Education:

Presented here are our replies to the International Committee's recommendations. The philosophy department wishes to express its gratitude to the committee for their thorough work. We feel we have benefited to a substantial degree from this opportunity to think both globally and in detail about our academic environment and achievements. In particular, we were happy to receive through the committee feedback from students of various academic levels about their experience in the department. We feel the report testifies to the amount of time and effort put in by all involved in order to sustain a department that operates at an international level of excellence.

Essential recommendations	Steps toward implementation
<p>1. Ensure frank and regular communication between the senior management and the Department and empower the Department to determine the specific ways in which it will implement University-wide recommendations and mandates.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> The department welcomes this recommendation wholeheartedly. We understand that more authority will gradually be decentralized to the heads of the institutes, and hope this will in turn lead to greater autonomy for the department.</p>
<p>2. Ensure that the approved recruitment process to hire in the philosophy of language goes ahead within the next 12 months.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> After advertising a job opening in these fields we have received 32 applications. We were very pleased to see that a good number of these applications comes from exceptionally qualified candidates. Whether or not our preferred choice among these highly qualified candidates will in fact be granted a position in the university is in the hands of the Faculty Development Committee.</p>
<p>3. Introduce measures to ensure that increasing the number of students does not overburden faculty, such as providing additional TAs to provide support to students from other faculties (e.g. in the "cornerstone" programme).</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We are sad to report that the faculty is currently cutting back on funding for TAs (to be fair, this is a faculty-wide problem and is not limited to philosophy).</p>



	<p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: The faculty would like to employ TAs for all courses, but given the budget only courses with more than 70 students are entitled to have TAs. In a few classes in only two departments (philosophy and biblical philology), given the intensity of the courses, we approved TAs also for a smaller number of students.</p>
<p>4. Ensure that whatever changes are implemented with regard to undergraduate and/or graduate education at HU do not compromise the Department's capacity to continue to deliver excellent teaching and learning outcomes.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We wholeheartedly hope the university administration will take this recommendation into account.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: Changes are made for the purpose of continuing to develop excellent teaching and learning while integrating new teaching and research methods (such as Digital Humanities) and encouraging international collaboration in teaching and research.</p>
<p>5. Ensure that the 4.5 additional unofficial positions that scaffold the "steady state" hires are supplementary to – rather than counted towards – the steady state headcount for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> The number of these additional positions is now 4 (following Orly Shenker's move to half an academic position this year). We regard this recommendation as essential to the department's survival and hope it will be taken with utmost seriousness by the administration in the upcoming years.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: The "steady state" of the dept. of philosophy, as well as other departments in the faculty, is to be completed as part of the faculty's long-term development strategy. This, is of course, on the condition that the candidates must be excellent. This, however, depends on the allocation of faculty positions by the university's management. We should also note that early retirements/leaving to other universities/deaths of active faculty members make it difficult to complete the Such losses are not "steady-state" automatically compensated by the university.</p>



<p>6. Continue to conduct all faculty searches using international best practices.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> As noted in our reply to recommendation 2 in this section, we received 31 applications to our latest job search, both from Israeli candidates who did their Ph.D. either in Israel or abroad, and from international scholars with no prior connection to Israel. Our selection process in this case, as it has been in recent years, is first and foremost merit-based.</p>
<p>7. Provide an assistant to help the Departmental Secretary.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We hope the administration will implement this recommendation as quickly as possible. Limor Eilon, our Departmental secretary, is clearly overworked.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> The workload of the faculty's administrative staff is determined and monitored by the university's HR division. The workload is determined by the number of students and the programs the department offers. In big departments, such as in philosophy, there is one secretary per department, while smaller departments share one secretary. The workload of the secretary of the Dept. of Philosophy could be reduced only as part of a wider administrative reform in the faculty. There are discussions about this between the administrative workers union and the university's management.</p>
<p>8. Allow faculty to discharge their mandatory teaching hours appropriately and flexibly.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> Regrettably, this recommendation has not yet been implemented by the Humanities Faculty. Specifically, many of our department members feel that their 4-point seminars should be taught consecutively over 4 academic hours in order to allow them to combine a proper teacher's introduction to the topic at hand with student presentations and further discussion. The Faculty still does not allow this. We feel this unwarranted restriction</p>



	<p>detracts from the academic quality of these seminars. Ideally, we would like to see other restrictions lifted. For example, it would be highly conducive to the department members' ability to work on their research projects if they were allowed (at least once every so often) to teach their yearly 12-hour quota in one semester.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: Viewing this possibility from a wider and comparative perspective, especially given that most students study a double major, the faculty thinks otherwise. The students, themselves, are against it.</p>
<p>4.2 Important recommendations</p> <p>1. Ensure that supervisions count towards the faculty's fulfilment of their formal teaching obligations, e.g. by recognizing a series of such supervisions as equivalent to conducting a weekly lab meeting.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but the department is working on creative solutions that are permissible within the current regulations (i.e. incorporating direct tutoring of students in MA seminars).</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: This cannot be implemented in the foreseen future. At the faculty, academic staff is expected to 1. Conduct research and apply for competitive grants, 2. Teach BA and MA courses, 3. Supervise and tutor graduate students, 4. After tenure, contribute to academic management (participate in committees, head departments and academic centers etc.). We are unable to finance external teachers to teach courses that will replace tenured academic staff, currently one obligation cannot replace another. Granting this permission to one department will also create inequality between departments (those who have bigger number of graduate students and those who do not), and between different academic staff.</p>
<p>2. Extend the completion period for the research-track MA to three years.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u></p>



	<p>We hope that under the new guidelines for MA studies – which are meant to encourage a greater percentage of students to enroll in the non-thesis track – the Faculty will look kindly on a three-year completion period for students in the thesis track.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: In some cases, we allow an extension of the completion period. However, since the state’s Planning and Budgeting Committee (of the Council for Higher Education) does not finance the 3rd year of the MA studies, an extension for all this will require a wider change of state-university financing scheme.</p>
<p>3. Clarify and formalize expectations surrounding activities such as supervising graduate students, mentoring junior faculty, and selecting TAs.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We will implement this recommendation regarding the supervision of graduate students in the course of the upcoming academic year. The selection process for TAs is conducted via a committee that evaluates applicants’ grades and asks for recommendations from former teachers. We are not sure there is a beneficial way to further formalize this process. The mentoring of junior faculty is currently based on a practice of attaching to each new faculty member a senior professor who helps guide them through the various demands of the faculty until they have received their tenure.</p>
<p>4. Find a way for PhD students to gain some teaching experience that is affordable for the Department.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We would very much like to allow our Ph.D. students to gain teaching experience at any level possible. Currently, the Faculty does not allow this due to the costs of employing Ph.D. students.</p>



	<p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: For outstanding Ph.D. students, teaching as part of the Mandel school is possible. For all others, we have started renegotiating with the Ph.D. students' union to lower the wages and the commitments for hiring Ph.D. students for teaching (at the moment, once we hire a Ph.D. student you must employ them for four years, regardless of their achievements in teaching, for an exceptionally high salary).</p>
<p>5. Encourage the development of a student cohort or community, e.g. by organizing or funding social events and providing a common space for students to meet.</p>	<p>Reply from the Department of Philosophy: We recognize the need to maintain a schedule of events that will be both social and academic in nature. We have already been doing this in the previous academic year (by means of the 'Night Owls' initiative) and plan to continue this effort. Regarding a common place for students, we currently have the Bar Hillel room, which is suitable for small gatherings. We will look into creating a larger venue tailored for philosophy students. We hope the Faculty will be willing to allocate the necessary funds for this initiative (e.g. for renovation costs).</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: For such purposes, the faculty allocates yearly funds for the faculty's 7 institutes.</p>
<p>6. Improve the gender balance among faculty.</p>	<p>Reply from the Department of Philosophy: We are fully conscious of the need to improve the gender balance. This year, we have hired a new female professor and hope to be able to continue this trend in our upcoming hires. We should also mention that most of our upcoming retirements are male members. If we are allowed to replace them as scheduled, this should give us a good opportunity to improve the gender balance in the department.</p>



<p>7. Find ways to increase the number of Arab students.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We are conscious of the dearth of Arab students in the philosophy department. Since our main contact with Arab students is after they have enrolled, our efforts in this regard are concentrated on attempting to recognize difficulties they might have in the earlier phases of their studies which might lead them to drop out. This is done through a collaboration with the Faculty unit for assisting minorities.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: Unfortunately, the new government has decided to cut off the budget for pre-enrolment courses for Arab students from East Jerusalem, and this will probably result in an even smaller number of students in the Dept. of Philosophy. This decision is currently being reviewed and is likely to be reviewed by the courts as well.</p>
<p>8. Add greater diversity into course syllabi.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We will take this recommendation to heart, both when discussing future courses with current faculty and when examining future candidates. In this regard, one of the proposed future courses of our newest department member, Noa Shein centers on women philosophers in the early modern period.</p>
<p>9. Improve the WIFI.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We give our full support for this recommendation.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: The faculty will add WIFI servers in places where needed.</p>

<p>4.3 Desirable recommendations</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u></p>
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<p>1. Investigate the possibility of introducing some new cross-disciplinary degree or programme that will be genuinely academically valuable, which makes sense given the current and projected strengths of the Department and other cognate areas.</p>	<p>We agree that this is a potentially viable venue for development. We intend to form a committee to look into these options and report back to the department and Faculty. Hopefully, our eventual choice from among the current job applicants for the epistemology/language position will give us even more to work with toward this end.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> In spite of the low number of students, we continue to fund the division in the 'history and philosophy of science', approaching mainly the sciences students, with we hope We will review ways to that it will expand. continue and expand that once the pilot period is over in 2025.</p>
<p>2. Investigate creative ways to expand coverage, including reciprocal arrangements with other Israeli institutions to allow HU students to take courses at these other institutions for credit, and perhaps vice versa.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We think this is in principle a good idea, and will broach the subject with our sister departments in Israel.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> We agree. It is possible but still bureaucratically complicated and should be made easier. We will raise this concern in the next monthly meeting of the Deans of the Faculty of Humanities in Israel.</p>
<p>3. Try to find some creative and fiscally responsible way of increasing the number of scholarships for MA students, perhaps through a donor.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> While donors are very hard to come by in Israel, we have discovered that we currently have sufficient funds to offer at least one MA scholarship a year through the Bergman Institute. In addition, David Enoch's recently awarded MAPATS grant can also be used to fund MA students. We will try to continue securing such lucrative grants in the future in order to provide further support for our MA students.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> The faculty, through the Mandel School, offers a number of excellent scholarships for MA students. These, however, are open and competitive to all fields. We are constantly looking for ways to expand the</p>



	<p>number of scholarships given to MA students in the faculty through applying to funding institutions in Israel and abroad and to potential donors and we will continue to do so.</p>
<p>4. Do more to prepare students for the (non-academic) job market by establishing mechanisms at the University- or Faculty-level to offer information and assistance to students regarding, e.g. relevant job opportunities and how to compose CVs and cover letters that emphasize the work-relevant skills such as close reading, analytical thought, effective communication that they have acquired through their academic training.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We think this is a very good idea and hope the Faculty will implement it.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: Next year, the Faculty will offer 6 courses which will include a dominant internship component, in companies, organizations, and governmental offices. In addition, last year we established a students' "entrepreneurial club" in the Faculty and offered two courses on "entrepreneurship in the humanities", which involve meeting people from the private and governmental sectors. These courses and initiatives are of course open for philosophy students.</p>
<p>5. Secure contact information for the Department's alumni and invite them to participate in the University in an ongoing way through, e.g. public seminars and social gatherings.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> There is currently an initiative of this sort at the Faculty level that encourages various departments to keep track of the career paths of their alumni. We will be happy to begin to consider on a regular basis which events might be suitable for inviting alumni.</p> <p>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities: The Faculty has appointed a professor in charge of alumni relations and he has been working on this with the different departments in the Faculty and with the university's alumni office.</p>



<p>6. Increase the steady-state FTE allocation of the Department to 16 to align with the Department's projected FTE.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We agree with this recommendation wholeheartedly and hope to see it implemented.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> A decreasing number of students in the humanities (in 1985, 27 percent of Israeli students studied in the faculty of humanities, these days it is less than 7 percent), and university budget cutbacks for the next two years, make it difficult to convince the university authorities to allocate more positions for the department. This will probably not happen in the foreseeable future.</p>
<p>7. Introduce Faculty-specific onboarding.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We would be very happy to see this recommendation implemented by the Faculty of the Humanities.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> We have set a clear onboarding process both at the university and the Faculty levels. Difficulties remain with hiring of non-Israelis especially in terms of visa and accommodation but we are working on that with the university's newly established "welcome center".</p>
<p>8. Coordinate with other Departments in Israel to share the cost of international visitors.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We think this is a good idea, and will approach other departments in Israel to see if they are willing to work together in this regard.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> The Faculty supports that.</p>
<p>9. Install air-conditioning in all offices.</p>	<p><u>Reply from the Department of Philosophy:</u> We hope this recommendation will be implemented as soon as possible.</p> <p><u>Reply from the Faculty of Humanities:</u> As part of the faculty infrastructure-investment plan, this year we will start installing air-conditioning in section 4 of the</p>

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האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
الجامعة العبرية في اورشليم القدس



	Faculty, and a year later in section 5 (where most of the offices of the dept. of philosophy's professors are located).
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