

**BGU response to  
Department of Politics and Government  
Evaluation Report  
October 2011**

As the youngest and smallest department in Israel, the in-depth evaluation is of great assistance to us and will ensure the department consolidates into a strong department. All comments and recommendations raised in the evaluation report will be considered and addressed in-depth.

The Department was founded a priori to reflect the changing discourse of the social sciences and to implement a multidisciplinary approach. It was not founded to be a traditional political science department, nor to directly compete with the other four (now five) Departments of Political Science which retain a more rigid and traditional style in their teaching structure. It was for this reason that the Department was named the Department of Politics and Government, rather than the Department of Political Science, it was for this reason that the Council of Higher Education recommended its establishment, and it was for this reason that much of the hiring was outside the core areas of traditional Political Science. This is the *raison d'être* of the Department and it partially explains the lack of core area teaching within traditional political science. The Department understands this need and will prepare a thorough plan to ensure the core is enhanced as recommended by the committee. Some changes in curriculum have already been addressed and we will continue to enhance this point and present a full plan at the end of the academic year. The MA curricula will be revised according to the specific recommendations raised.

The need for 3 to 4 additional tenure track positions within the next 4 to 5 years will be discussed as part of the preparation of the Five-Year Strategic Plan for the Faculty and University, which is presently being prepared and will be drawn up in 2012. Once new recruitments will be approved they will focus on the core areas of the discipline, such as international relations, comparative politics, political thought, quantitative methods. The aim will be to recruit at least one faculty within the diverse areas of political science (comparative politics, political theory, methodology, international relations, and so on) who displays a strong European focus. Along with its cross-disciplinary focus, this is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of this Department when compared with other departments of political science in Israel which we will try to strengthen. New recruitments will be approved only based on scholarly achievements and excellence to ensure the department research record.

The idea of joint teaching between the Department of Politics and Government and the Department of Public Policy (located within the Faculty of Business and Management) is interesting and will be discussed in detail along the upcoming academic year. Additionally, we will continue strengthening the cooperation with three other departments – Sociology and Anthropology, Communications, and Middle Eastern Studies, again as an indication of the cross-disciplinary focus within this Faculty.

We are aware of the limited library facilities we provide. This has been placed on top priority of the university and we are seeking funds to establish a new library building with a substantial budget for purchasing books. The university aims to improve the library facilities which are critical for the quality of research and teaching.

## Specific recommendations/comments

### Study program

The **new** curriculum has seven mandatory core disciplinary political science courses in line with the committee's recommendation (Introduction to Politics and Government, Political Theory 1 and 2, IR, Introduction to the Israeli Political System, Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics, Approaches and Methodologies, and Comparative Politics), and one or two obligatory seminars. The number of core mandatory courses is clearly higher than the requirements of parallel departments in leading universities such as Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley and Cornell, which require up to four core mandatory courses (the program at Harvard even emphasizes the importance of flexibility in building a curriculum and the fact that students have the freedom to "tailor the Government Department to [their] needs").

A thorough revision that raises the number of courses devoted to methodology - both quantitative and qualitative for both the BA and MA curricula will be presented by March 2012. A structured program will be presented. The balance of views in the curriculum will be ensured in the revised plan. The MA program will be investigated in-depth in-line of the committee's recommendations.

Three internship courses are offered this year. Also in line with the committee's recommendations, for the coming year we have extended internships to include not only NGOs, but also local government offices.

All other comments will be discussed and a thorough plan presented by the end of the Academic Year including cooperation with other departments as proposed and discussed in above.

We would like to note the high registration of students to this Department, with high scores in matriculation and psychometric exams. We assume that this is an outcome of the unique approach the department has taken and hopefully once the recommendations will be fulfilled we will further improve our student composition which will reflect also on the research outcome.

### Research

As the committee noted, we must improve our research record, and there are several facts indicating that we are doing so. In the last two years, the Department has raised US\$ 1,250,000 in grants, one of our faculty members has become the first person from BGU to receive the EU's prestigious Marie Curie Fellowship, and three new post-doctoral researchers will join the Department this coming year. While the number and quality of our publications can and should be improved (and as suggested by the committee, we must think of incentives that will encourage this), the figures given by the committee undervalue the Department's achievements. We assume this is because the committee members failed to take into account the interdisciplinary nature of the Department, which leads faculty members to publish in leading journals that are ranked highly in other disciplines (e.g., sociology, human geography) and to publish more books than is common in other political science departments. Since only journals in the subfield of political science were probably considered, the committee's figure of articles published in journals covered by Thomson ISI underestimates the real numbers by at least 50%. However, a thorough analysis will be conducted by the department aiming to improve the publication outcome in high quality journals. The committee's claim that "*none of the books...were published by leading university presses*": In the last three years, Department members published two books in university presses ranked among the top ten in political science (University of California ranked #7, Cornell University Press ranked # 8, and three other books were published by presses that ranked among the top 20 (Routledge and Columbia University Press). We will aim to improve this record.

A thorough plan to significantly improve the research record of the department will be presented by end of the Academic year 2012.