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## **Comments on the Action Plan by the Department of Politics and Government of Ben Gurion University in Response to the Recommendation of the CHE Evaluation Committee**

We sincerely appreciate the action plan submitted by the Rector and President on behalf of Ben Gurion University's Department of Politics and Government. If this action plan is implemented, the Department of Politics and Government will have followed the main recommendations of the CHE Evaluation Committee of September 2011. This would constitute a major step in correcting the key issue that we emphasized in our report, namely that, based on the information the committee had been given in the Department's Self-Evaluation Report and through presentations at its site visit, "the Department is too weak in its core discipline of political science in terms of number of faculty, curriculum, and research. The committee believes that this situation needs to be changed immediately and that the Department should institute major changes toward strengthening its disciplinary and methodological core through both hiring more faculty and altering its study programs."

In the following, we comment on the various individual steps:

### FACULTY

1. We thoroughly welcome Ben Gurion University's commitment to hire four new faculty in the core areas of Political Science. This was the CHE Evaluation Committee's most important recommendation and the university leadership has made the respective decisions. We would like to see, however, a more detailed description from the Department of Politics and Government of the specific fields covered by the new faculty. The Department's response of October 2011 mentions that the plan for new recruitments "will focus on the core areas of the discipline, such as international relations, comparative politics, political thought, quantitative methods." What fields will now be represented by the actual faculty being recruited?

### CURRICULUM

2. We also appreciate the changes in the undergraduate core curriculum. It seems that all subfields of political science are now taught as core classes in the BA program. We still see some weaknesses in the methodology training, though, since quantitative and qualitative methods only appear to be taught as electives. In this context, we would like to see the syllabus of the "introduction to research methodologies" (as well as the syllabi of the other introductory courses).
3. The Department is also implementing our recommendation concerning internships as a required part of the curriculum. We also appreciate the syllabi of the internship courses, but recommend that they could be a bit more oriented toward the practical and political issues involved in those internships. This is particularly relevant for the syllabus on "Human Rights, Community, and Planning Policy in Israel" which appears rather abstract and meta-theoretical.
4. We have only one further comment on the MA program: Why is the methods training apparently confined to qualitative methods only, why are there no classes on statistical methods in the MA program?

### RESEARCH

5. With regard to research, the Department's accomplishment in the area of research grants is nothing less than impressive in recent years. We appreciate these efforts and only wish that this information had been made available to the CHE Evaluation Committee during the site visit. With regard to publications, our report noted that there have been few publi-

cations in leading political science journals. On this point, we would request an updated list of publications (submitted and accepted).

#### GENERAL

6. We also take note of the fact that the Department is implementing our recommendation to increase cooperation with the Department of Public Policy.
7. With regard to political views and balance, we appreciate that the Dean has sent a letter to the faculty. However, we would like to ask the Department what efforts it is making to ensure that the curriculum, particularly the syllabi of the introductory courses, expresses a broad view of the field of political science, and how it plans to expose students to a variety of different perspectives.