

Lack of jobs leaves Israeli academics 'stranded' overseas

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Thousands of Israeli academics living overseas are actively seeking jobs in Israel that would allow them to return home, but for most, the chances are slim.

The Contact Center for Israeli Researchers, which is operated by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, will hold its sixth annual conference on Thursday, and conference organizers said an all-time high of 3,027 academics have registered for the job fair that is part of the conference. Of these, 568 have already returned to Israel from abroad but are still looking for work. The rest are currently working abroad but are hoping to find a position in Israel.

Of the registrants, 2,198 already have doctorates and

658 are Ph.D. candidates. More than half of the total — 1,743 — work in the United States. Of the remainder, 228 are in England, 94 in Germany, 52 in Australia, 39 in France and 11 in Canada.

The 3,000-plus people who have signed up are divided more or less evenly among medicine and life sciences; engineering and exact sciences; and the humanities and social sciences.

But demand for academic jobs in Israel is many times greater than the supply. People from the contact center said that since it was established, in 2007, it has helped about 500 returning academics to find positions in higher education. Yet they are only a fraction of the thousands who would like to return to Israel but cannot find work that is appropriate to their training and experience.

Most of the 500 people who were helped by the center had been working in Canada, the United States or Europe prior to their return. The vast majority of them — 430 — were hired for faculty positions, while the remainder received postdoctoral positions. Some only found part-time or temporary positions, and in some cases the job was their second or even third

postdoctoral position.

Figures published by the Contact Center yesterday show that the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has hired the largest number of returning academics — 90, including 16 over the past year. Next in line was Tel Aviv University, which has hired 73 (including 14 this year), followed by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (63), Haifa's Technion — Is-

rael Institute of Technology (53), the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot and Bar-Ilan University (44 each), the University of Haifa (35), Ariel University (18) and the Open University of Israel (9).

The more time an Israeli academic researcher remains abroad, the contact center noted, the more difficult it often is to return to Israel.