



**The Committee for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Administration  
Study Programs**

**Tel Aviv University Evaluation Report**

**July 2011**

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## Chapter 1 - Background

At its meeting on October 07, 2008 the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the fields of public policy and administration during the academic year 2009-2010.

Following the decision of the CHE, the Minister of Education, who serves ex officio as a Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- **Prof. Steve Kelman- John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, USA – Committee Chair**
- **Prof. Eugene Bardach- Richard and Rhoda Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkley, USA<sup>1</sup>**
- **Prof. Mark Kleiman- School of Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, USA**
- **Prof. David Nachmias- Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel<sup>2</sup>**
- **Prof. Michael Rothschild- Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, USA**

*Ms. Marissa Gross* - Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the Council for Higher Education.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:<sup>3</sup>

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in public policy and administration, and to conduct on-site visits at those institutions.
2. Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the evaluated academic units and study programs, including the Committee's findings and recommendations.
3. Submit to the CHE a general report regarding the examined field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of October 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Bardach did not participate in the second round of visits for personal reasons.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Nachmias did not participate in the site visit at Tel Aviv University.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## Chapter 2 - Committee Procedures

The Committee members received the self-evaluation reports in October, 2010, and discussed them via email.

The Committee held its first meeting on December 14, 2010, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Public Policy and Administration study programs.

In December 2010, the Committee held its first cycle of evaluation, and visited the Hebrew University, Tel-Aviv University and Sapir Academic College. In March 2011 the Committee conducted its second evaluation cycle, and visited the University of Haifa and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, students and alumni.

This report deals with the **Department of Public Policy at Tel Aviv University**.

The Committee's visit at Tel Aviv University took place on December 21-22, 2010. The schedule of the visit, including the list of participants from the institution, is attached as **Appendix 2**.

## **Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Department of Public Policy at Tel Aviv**

### **University**

*\* This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institution, and does not take account of any subsequent changes. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Committee based on the documentation provided by the institution, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation as well as other information available to the Committee.*

### **Mission Statement**

The mission statement of the Tel Aviv program is relatively strongly oriented towards research and relatively less oriented towards preparing students for careers in public service. The self-evaluation report describes a double mission, “to be a focus of research and teaching in the domain of public policy,” and continues to discuss the importance of “excellence in advancing research in public policy.” The self-evaluation report does a good job explaining the research productivity and quality (in terms of journal impact factors) of its faculty, and pays a good deal of attention to doing this.

In the mission statement, there is no discussion of a mission to prepare students for leadership positions in public service. According to the alumni survey provided by the program, only about half of graduates go into jobs in government or the third sector, the other half into the private sector. While some of this is due to exogenous factors such as government hiring and the location of the program in Tel Aviv rather than Jerusalem (the seat of government) – and while we certainly would not argue that no graduates of a public policy program should take jobs in the private sector – nonetheless these percentages are somewhat problematic for a program in public policy, especially given the strong needs for public-sector improvement in Israel.

The Tel Aviv program is the most economics-oriented of the Israeli public policy programs, dominated by economists rather than political scientists. As a result, students learn frankly prescriptive and evaluative modes of analysis; this strikes the committee as a valuable addition to the purely descriptive stance of the “policy studies” tradition. The students do not seem as invested the mission in the Tel Aviv program as they could be; most were not undergraduate economics majors, and the committee received the impression that many do not have significant math skills, and our impression is that some

students are not happy about the program's economics orientation. They are more likely than students we talked with in other programs to mention "economic reasoning" and/or "cost-benefit analysis" as one of the primary skills they learned in the program. At the same time, our impression, based on conversations with some of them, is that many have a difficult time applying microeconomic reasoning to a concrete policy issue (we spoke with them about global warming and policies regarding solar energy).

### **Study Program/Curriculum**

This program, more than any of the others we examined, had a "policy analysis" (microeconomics and quantitative reasoning) focus. This is a reasonable strategic choice. However, a full-blown public policy program of the sort discussed in the general report should include at least some coverage of management and politics material: again, from a prescriptive and evaluative standpoint, rather than a merely descriptive one.

TAU has recently established an executive education program. We did not get the impression that faculty had thought very strategically about opportunities for synergies (course content, course sharing, curricular cross-fertilization) between executive education and the masters program, including ways executive education could be used to improve the professional focus of the masters program.

### **Students**

We were encouraged to find that the students at Tel Aviv spontaneously refer to concepts such as benefit-cost analysis when asked to describe their training. We were not as impressed with their ability to apply that concept, or other ideas from the economist's toolkit, to the specific policy issues we raised with them. In summary, it appears that the Tel Aviv program is stimulating more intellectual ambition than it is able to satisfy. We did not emerge from our meetings with confidence that the students can deliver on the goal enunciated by some faculty members: to be able to go "toe-to-toe" with colleagues trained as economists in discussing quantitative problems. Given the significant limits on available student time for class preparation, the curriculum may be trying to impart too much material.

## **Faculty**

It is an advantage to the program that the tenure/tenure-track faculty is mostly fulltime in the department, rather than mostly having joint appointments; a fulltime faculty generally finds it easier to develop a distinctive culture and ethos. This advantage is reflected in cordial relationships among faculty members at Tel Aviv and their practice of discussing curricular issues such as coordination among courses. The faculty also seems to be doing something to adapt disciplinary material to the needs of public policy teaching; the economics and statistics courses give significant number of public policy examples, and use class exercises as well as lectures. We are impressed that a faculty dominated by economists seems to be happy to have a program chair from another discipline, and that the economists agree that, for the good of the program, the next faculty hire needs to be someone from public management rather than economics.

The program has been strongly affected by the resource cutbacks at the university in recent years, as three faculty took early retirement. As it happened, two of the three were faculty who worked more on political and management issues, leaving this part of the program largely devoid of fulltime staff.

## **Research**

The Self-Evaluation Report of Tel Aviv University claims that the Public Policy Department has the most “total weighted citations” of work by its faculty than all other Departments of Public Policy in Israel. Other remarks in the Report suggest that they take great pride in what they assume to be their strong showing in the realm of research.

The Self-Evaluation also emphasizes a number of other signs of how seriously they take research. It provides a detailed listing of journals and measures of each journal’s “impact”, an impressive listing of professional meetings attended and the names of presented papers, and a review of all the grants, honors, and fellowships received by faculty members. They also supply a list of the names of all the conferences and workshops the department has hosted. Each of these listings shows the department in a relatively good light.

Leaving aside the truth or falsity of the precise numerical claims about “total weighted citations,” there is no doubt that the faculty has been decently productive --

although not outstanding by international standards -- both in terms of quantity of publications, the quality of placements, and also in terms of impact (as measured by at least one index (Google Scholar). This is in part due to the fact that the staff is somewhat weighted towards economists, whose discipline is relatively international and in which specialized journals abound.

Some members of the faculty have also been relatively active and visible in getting involved in public policy discussions in Israel more broadly, both at the level of public advocacy and consulting to governmental institutions. Some have written policy papers making policy recommendations: precisely the sort of activity, unrewarded in most disciplinary departments, for which policy programs should provide a home. Overall, it is our impression that the faculty contributions overall to the world of public-policy-related scholarship is substantial. We would also note that the record of research activity also looks quite good if one includes the adjunct faculty and the numerous emeriti from the 2004-2009 period.

### **Tel Aviv Recommendations**

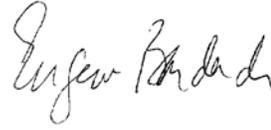
All of the recommendations in our General Report apply to Tel Aviv University. In addition, we make the following specific recommendations:

1. There should be at least some material on management and/or politics in the curriculum. This suggests that the highest recruitment priority should be for a full-time faculty member with a background in management/organizational behavior or politics.
2. Look for opportunities to share courses between executive education and the masters programs, and ways there can be curricular or other cross-fertilization between executive and masters education, particularly in terms of giving the masters program a greater professional content.

**Signed By:**



Prof. Steve Kelman, Chair



Prof. Eugene Bardach



Prof. Mark Kleiman



Prof. Michael Rothschild

## Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



שר החינוך  
**Minister of Education**  
وزير التربية والتعليم

October 12, 2010

Prof. Steve Kelman  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University  
USA

Dear Professor Kelman,

The State of Israel undertook an ambitious project when the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) established a quality assessment and assurance system for Israeli higher education. Its stated goals are: 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. Involvement of world-renowned academicians in this process is essential.

This most important initiative reaches out to scientists in the international arena in a national effort to meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher educational system today. The formulation of international evaluation committees represents an opportunity to express our common sense of concern and to assess the current and future status of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. It also establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process among scientists around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial endeavor.

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 Public Policy and Administration.

The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Steve Kelman (Chair), Prof. Eugene Bardach, Prof. Mark Kleiman, Prof. David Nachmias, Prof. Michael Rothschild.

Ms. Marissa Gross will coordinate the Committee's activities.

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In your capacity as the chair of the Evaluation Committee, you will be requested to function in accordance with the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,



Gideon Sa'ar  
Minister of Education,  
Chairperson, The Council for Higher Education

*Enclosures:* Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Ms. Riki Mendelzvaig, Secretary of the Council for Higher Education  
Ms. Michal Neumann, Head of the Quality Assessment Division  
Ms. Marissa Gross, Committee Coordinator

**Schedule of site visit**  
**Department of Public Policy , Tel Aviv University**

**Tuesday, December 21, 2010**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Participants</b>
09:30-10:15	Opening session with the academic heads of Tel-Aviv University and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Aron Shai, Rector Prof. Dina K . Prialnik, Vice Rector Prof. David Horn, Head of Quality Assessment
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences	Prof. Noah Lewin-Epstein, Dean (Social Sciences Building, Room 305)
11:00-11:30	***Suggested : <b>First Observation</b> in class : (regular class hours: 09:15 - 11:45)	Class: <i>Introduction to Public Policy</i> , Dr. Amos Zehavi (Social Sciences Building, Room 004)
11:30- 12:15	Meeting with the Chair of the Department of Public Policy	Prof. Gila Menahem (Social Sciences Building, Room 412)
12:15-12:45	<b>Second Observation</b> (regular class hours: 12:15-14:45)	Two classes: 1. <i>Principles of Economics</i> , Prof. Dan Ben-David (Room 110) 2. <i>Environmental Policy</i> , Dr. Dorit Kerret (Room 420)
12:45-13:30	Meeting with Master's Degree students**	
13:30-14:15	Lunch with Department faculty members	Prof. Gila Menahem, Prof. Eran Yashiv, Prof. Zeev Segal, Prof. Dan Ben-David, Dr. Amos Zehavi (Social Sciences Building, Room 062, Public Policy Wing)
14:15-15:00	Closed-door working meeting of the committee	(Social Sciences Building, Room 412)

**Wednesday, December 22, 2010**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Participants</b>
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9:00-10:00	Meeting with faculty members and representatives of the relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)*	<i>Due to the small number of faculty ( 7 including the Chair) we suggest all faculty members attend the meeting. Names of representatives of all committees are listed below. Appointment Committee: Prof. Neil Gandal Teaching Committee: Prof. Eran Yashiv Evaluation Report Committee: Prof. Dan Ben-David and Prof. Gila Menahem PhD Committee: Prof. Gila Menahem Admissions Committee : Prof. Gila Menahem and Prof. Zeev Segal Faculty: Dr. Dorit Kerret and Dr. Amos Zehavi</i>
10:00-10:45	Meeting with adjunct lecturers*	Dr. Ravit Hananel; Dr. Shlomit Wagman; Dr. Dani Korn; Dr. Haim Weizmann; Dr. Hedva Vinarski Dr. Gal Alon; Dr. Yoram Ida. Dr. Orit Dayagi - Epstein.
10:45-11:30	Campus tour (classes, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.)	
11:30-12:15	Meeting with doctorate students**	
12:15-13:00	Meeting with Alumni**	
13:00-14:00	Lunch and Closed-door working meeting of the committee	Faculty Club : Green House
14:00-14:45	Summation meeting with the academic heads of Tel-Aviv University, the Department Chair and the senior faculty member appointed to deal with quality assessment	Prof. Aron Shai, Rector Prof. Dina K .Prialnik, Vice Rector Prof. David Horn, Head of Quality Assessment Prof. Noah Lewin-Epstein, Dean Prof. Gila Menahem, Chair,

		Department of Public Policy
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**Notes:**

\* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.

\*\* The visit will be conducted in English, with the exception of students who may speak in Hebrew and anyone else who feels unable to converse in English.

\*\*\* Explanations to changes made in the template: changes were introduced in order to adapt to the schedule of classes. It is suggested to split the observation in classes into two sessions: one before meeting with the Department Chair and one afterwards. This will allow for a wider representation of classes (required courses and electives).