



**General Observations  
About Higher Education  
in Communication Studies in Israel**

**Submitted by  
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**External Review Committee**

**To**

**The Council on Higher Education**

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## **I. General Background and Executive Summary**

### **I.1 General Background**

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate the study programs in the field of communication in Israel in the academic year 2008-2009. Following the decision by the CHE, the Minister of Education appointed the following members of the evaluation committee:

- Professor Joseph Cappella, University of Pennsylvania (Chair)
- Professor Emerita Hanna Adoni, Hebrew University (Sapir College and Netanya College)
- Professor Wolfgang Donsbach, University of Dresden
- Professor Mordechai Kremnitzer, Hebrew University
- Professor Karen Ross, University of Liverpool (Tel Aviv University, Haifa University, and Ben-Gurion University)
- Professor Esther Thorson, University of Missouri (College of Management, Tel Aviv University, Haifa University, and Ben-Gurion University)

Ms. Michal Kabatznik coordinated the committee

The committee's work in the first phase suffered from two cancellations by previous members of the committee, one coming in shortly before the committee's work began. This, as well as time constraints on the side of the two Israeli members, led to the fact that at least in the beginning the committee lacked the breadth of perspectives and the distribution of labor that is required for such an important task.

The committee's work also was affected by the military situation in Israel and the Gaza strip that escalated shortly before the first field trip. This had basically three consequences: it was the reason for one of the above mentioned cancellations; it made it impossible for the committee to conduct its site visit to Sapir College (because the college had to be closed); and it made it difficult for CHE to find additional committee members from abroad who would replace colleagues who had to withdraw from their involvement.

## II. Committee Procedures

In the fall of 2008 the committee was invited to evaluate the undergraduate programs of seven departments of communication at colleges and universities in Israel. As one department (Hebrew University) had just undergone an evaluation by its own university this was dropped from the list. The remaining units were:

- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- The University of Haifa
- Tel Aviv University
- The College of Management Academic Studies
- Netanya Academic College
- Sapir Academic College

The committee's work span the time between December 2008 (preparatory work) and June 2009 (completion of the final reports). Visits to Israel by the committee members from abroad took place January 3 to 9, March 8 to 13 and May 10 to 14. The site visit to the campus of Sapir College had to be cancelled due to security issues. Instead, faculty, students, and administrators came to meet the committee in Tel Aviv on January 5, 2009. A site visit was able to be completed in May. According to the arrangements between CHE and the School of Communication the committee met in consecutive meetings with

- The head of school
- The academic heads of the program's tracks
- Members of relevant committees
- Senior faculty members
- Adjunct lecturers
- Students
- Alumni
- Chair of the college's academic council and head of academic affairs

(See complete list in appendix)

## **General Observations About Higher Education in Communication Studies in Israel**

Over the period from January through May of 2009, the external review committee had the opportunity to visit six of seven of the approved programs of study in communication in Israel. Hebrew University had undergone a recent visit by a team of external reviewers and so was not included. Our experiences plus the self study materials prepared by the departments and schools produced some general impressions that share here. As with all educational systems, there are positives and negatives to be noted. The negatives pose important challenges to higher education in communication with the concomitant opportunity to address those challenges. We take the opportunity to pose more challenges than strengths so that a dialogue can begin over how to meet those challenges.

Overall, the committee has been very impressed by the quality of teaching and the level of research. For a small country like Israel it is highly unusual in that so many institutions of higher education offer programs in the increasingly important field of communication at a high level. It is even more impressive that many scholars of all generations have reached an international visibility in the field through important work published in the leading journals and presented at international conferences.

### **Economics of Teaching Communication in Colleges and Universities**

The committee observed that a great deal of the undergraduate teaching load was borne by adjuncts, some with PhDs and many without. This was true both of courses directed toward theory and toward more applied, practical courses. The exact numbers would be too difficult for us to construct from the limited data at our disposal and because of the difficulty in comparing job classifications across institutions. But a very large proportion of the hours of training obtained by undergraduate students in communication in Israel is provided by non-permanent faculty, many without doctoral training or with only a little training in master's programs.

Our conversations with many of the adjuncts showed them to be committed to their work and professionals who viewed their teaching as much more than simply a means to a paycheck. Their students often testified to their teacher's commitment to their work and to the students as individuals. We heard many times comments from the adjuncts that the money received in salary alone was not the reason for their commitment.

Nevertheless, there are financial and institutional structures in place in the teaching of communication that limit the quality of training students receive.

We observed that the work load of individual adjuncts could sometimes be very high involving 150% or higher appointments within one college or university. These high levels were sometimes compounded by multiple appointments at more than one institution. The number of students for whom an individual adjunct is responsible across

courses, too could be very high, sometimes in the hundreds. This limits the time and attention that teachers can allocate to individual courses and students.

The reason for this state of affairs -- we are told by those operating within it and administering it -- is cost. Pay for adjuncts is low. Thus there are incentives for colleges and universities to meet demand with lower cost adjuncts. Adjuncts, for their part, must take higher teaching loads -- and sometimes multiple positions -- in order to make enough to support themselves and their families. Certainly other educational systems around the world are employing more adjunct teachers in order to keep costs low, so the problem is not unique to communication study in Israel (in fact a recent report from UNESCO suggested that in the last nine years, enrollment in higher education was up 53% world-wide). However, we believe that a careful, systematic assessment of the number of student hours taught by adjunct faculty would show a very large proportion of student contact hours taught by adjuncts -- professional, PhD, non-PhD and non-professional staff.

The consequences of this adjunct-oriented system are multiple and include:

(1) Who is teaching the students? The magnitude of the problem seems significant as we have read through the reports from colleges and universities. But getting clear data on how many students hours are being taught by various categories of non-permanent faculty is difficult. One of the first requirements in addressing this problem is to acquire systematic data on the number of undergraduate student hours that is being taught by adjuncts versus more permanent faculty. In a later section we describe the kind of data that is needed. It will be necessary to separate student hours taught by professionals, academics without a PhD, and others. It may be necessary to cap the number of student hours taught by adjuncts in a given department and to cap the number of student hours taught by any adjunct in a given semester.

Here we present a table showing the ratios of students to permanent, senior faculty and the ratios of adjuncts to senior faculty at all the institutions we visited. These data were pulled together by staff from CHE from data provided in the self-studies. We present these data to illustrate the need for additional senior faculty not to suggest that teaching by adjuncts themselves is inherently problematic. The data also refer to the number of senior faculty with at least a one-half time position in the department and not FTEs. Also junior faculty are not included, only senior faculty. At the College of Management there are 17 permanent faculty 9 of whom are junior. As can be seen, all departments except Ben Gurion (which did not have an undergraduate program at the time of our evaluation) have many students per senior faculty and two have a very large number of adjuncts per senior faculty member. These data suggest the need to increase senior faculty both to increase contact with undergraduate students and to oversee the work of what will continue to be a significant adjunct teaching group.

	Tel Aviv University (BA + PhD)	Haifa University (BA + PhD)	Ben Gurion University (MA only)	Netanya Academic College	Sapir College	College of Management
# senior faculty*	7	12	5	11	12	<b>8</b>
# Adjuncts**	24	24	17	18	135	132
#Students	454	390	18	315	873	1159
Ratio: senior faculty to students	~1:65	~1:32.5	~1:3.6	~1:29	~1:73	~1:145
Ratio: adjuncts to senior faculty	~1:3.4	~1.2	~1:3.4	~1:1.6	~1:11	~1:17

(2). Effects on degree completion by MA and PhD candidates. Many adjunct teaching positions go to second and third year MA students who might not only be commuting to their positions, but also trying to complete their theses. These demands during third year or even second year reduce the likelihood of completions or at least lengthen them. Poor pay requiring multiple positions and heavy overloads are not conducive to moving graduate students through their degrees. This situation can also interfere or lengthen seriously the completion of the PhD.

(3) Effects on quality of teaching. Despite our impression that adjuncts are committed to their students and to their teaching, heavy teaching loads -- defined as the number of classes and the number of students -- cannot help but undermine the teacher's ability to keep up to date, provide high quality feedback to students on their assignments, and can even lead faculty to limit assignments to those which can be graded easily within the time constraints.

(4) Effects on learning: Learning cannot help but be affected when teachers have heavy responsibilities, many courses, and are less well trained or have less experience than is desirable. Personal commitment, intelligence and energy cannot completely balance the structural and economic factors that created such an adjunct-heavy undergraduate experience.

Some recommendations:

Student demand for training in communication is a reflection of the importance of the institutions of communication that have come to dominate political and social life. This demand is a significant challenge to Israel's system of higher education but it is also an opportunity to influence the institutional structure and direction of the communication system. Simple solutions such as higher pay or capping the number of majors or requiring double majors in communication and in a second field (to reduce pressure on

communication course demand) will not suffice to put into place the highest quality teachers who can provide balanced training in theory and practice of communication.

Longer-term solutions will require training the best graduates of Israeli universities both in Israel and abroad and giving them the resources to complete their training efficiently and at the highest levels of scholarship. Adjuncts with professional experience will certainly continue to be important components of training in communication. These professionals must have significant credentials in their fields, commitment to their institutions, and careful, continuing evaluation so that practical training in the classroom will be directed by those with advanced experience and knowledge. This recommendation assumes that more senior, permanent faculty are added both in the short term and over the longer term to faculties in Israel's colleges and universities.

In the short term, careful, systematic and continuing evaluation of teaching by the adjunct faculty (as well as the more permanent faculty) including student evaluation, monitoring of syllabi, and classroom visits will help insure that teaching quality reaches the highest standards. This suggestion -- while obvious -- may be very difficult to achieve in those departments where the number of senior permanent faculty is low. Adding some senior established leadership may be a necessary step in these cases.

### **Colleges and Universities Teaching Communication**

Seven colleges and universities are approved to teach communication in Israel. Three are colleges and four are universities. We understand that some other institutions have received permission from the CHE to open new BA programs in communications and are beginning to offer courses in communication as well but we were not charged with their assessment. Clearly, there is a very strong demand for communication education among students. Institutions of higher education are vying for the tuition revenue that these students provide. As programs proliferate it will be necessary to insure that there is a balance among approaches and across geographical regions so that redundancy is minimized while coverage is maintained. This issue will become especially problematic unless it is considered early in the development of new programs.

We suggest the following three criteria in evaluating the value of new programs of study: emphasis (theory and research versus the practical arts); location (region where the institution is located); and specialization (emphasis on specific niche for communication study such as new media or interdisciplinary specializations such as law, media management, health communication, etc). A well-designed system of higher education will balance these criteria in evaluating where and when new programs of study should be put into place.

#### Emphasis

The colleges and universities obviously have different foci. Although all give lip service in some way to theory-practice balance, individual programs emphasize one more than the other. Undergraduate students' interests vary considerably with many concerned primarily with job prospects and marketability and others drawn to more scholarly

pursuits. The college and university system must be ready to meet the full range of needs that students will have, although not necessarily within every program. The full range of emphases must be available in the college and university system although not necessarily in every program.

#### Location

We heard loud and clear from students we interviewed the importance of the physical location of their place of study. Family, job, and financial support constrained where students could pursue their undergraduate and graduate training. The impact of these social ties and regional commitments on decisions about schooling should factor into decisions about approval of programs of study in higher education in communication.

#### Specialization

Some colleges offer a broader-based program in communication and general education (Sapir model), others a specialization in certain subfields (College of Management model). The department at Ben Gurion University envisions a focus on new media, minorities, and media organizations. Haifa emphasizes theory and research. With the proliferation of programs, the development of specialized niches – whether in content or in approach (practice versus scholarship) -- can be highly desirable because resources are used for complementary rather than competing goals and student needs met that might have been previously unmet.

#### Suggested Solutions

With the rapid growth of student interest and programs of study in communication (both approved and in development), we recommend the development of a strategic plan for the study of communication in colleges and universities. This planning process would perhaps be organized by the CHE (assuming that such activity is consistent with its charter), would involve representatives from all stakeholder groups, and would address a broad array of issues. The goal of the strategic plan would be to achieve a balance among the three factors described above: emphasis, specialization and geography. Although strategic plans can stymie innovation when they do not include an ability to be responsive to changing circumstances, the absence of broader planning can also allow helter-skelter growth and competition rather than complementarity. Communication study is already undergoing rapid growth in Israel. The time for strategic planning is now.

#### **Curricula**

The committee closely examined the curricular offerings of individual departments and reported on them separately in individual reports. However, we did see three trends that were important to note and that should be addressed.

### Convergence in the new media

New media are often underrepresented in practical training as well as in frontal teaching, particularly at universities. Although none of us can know what form or structure new digital media will take, consensus suggests that convergence across digital media will be the norm in the near future. Distinctions among older forms of media – radio, television, cinema, computer, text, and even interpersonal communication – will blur as each bleeds into the other and what were firm boundaries disappear. Universities and colleges that teach communication must anticipate the social, institutional, and psychological changes that convergence will bring rather than operating within modes of communication that maintain separation across “tracks” or media. Rather than simply recapitulating the models of media that exist, a modern view of the study and practice of communication would anticipate convergence across media providing students with the perspective and skills that anticipate the future while not ignoring the current formats. This means changes in the way whole curricula are designed, altering existing course content so that every course in communication is about the future even when discussing the past, and offering niche majors that focus on new media in a cross-disciplinary context. Approaches that encourage students to specialize in one medium (e.g. radio) while providing short-term skills that may make the person attractive to some employers are failing to meet the long term needs of the students and the media institutions they serve. Such approaches should be re-thought to emphasize cross-media issues and training rather than specialization within media.

### Balance of epistemologies

Some programs (particularly at colleges) seem imbalanced towards one epistemology or approach to the study of communication to the neglect of other commonly accepted approaches. In our opinion the training of undergraduates should expose them to many ways of thinking about problems – humanistic, scientific, critical, and descriptive. Strong traditions in the study of communication have employed each of these points of view. Acquiring and evaluating knowledge can suffer when vision is clouded because one’s glasses are tinted in only one color. Some departments suggested proudly that they operated from a particular epistemological orientation and hired accordingly. This is not the same as having a special niche (e.g. new media). Instead it represents an ideological orientation to knowledge that can bias and limit students’ experience and thinking and has no place in a department’s overall philosophy of education. Departments should examine their curricular offerings to insure there is a broad range of approaches to communication study especially at the undergraduate level.

### Breadth of exposure to range of knowledge

The training of undergraduates in the colleges is focused more on the practical arts of communication than is the case in the universities. Focus on the practical arts in our view requires training not just in the practice and strategy of communicating but in the broad knowledge base that is the core content of what is communicated. For example, we believe that to be an excellent journalist requires breadth of training in the humanities, social sciences, and sometimes even in the sciences. The same is true for

those training for positions in the non-journalistic arts of communication including entertainment.

Training only in communication studies provides an insufficient basis for the kind of broad-based knowledge that is the core from which communication is made possible. The majority of the institutions that we reviewed did not provide the curricular structure to acquire such knowledge.

Departments and schools of communication should require a broad curricular base of training for their undergraduates that is taught outside the department of communication and that complements the student's specialty in communication. Communication departments should impart the skills of communication not the knowledge, experience and values that are the content of what is to be communicated. Broad training in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences from experts in those disciplines can provide such content and perspective on its quality. This is not the same as a communication department itself offering training in the humanities, social, and behavioral sciences.

#### Equipment for training

When departments seek to provide professional training in mass communication they often suffer from limited or out-of-date facilities. Our experience with the departments that we reviewed was the opposite. Facilities for the production of communication – studios, computers, sophisticated editing, etc – particularly at some of the newer colleges are very sophisticated and their use innovative in terms of training and involvement in the community. Some alumni voiced the view that the facilities at their colleges were more modern and sophisticated than those in their current jobs at radio or television studios. Although the availability of sophisticated media laboratories was not equal across the board, the overall level was impressive at the colleges in particular. It would be unwise, however, to rest on one's laurels in this fast-changing, expensive world of modern communication technology. To keep students exposed to the best equipment will require continual updating and capital infusion.

#### **The Theory-practice Debate**

All the programs that we visited were involved in some way in the theory-practice debate. The field of communication has a distinct advantage over some other domains of study in part because it is a practical art and because it is tied to very significant institutions of the mass media with substantial economic consequence. Many students thus see the study of communication as a means to enhance their marketable skills and enhance their job prospects. Even when programs are clear and explicit about their research orientation, students still expect practical training.

At every institution we visited we were confronted by spirited debate about the relative balance of theory and practice, which was more important and to whom and how the two were integrated. Both are clearly important and their integration in the educational system is crucial. After all, the college and university systems are not merely places for training in a vocation. At the same time they would be derelict if they ignored the needs

of students or social institutions for employment. For their part students varied considerably in their dispositions toward theory or practice but shared an intensity in the views they expressed.

Despite the extensive discussion to which we were exposed throughout Israel, the committee believes that the debate within communication departments and schools must mature beyond two simplistic poles. One pole holds that colleges and universities must provide skills that are directly applicable to the business world; the other pole represents the view that institutions of higher education generate knowledge – theory and research – that need not be sullied by the vocational needs of its students. It is our view that the integration of these opposing views is more complex both in theory and in the practice of teaching.

Practice is not the same as learning to carry out the simple hands-on procedures of the media industries of radio, broadcast television, or print or electronic journalism.

Theory is not divorced from application to life or to social policy and professional practice.

Practice can and should be – indeed must be -- theoretically and critically based.

Theory can and should be applied to significant social problems that have implications for policy and intervention.

The balance between theory and practice should and will differ across educational units with students choosing those that best meet their needs; but students should not leave their education in communication without theory, research or practice as core constituents of their training. Neither should students be able to escape their educations with perfunctory training in any of arenas.

The two approaches cannot be divorced in the education of students – training by sophisticated practitioners in one course and education by sophisticated scholars in a separate course. Students must be trained in both approaches and see them integrated. Students' practice cannot simply replicate the norms of industry but must challenge and extend them. Students' research and theory cannot be merely an academic exercise but must contribute to the solution of real problems that affect real lives. Positioning one's teaching to accomplish these ends is a very significant challenge but one that is required of the very best educational approaches to communication.

At a minimum, the practical arts of communication are concerned both with best practices in professional behavior and with engagement with significant social problems and their solution. Communication theory and research should be informed by these concerns and in turn inform the teaching of practical arts.

Debate about the best pedagogy must not be reduced to its simple poles but must address the full complexity of the issue in the way courses and curricula are designed and

delivered. Training students in theory and in practice in part means leading them to understand the complexity of the theory-practice debate itself by making practice critical and theory applied. A national dialogue about pedagogy in the teaching of communication – perhaps in the form of a conference – might not only stimulate this debate but inform administrators and faculty about solutions being employed by others.

## **Students**

It was impossible for the committee to assess the quality of students, either absolutely for single programs, comparatively across the programs, or even in an international perspective. There are simply no valid data for such assessments. However, the committee met at all institutions with undergraduate and graduate students to discuss their experiences with the courses, the teaching personnel, and other circumstances of their studies.

Given the different environments in terms of the nature of the institution (colleges vs. universities), in terms of the foci of these programs (practical vs. theoretical), and in terms of educational and cultural background of the students it comes as no surprise that there is a remarkable range of the students' capabilities. But these differences exist in every country and particularly in the communication programs where the field is much less defined and standardized than in other disciplines. Overall we found the students in these programs as motivated, well-read, and knowledgeable in the field as in upper-half programs in countries like the US, Netherlands, or Germany.

We can make such assessments more specifically for the level of graduate students with whom we discussed their doctoral theses or with whom we talked in their capacity as research assistants. The remarks we have made below about the quality of communication research is a direct consequence of the quality of the students in the graduate programs. The output and the quality of communication research in Israel is by international standards impressive, given the small size of the country and the relatively small number of institutions of higher education. Although some of the leading figures in the field have been trained abroad, particularly in the United States of America, the individual motivations and talents of the students in Israel and the quality of the programs to which they have been exposed certainly has contributed significantly to this success.

## **Research**

The committee gave a fair amount of attention to the research quality and productivity of individual departments and schools in their separate reports. Overall we were quite impressed with the concern with research at all levels and impressed with the significant international reputations of some faculty – many known well to the review committee. Even the colleges were aware of the need for faculty to be supported in their research endeavors and some provided modest support to do so.

Here we offer only two broader observations generally applicable across institutions.

### Research grants

The committee was pleasantly surprised by the success of several departments in competing for larger and smaller research grants both within Israel and in broader (e.g., EU) competitions. Such external recognition is a good sign of the quality of communication research within Israel and bodes well for increasing interdisciplinary research. At the same time, we were told that institutional policies were such that grant money could not be used to reduce course loads but could only be used to increase the recipient's current salary. Given the relatively heavy teaching loads of faculty even at research-oriented universities, the inability to reduce these loads makes it unlikely that faculty could take on more substantial grants or multiple grants. As the reputation of communication researchers grows and opportunities for research grants within and across borders (and disciplines) grows, policies that enhance rather than reduce grant-based research should be put into place.

### Research quality

In each of the separate reports we commented on the research activities of departments and schools. Overall, there are some very significant communication scholars in faculty positions at several places in Israel, people whose work gains attention whenever it is published. These stars need to be supported and nurtured to allow their contributions to continue and to shine brighter. At the same time, a significant portion of the work being published in some departments is narrow in its focus concerning itself with local issues exclusively. Of course, all public scholars must be concerned with issues that affect local constituencies but at the same time these local concerns must be placed, whenever possible, in a broader theoretical, historical and critical context in order to speak to the wider scholarly community. As departments and schools support and promote faculty research, it is imperative that they distinguish the quality of the work being done, including its ability to address audiences outside of Israel.

### **Systematic Data Acquisition and Reporting**

The committee received a great deal of information from each of the institutions and from CHE to carry out its evaluations. However, by the end of the process it was clear that systematic and consistent information across the various programs would have assisted the evaluation process immeasurably. We received some of the information described below from some of the institutions but we are suggesting that it be made mandatory for all groups in subsequent evaluations.

### Course evaluations

Courses are evaluated in various ways. We had access to syllabi and to course descriptions. However, student course evaluations while gathered by each institution were not made available to us until we requested them. We suggest that course evaluations be a part of every report including: (1) a 5-year summary of average course evaluations for the department and for comparable units within the university or college; (2) evaluations for subgroups of the teaching faculty including specifically (a) adjuncts with and without PhD (b) those teaching "workshops" versus those teaching theory courses; and (3) permanent faculty.

### Applications, admits, enrollees, and degrees

For both BA and MA programs of study, admissions and completions data for the previous five years should be included. This information would provide the number of applicants to the program, the number admitted, the number who enrolled and the number of completed degrees as a percentage of the entering class. Psychometric data and grade point averages of entering classes are useful as well in assessing trends of entering classes. Data on admission will reveal trends in student interest while degrees will provide some indication of the program's success.

### Alumni surveys

A different form of evaluation of a program's success is the success of its alumni. We understand that there is less of an "alumni culture" in Israel than in some other countries such as the United States. However, alumni are extremely important not only as sources of information about a program's success but as a route to channel students to employment in various institutions. Some departments did conduct surveys of alumni and were able to provide us with information about the kinds of positions that their students had obtained and the extent to which these positions were related to their degrees and their previous training. Such information should be routinized as a way to provide general feedback to the program about its strengths and weaknesses and as a way to evaluate the program's success. Both applied and theoretical programs could profit from such information.

### Overloads, multiple employment

One of the most significant concerns that the committee has about higher education in communication is the heavy teaching loads of adjuncts within and across institutions. This load includes (a) the number of courses being taught, (b) the total number of students being taught by a person, and (c) the number of different institutions employing the person at the same time. Each of these factors adds to a person's load with a concomitant decline in their ability to meet the needs of their students. Monitoring of these loads by a central group such as CHE (or other appropriate entity) would help evaluate and later control the overload problem.

### Harmonizing job descriptions and titles

The committee's work sometimes suffered from the problem that different institutions used different terms to describe academic positions, e.g. distinguishing between senior and junior positions or what defines an "adjunct" teacher. We recommend that CHE clarify guidelines to the institutions on how to use these and related terms.

## **Conclusions**

### Strengths:

1. The faculty is in general very hard working bearing in some cases a heavy teaching burden

2. The faculty are bright, and productive in research. In some cases they have earned international reputations equivalent to any major scholar in communication research.
3. The physical facilities for training are in general excellent with an occasional exception.
4. Students are very interested in communication study and „vote with their feet“ choosing both professional and advanced training in large numbers. This interest parallels growth world-wide reflecting in part the era of communication.
5. Programs of study are diverse allowing students to find a niche that meets their needs even though this might require travel and short term relocation.

Challenges for the future of Communication Study:

1. The amount of teaching done by adjuncts is too great in some programs. This problem needs to be redressed through the addition of more high quality senior faculty.
2. Pay structures and support for graduate students make adjunct teaching a special burden requiring teaching many courses often at geographically dispersed locations.
3. The interplay of theory and practice is a concern in every program teaching undergraduate students. Departments have not yet addressed this problem seriously nor in an innovative way.
4. New programs of study in communication (e.g. at Ben Gurion) must be balanced with improving the quality of existing programs.
5. Programs of study and curricula must move aggressively into the arena of new technology whether the programs are applied or theoretical. To ignore these developments in media convergence is to risk being too far behind important trends to ever be on the cutting edge of teaching and research.
6. In order that future evaluations allow serious comparison of programs over time, ; systematic data acquisition for evaluation is necessary.
7. As programs grow and develop and new programs of study in communication emerge in other universities and colleges strategic planning is a necessity. Strategic planning requires all stakeholders around the table. Without such planning, growth will be unsystematic and could fail to conserve human and capital resources.

**Signed by:**



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Prof. Joseph N. Capella, Chair



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Prof. Wolfgang Donsbach



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Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer



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Prof. Karen Ross



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Prof. Esther Thorson

## Appendix: Sample Letter of Appointment



February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Professor Wolfgang Donsbach, Budgeting Committee | הועדה לתכנון ולתקצוב  
Director, Department of Communication  
Dresden University of Technology  
Germany

Dear Professor Donsbach,

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 scholars and experts in the international arena in a national effort to meet the critical challenges that confront the Israeli higher education system today. The formation 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 and professionals 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 a member of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Communication Studies. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Joseph Cappella - Chair, Prof. Hanna Adoni, Prof. Wolfgang Donsbach, Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer, Prof. Karen Ross, and Prof. Esther Thorson. Ms. Michal Kabatznik will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as a member 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,

  
Professor Yuli Tamir  
Minister of Education, Culture and Sport  
and Chairperson of 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 Unit  
Ms. Michal Kabatznik, Committee Coordinator



October 07

## **Appendix to the Letter of Appointment for Evaluation Committees (Study Programs)**

### **1. General**

On June 3, 2003 the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to establish a system for quality assessment and assurance in Israeli higher education. Within this framework, study-programs are to be evaluated every six years and institutions every eight years. The quality assessment system came into effect in the academic year of 2004-2005.

The main objectives of the quality assessment activity are:

- To enhance the quality of higher education in Israel;
- To create an awareness within institutions of higher education in Israel of the importance of quality evaluation and to develop internal self-evaluation mechanisms on a regular basis;
- To provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel;
- To ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

**It is not the CHE's intention to rank the institutions of higher education according to the results of the quality assessment processes. The evaluation committee should refrain from formal comparisons.**

### **2. The Work of the Evaluation Committee**

- 2.1 The committee shall hold meetings, as needed, before visiting the institution, in order to evaluate the material received.
- 2.2 The committee shall visit the institution and the academic unit being evaluated – if possible - within 3-4 months of receiving the self-evaluation report. The purpose of the visit is to verify and update the information submitted in the self-evaluation report, clarify matters where necessary, inspect the educational environment and facilities first hand, etc. During the visit, the committee will meet with the heads of the institution, faculty members, students, the administrative staff, and any other persons it considers necessary.
- 2.3 In a meeting at the beginning of the visit, the committee will meet with the heads of the institution (president/rector, dean), the heads of the academic unit and the

- study-programs, in order to explain the purpose of the visit. At the end of the visit, the committee will summarize its findings, and formulate its recommendations.
- 2.4 The duration of the visits (at least one full day) will be coordinated with the chairperson of the committee.
  - 2.5 Following the visit, the committee will write its final report, including its recommendations, which will be delivered to the institution and the academic unit for their response.
  - 2.6 In the event that a member of the committee is also a faculty member in an institution being evaluated, he/she will not take part in discussions regarding that institution.

### **3. The Individual Reports**

- 3.1 The final reports of the evaluation committee shall address every institution separately.
- 3.2 The final reports shall include recommendations on topics listed in the guidelines for self –evaluation, such as:
  - The goals and aims of the evaluated academic unit and study programs.
  - The study program.
  - The academic staff.
  - The students.
  - The organizational structure.
  - The broader organizational structure (school/faculty) in which the academic unit and study program operate.
  - The infrastructure (both physical and administrative) available to the study program.
  - Internal mechanisms for quality assessment.
  - Other topics to be decided upon by the evaluation committee.

### **4. The structure of the reports**

#### ***4.1 Part A – General background and an executive summary:***

- 4.1.1 General background concerning the evaluation process, the names of the members of the committee, a general description of the institution and the academic unit being assessed, and the committee's work.
- 4.1.2 An executive summary that will include a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the academic unit and program being evaluated.

#### ***4.2 Part B – In-depth description of subjects examined:***

- 4.2.1 This part will be composed according to the topics examined by the evaluation committee, and based on the self-evaluation report submitted by the institution.
- 4.2.2 For each topic examined the report will present a summary of the findings, the relevant information and analysis.

#### ***4.3 Part C –Recommendations:***

- 4.3.1 Comprehensive conclusions and recommendations regarding the evaluated academic unit and the study program according to the topics in part B.
- 4.3.2 Recommendations may be classified according to the following categories:
- ***Congratulatory remarks and minimal changes recommended, if any.***
  - ***Desirable changes recommended*** at the institution's convenience and follow-up in the next cycle of evaluations.
  - ***Important/needed changes requested for ensuring appropriate academic quality*** within a reasonable time, in coordination with the institution (1-3 years)
  - ***Essential and urgent changes required, on which continued authorization will be contingent*** (immediately or up to one year).
  - ***A combination of any of the above.***

**4.4 Part D - Appendices:**

The appendices shall contain the committee's letter of appointment and the schedule of the on-site visit.

**5. The General report**

In addition to the individual reports concerning each study program, the committee shall submit to the CHE the following documents:

- 5.1 A general report regarding the status of the evaluated field of study within the Israeli institutions of higher education.

**We urge the committee to clearly list its specific recommendations for each one of the topics (both in the individual reports and in the general report) and to prioritize these recommendations, in order to ease the eventual monitoring of their implementation.**

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