



Committee for the Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Study Programs

Ariel University Center

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Evaluation Report

August 2012

Contents

Chapter 1: Background.....	3
Chapter 2: Committee Procedures.....	4
Chapter 3: Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Study Program at Ariel University Center	5

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letter of Appointment

Appendix 2 - Schedule of the visit

Chapter 1- Background

At its meeting on July 14, 2009, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Sociology and Anthropology.

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. Seymour Spilerman – Department of Sociology, Columbia University, USA, Committee Chair
- Prof. Arne Kalleberg - Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina, USA
- Prof. Herbert Lewis - Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, USA
- Prof. Leslie McCall - Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, USA*
- Prof. Yitzhak Samuel - Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Haifa, Israel
- Prof. Moshe Shokeid - Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Prof. Florencia Torche - Department of Sociology, NYU, USA†.

Ms. Yael Franks - Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to‡:

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Civil Engineering, 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 2009).

* Prof. Leslie McCall did not take part in the evaluation of OUI, TAU, BIU and AUC

† Prof. Florencia Torche joined the committee at a later stage, after the first round of visits in January 2012, thus did not take part in the evaluation of BGU, HUJI, Academic College Emek Yezreel and University of Haifa

‡ The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2-Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meetings on January 02, 2012 during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Sociology and Anthropology Study programs.

In January 2012, the Committee held its first cycle of evaluation, and visited Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, University of Haifa, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Academic College of Emek Yezreel. In May 2012 the Committee conducted its second evaluation cycle, and visited The Open University, Tel Aviv University, Bar Ilan University and Ariel University Center of Samaria. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students, and toured the visited departments.

This report deals with the **Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ariel University Center (AUC)**.

The Committee's visit to AUC took place on May 08th, 2012.

The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The Committee thanks the management of AUC and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the Committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Sociology and Anthropology Studies Program at Ariel University Center

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.

Background

The Ariel University Center of Samaria (AUC) was established in 1982 as a college in Kedumim. It came under the supervision of Bar-Ilan University in 1990 when it moved to its current location in the outskirts of Ariel. The college was accredited by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in 1996 and in 2006 the academic programs became fully independent of the supervision of Bar-Ilan University. In that same year, the Council for Higher Education of Judea and Samaria--an institution that is separate from the CHE--approved a change in status from "college" to "university center" for a period of 6 years. AUC is the largest public academic institution in Israel that is not a research university, both in number of students and number of senior faculty, according to its self-evaluation report. The mission of AUC is to teach subjects relevant to the Israeli economy and to Israeli society, and to carry out applied research activities, especially as they relate to technology industries. AUC serves a diverse group of students, including a substantial number of recent immigrants, mainly from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, as well as a modest number of Israeli Arabs.

The AUC is composed of the following faculties: Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, Architecture, and the School of Communications. Within these faculties there are 23 departments that offer undergraduate degree programs. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology (DSA), established in 2001, is located within the faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Since 2008 it has offered a dual major program leading to the BA degree.

While the AUC has the status of a university center, our mandate in this review is to evaluate it as a college. We also point out that given the location of the AUC outside the "green line" boundary of Israel, review by this committee does not constitute agreement with the settlement policies of the government.

Mission and Goals of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Sociology and anthropology is a dual major program; i.e. all students must pursue a second major as well. However, there are complexities in trying to provide a clear specification of the program requirements. In one track the second major must be a field that is not

included in the Multi-Disciplinary BA program. In two other tracks the "second major," despite this terminology in the SER, appears to be a "minor" in terms of credit requirements. The latter tracks also restrict the choice of the second major to come from the Multi-Disciplinary Department, with a strong recommendation that it be a combination of human resources and psychology. The intent of this specialization appears to be to provide the student with training for practical work in public and private organizations.

The DSA states that its mission is to prepare individuals to be able to address concerns that are global but also relevant to Israeli society, such as social cleavages in the country, poverty, religion and state, and defense policy. The study program highlights various aspects of everyday life in Israel which derive from the fact that the society is grounded in a nation-state ethos, yet is comprised of an amalgam of cultures and ethnic groups. The program is intended to train students for career opportunities as well as open the possibility for further academic study.

Study Program & Students

In the year 2009-10 the number of students enrolled in the DSA was 115. This is a small number of students for a faculty that numbers 13, but much of the teaching by the staff involves course responsibilities in other departments, as well as the provision of service courses within the DSA for students who are enrolled in other departments.

Indeed, sociology and anthropology study at the AUC appears to be embedded in an unwieldy organizational configuration, probably one that is in the process of transition to a different organizational arrangement. We have already noted the existence of three tracks to a BA in the DSA, partly differing according to whether the second major is taken in the Multi-Disciplinary Department or in a different unit. Complicating matters, both the Multi-Disciplinary Department and the Department of Behavioral Studies have study programs that overlap substantially with those of the DSA. The self-evaluation report differentiates the DSA from the Multi-Disciplinary Department by noting that admission standards are much higher in the DSA. This may be the case, but since many of the Multi-Disciplinary courses are staffed by DSA faculty, and many students in the Multi-Disciplinary Department take courses in the DSA, it is not clear what purpose is served by having two programs with such extensive overlap.

Nor is this overlap and competition for students with sociology and anthropology interests limited to the Multi-Disciplinary Department. The Department of Behavioral Sciences, another unit within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, also has an extensive overlap with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. All Behavioral Science students are obligated to take 20 credits of core courses in sociology and anthropology as part of their program. The rationale for these competing programs escapes us, even though the members of this Committee are predisposed to the notion of a liberal education and much program choice by students. We therefore recommend that the AUC administration, along with the CHE, review the merits of having these overlapping--and competing--

programs in sociology/anthropology, and devise an organizational plan to rationalize the delivery of education and training in this field.

The faculty of the DSL expressed an interest in developing an MA program in sociology and anthropology. Our view is that it is necessary, first, to build a strong undergraduate program that has some distinction. Second, a department that wishes to institute an MA program should have a number tenured faculty on staff, who can bring stability to the department and who are moderately distinguished in order to ensure the quality of the program. The DSA needs improvement on these dimensions. Finally, AUC is located in the center of the country, within easy commuting distance from three Israeli universities. Thus we tend to believe that the opening of a new MA program at AUC would draw students from these institutions without the promise that they would be exposed to a better education. We therefore do not recommend the opening of an MA program in sociology and anthropology at the AUC.

While the students with which the Committee spoke are probably not a representative sample of the student body, they spoke of their satisfaction with their experience at AUC and with the DSA in particular.

Faculty and Teaching

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at AUC currently employs a teaching faculty of 26, of whom 11 are instructors or adjuncts. Most of the teaching staff have PhD degrees. Only five are full-time employees of the AUC, and of those only the chair is 100% in the program. The other staff members either teach part time at other institutions or offer service courses for other programs at the AUC, especially for the Departments of Behavioral Sciences and Multidisciplinary Studies. (Several of the DSA staff are listed as faculty in the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies.) Indeed, as remarked earlier, the DSA is, in fact, just one track in a larger program of studies in sociology and anthropology within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. This means that while it is the case that few students are enrolled in the DSA, the faculty is fully engaged in the teaching program of AUC, offering sociology and anthropology courses in a variety of venues. Indeed, the teaching load is heavy, with a full program requiring 12 weekly hours of frontal teaching.

The teaching staff includes several faculty older than 68, the standard retirement age, though most faculty are relatively young. Only three members of the teaching staff are tenured, in part, because there is no tenure for individuals who have exceeded the retirement age. In addition, the committee was told that in AUC they are not permitted to grant tenure though they can promote to the rank of senior lecturer--without tenure. Several faculty members expressed concern about the "mysteries" of promotion at AUC, which requires research productivity as well as teaching success, and the problems of doing research at the institution.

In general, the teaching staff expressed positive views of their work at AUC, even in light of the declared convictions of several members in opposition to the settlement policies of the government. They spoke of a sense of feeling a part of the building of a new institution and of their appreciation of the diversity of the student body, heavily drawn from “the second Israel”-- immigrants from Ethiopia and Russia, Israeli Arabs, and others from the periphery. The syllabi from a number of courses makes clear that there is considerable academic freedom to express political views that might not be consistent with the dominant ethos of the institution. However, we note that the number and variety of courses offered in the program beyond the introductory classes are quite limited, which is possibly a result of the DSA being preoccupied with the provision of basic services courses sought by other programs. An absence of electives in anthropology was particularly apparent and this deficit in course offerings should be remedied. In particular, we recommend that the DSA add at least one anthropology course that exposes students to a wider range of cultures worldwide than only a focus on Israeli society. Such an addition would fit well with the mission of the department, which emphasizes cultures, ethnic groups, and global concerns.

Another concern of the Committee relates to the fairly minimal use of English language materials in courses. Competency in English is necessary for enrolling in graduate study at a university as well as for functioning in many sorts of organizations that will employ graduates of the program.

The faculty made clear that the DSA faces several challenges. One is that they must teach many AUC students who are not majors in the department and who sometimes have little interest in sociology and anthropology courses. Second, the faculty has to cope with many students who come from lower social backgrounds and with little preparation for college study. Department members seem eager to take on this challenge, but it makes a considerable demand on their time.

Research

Research productivity is listed as a key criterion by which faculty members are hired and promoted at AUC. The amount and quality of research publications, as well as success in obtaining external grants, are used to evaluate the faculty; in particular, evidence of research productivity is required for advancement. The stress at AUC on research is illustrated by the fact that involvement in an active research program can justify the reduction of a faculty member’s teaching load from 12 to 8 hours.

The faculty with whom the Committee met indicated that they were motivated to undertake research in addition to carrying out their teaching responsibilities. In addition to the possibility of a reduced teaching load, faculty members can also receive support from the Ariel Research Authority to finance projects, in addition to the funds available for travel to conferences. However, the research efforts of the faculty are hampered by a number of constraints. The lack of a graduate program means that faculty members who need assistance in their research activities have to rely on BA students. Also, with respect to

obtaining grants from international agencies, the Committee was told that some European NGOs will not fund research projects at AUC for political reasons.

The Committee felt that the research accomplishments of the AUC faculty seemed adequate for a college in which teaching responsibilities constitute the main responsibilities to the institution. However, the Committee does not regard the research records of the faculty to be outstanding. While some publish regularly, the journals and other outlets in which most of their publications appear are not of especially high quality or of great visibility. It is our view that decisions about advancement at the college should heavily reflect teaching effectiveness, which is the purpose of the institution.

Infrastructure

The Committee was given a tour of the library, faculty offices, and several classrooms at AUC. The current library (which serves several faculties in addition to the Social Sciences and Humanities) seemed to be a pleasant place for students to work, ample seating and sufficient computer terminals. The library provides good access to e-journals and e-collections (such as Jstor) and to about 1000 e-books, in addition to print copies of a selection of sociology and anthropology books. In addition, the library provides institutional access to data bases and data libraries (such as those made available by the Central Bureau of Statistics) that faculty are able to use in their research. The computers also have software that provides a handy overview of the various databases and e-resources that are available through the library. While the current library seems satisfactory for a college, the new library currently under construction promises to be a significant upgrade that will be available to students and faculty.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. The Committee recommends that the AUC reconsider the organizational structure of sociology and anthropology study at the institution to reduce the overlap among departments in course offerings on these subjects.
2. We recommend that steps be taken to introduce English language instruction and readings more deeply into the program in order to improve opportunities for graduates of the program.
3. The Committee recommends that the DSA increase its offerings of anthropology courses, and, in particular, add a course that examines a range of cultures outside of Israel.
4. The Committee recommends that the DSA increase the number of faculty who are involved full time in the program. This is necessary for maintaining stability over time in the organization of the program.
5. It is the consensus of the Committee that an MA program in sociology and anthropology at the Ariel University Center is not warranted.

Signed by:

Sy Spilerman

Prof. Seymour Spilerman,
Chair

Arne Kalleberg

Prof. Arne Kalleberg

Herbert A. Lewis

Prof. Herbert Lewis

Florencia Torche

Prof. Florencia Torche

Yitzhak Samuel

Prof. Yitzhak Samuel

M. Shokeid

Prof. Moshe Shokeid

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



February, 2012

שר החינוך
Minister of Education
وزير التربية والتعليم

Prof. Seymour Spilerman
Department of Sociology
Columbia University
USA

Dear Professor Spilerman,

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 21st 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 Chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of Sociology - Anthropology Studies.

The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Seymour Spilerman (Chair), Prof. Arne Kalleberg, Prof. Herbert Lewis, Prof. Leslie McCall, Prof. Yitzhak Samuel Prof. Moshe Shokeid and Prof. Florencia Torche.

Ms. Yael Franks will coordinate the Committee's activities.

In your capacity as 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 Chair 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. Michal Neumann, The Quality Assessment Division
Ms. Yael Franks, Committee Coordinator

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Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Sociology & Anthropology - Schedule of site visit – Ariel University Center

Wednesday, May 08, 2012

Time	Subject	Participants
09:15-09:45	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment	President: Prof. Dan Meyerstein Dean: Prof. Israel Nebenzahl Head, Quality Assessment System: Dr. Nitza Davidovitch
09:45-10:15	Meeting with head of Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities	Prof. Israel Nebenzahl
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the academic and administrative head of Department	Prof. Dan Soen
11:00 -11:45	Meeting with Senior academic staff (representatives of relevant committees)*	Prof. Ran Chermesh Dr. Udi Lebel Dr. Miryam Billig Dr. Mira Moshe Dr. Rina Shachar Dr. Roni Mash Dr. Yaarit Bokek Dr. Moshe Levy Dr. Mina Meir- Dviri Dr. Hagit Boni-Noach
11:45-12:30	Meeting with Adjunct & Junior academic staff *	Dr. Yarden Enav Mr. Malachi Krentzler Ms. Bat-El Sharaby Mr. Ofer Gut Ms. Galit Madar
12:30 -13:15	Meeting with BA students**	
13:15-14:00	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
14:00-14:45	Tour of facilities: classrooms, library, offices	Dr. Moshe Levy & Dr. Mira Moshe
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Alumni**	Ms. Hanna Bordiisz, Ms. Galit Gabay
15:30-16:00	Closed-door working meeting of the committee	
16:00-16:30	Summation meeting with heads of department and institution	President: Prof. Dan Meyerstein Rector: Prof. Michael Zinigrad Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities: Prof. Israel Nebenzahl Head of Department: Prof. Dan Soen Head, Quality Assessment System: Dr. Nitza Davidovitch

* 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.