



Committee for the Evaluation of Economics Study Programs

Ruppin Academic Center
Department of Economics and Management
Department of Economics and Accounting
Evaluation Report

May 2017

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Chapter 1: Background

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Economics during the academic year of 2015-2016.

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

- **Prof. Georg Winckler** - former Rector of the University of Vienna, Austria - committee chair (Emeritus).
- **Prof. Russell Cooper¹** - Department of Economics, Penn State University, USA.
- **Prof. David Dillenberger** - Department of Economics, University of Pennsylvania, USA.
- **Prof. Philippe Weil** - Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium.
- **Prof. Eyal Winter²** - Department of Economics, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

Ms. Maria Levinson-Or served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:³

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Economics, 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 September 2015).

¹ Due to scheduling constraints, Prof. Russell Cooper did not participate in the site visits to the University of Haifa, Ben-Gurion University and Bar-Ilan University.

² In accordance with the CHE's policy, Prof. Eyal Winter did not participate in the evaluation of the Economics department at the Hebrew University to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interests.

³ The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2: Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meetings on 18.12.2016, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Economics Study programs in Israel.

In December 2016, the Committee held its visits of evaluation, and visited the Academic College Tel-Aviv Yaffo, the College of Management Academic Studies, Tel-Aviv University, Ruppin Academic Center, the Open University, Tel-Hai Academic College, the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel, the Hebrew University, University of Haifa, Bar-Ilan University and Ben-Gurion University. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

During its visit to Israel, the committee divided into two sub-committees for conducting parallel visits. The members who visited the institution are prof. Russell Cooper, prof. David Dillenberger and prof. Eyal Winter. However, all committee members were part of the following discussion and contributed to drafting the report.

This report deals with the Department of Economics and Management and the Department of Economics and Accounting at the Ruppin Academic Center. The Committee's visit to Ruppin Academic Center took place on December 21, 2016.

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

The Committee thanks the management of Ruppin Academic Center and the Departments of Economics and Management and Economics and Accounting for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Economics Study Programs at Ruppin

Academic 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.

The committee was impressed with the college's mission and dedication to having a diverse student body. The mission was well translated into concrete actions both by integration with the community and outreach policies to underrepresented sectors of the population.

The college's vision is one that views research and teaching as complementary activities. This vision translates into greater support for research that allows reduction of teaching for grants, and provides internal support for research. The committee appreciates these efforts. However, we learned that such support is limited, and at times requires complex bureaucratic procedures. We suggest the college simplifies the application process for internal research support, and provides greater support for attending conferences and journal submission. The committee also suggests adding a departmental or a school research seminar to help promote research.

The committee was impressed with the faculty and their dedication to the institution, both of senior faculty and adjunct faculty. A cause for concern was the seeming lack of clarity of promotion criteria. Given the college's teaching mission, a better balance between teaching and research within the promotion process is required.

The committee is concerned by the small size of the faculty and by the student faculty ratio, which is extremely high. The school should recruit more faculty in the upcoming years. A possible resource for recruiting could be from within the adjunct faculty that teach in the school.

The school caters to a diverse student body with diverse study objectives. Students wishing to pursue a career in accounting are offered the well-focused DEA program, which is based on compulsory courses only and is well connected to the four major accounting firms in Israel.

Students wishing a broader academic exposure are offered the DEM, which includes elective courses as well, and more diverse placement opportunities upon graduation. Students and alumni of both programs seem generally satisfied with the education provided. The school should keep records of alumni performance and job opportunities in order to assist in evaluating existing programs and help design future changes.

The school informed us of their desire to launch an MA program. While we understand the desire to evolve, it is premature at this stage, given the small size of faculty, and the high student faculty ratio. The current priority should be strengthening the BA program and therefore available resources should be dedicated to this focus.

Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations

Essential:

1. The School should not launch an MA program, given its current status.
2. The School needs to recruit more faculty in economics to reduce the high student faculty ratio.
3. The college must articulate and communicate procedures for promotion to the faculty and its standards should match the mission of the institution.

Important:

1. The college should articulate and communicate its mission and vision in terms of the balance between research and teaching.
2. There should be more research support for faculty: travel funds, internal resources, research seminar, etc.
3. Alumni tracking, especially in the DEM program, should be improved and strengthened.

Signed by:



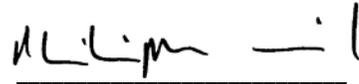
Prof. Georg Winckler - Chair



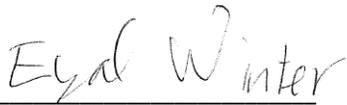
Prof. Russell Cooper



Prof. David Dillenberger



Prof. Philippe Weil



Prof. Eyal Winter

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



June 2016

Prof. Georg Winckler
University of Vienna
Austria

Dear Professor,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging upon this mission, the CHE seeks: 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.

As part of this important endeavor we reach out to world renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges that confront the Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

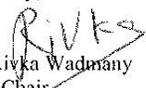
I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

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 the study programs in **Economics**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Russell Cooper, Prof. David Dillenberger, Prof. Oded Galor, Prof. Philippe Weil, and Prof. Eyal Winter. Ms. Maria Levinson-Or will be the coordinator of the Committee.

Details regarding the operation of the committee and its mandate are provided in the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as the chair of this most important committee.

Sincerely,


Dr. Rivka Wadmany
Vice Chair,
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Dr. Varda Ben-Shaul, Deputy Director-General for QA, CHE
Ms. Maria Levinson-Or, Committee Coordinator

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

<u>Economics - Schedule of site visit</u>		
<u>Ruppin Academic Center</u>		
Wednesday, December 21 ,2016 – meeting room, administration building		
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Galia Sabar, President.
09:30-10:00	Meeting with the Dean of the School of Economics and Business Management	Prof. Eli Feinerman.
10:00-10:40	Meeting with the Head of the Economics and Management Department and Economics and Accounting Department	Prof. Leah Achdut, head of Economics and Management Department Dr. Liema Davidovich, head of Economics and Accounting Department.
10:40-10:50	Break	
10:50-11:35	Meeting with senior academic staff *	Nonna Kushnirovich, Guy Barookas, Arie Sherman, Adi Luria, Ofer Arbaa, Yoram Kroll, Yossi Tzur.
11:35-12:15	Meeting with adjunct academic staff*	Dr. Anat Alexandron-Lavon, Dr. Sharbel Shoukair, Dr. Gil Sharoni, CPA Yehuda Barlev, CPA Liraz Tubul Fahima, CPA Noam Bacher, Mr. Shlomi Katz.
12:15-12:45	Open slot	Final seminars students' presentation.
12:45-13:30	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
13:30-14:15	Meeting with BA students**	
14:15-15:00	Meeting with Alumni**	
15:00-15:20	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
15:20-15:45	Closing meeting	Prof. Galia Sabar Prof. Eli Feinerman Prof. Leah Achdut Dr. Liema Davidovich Dr. Yonit Shachnovich