



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

Ben Gurion 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, USA¹**
- **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**
- **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:²

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).

¹ Prof. Bardach did not participate in the second round of visits due to personal reasons.

² 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 Administration and Policy at Ben Gurion University**.

The Committee's visit at Ben Gurion University took place on March 13-14, 2011. 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 Administration and Policy at Ben Gurion University

Mission Statement

The master's program is a part of the Business School. It is small both relatively (fewer than 10% of students in the business school are in this program) and, absolutely (six senior faculty when the Self-Evaluation was written). Although located in a business school, the program's mission does not seem to have taken advantage of that fact. Its curriculum does not seem notably different from that of other programs we examined. In particular, we note that the program does not seem to have the strategic choice (outlined in our General Report) to be a program with a "public administration" focus which might have been natural given the program's business-school location and the overlap between the study of business management and public administration.

Study Program/Curriculum

Students must complete 42 credit hours (roughly 14 courses) to graduate. Six courses are mandatory and are almost always taken in the first year. Five mandatory courses are offered in both semesters. This means that the entering cohort do not all take mandatory courses together. One reason for this is that if students need to take an introductory course in economics and/or quantitative methods due to insufficient prior preparation, these courses are taken during the first semester of the first year, rather than during the previous summer; this inhibits development of a common student culture that we believe may encourage student work effort.

Although the program is part of a business school, the curriculum, somewhat to our surprise, did not have a strong organizational behavior or management component.

We do not have a very good handle on what is taught. The syllabi that accompanied the self-study were short English summaries of the actual Hebrew syllabi that did little more than list a few major books on the reading list. We requested original syllabi for required courses and used Google Translate to render them into English. From this exercise we tentatively concluded that the coverage and content of the required courses was reasonable although the labeling confused us. "Quantitative evaluation of

public policy” is a microeconomics course focusing on the economic justifications for government intervention in the economy and cost-benefit analysis; “Applied Economic Policy” is a mixture of macroeconomics, industrial organization, privatization and regional economics; “Statistical research methods in public policy” introduces basic concepts in probability theory and statistics.

To its considerable credit, Ben Gurion has learned the value of a “special” week devoted to a particular project. The Self-Evaluation describes one week intensive workshops that occur three times a year. A relatively small number of students participate in each workshop. In a workshop, a “world scholar” or “high level professional” devises a program focused on a compelling topic that is not taught elsewhere in the curriculum.

There is some cross-registration into management courses (or courses on the business-government relationship) in the business school, but it is fairly limited. The limited cross-registration vitiates a possible advantage of locating this program in a business school. One important practical problem is having all public policy courses on the same day, to accommodate students with fulltime jobs; since business school courses are on a different day, many students will have no desire to take them. Perhaps (we do not know if this, or some other alternative, is possible) the second-year elective courses in public policy could all be held the same day as business-school courses – or the business school courses most attractive to public policy students – are held.

Our discussions with students provided a quite consistent set of observations about what messages students had gotten from the program. They stated they had learned that public policy in Israel was made in unattractive ways, and often produced unattractive results, but that changing this was extremely difficult. At least some members of the committee felt that students often sounded quite cynical. Almost no students mentioned any analytic technique or approach that had made an impression on them, and few mentioned any ways of improving analysis or decision making.

Students

To make participation in a masters program possible for students with fulltime jobs, formal instruction is jammed into a very long – as much as 12 hours – single day.

Time for learning outside of class is limited. During the average week students spend somewhere between two and five hours in total in preparing for class. (A few reported 10 or more hours.) The good news is that many faculty members appear to have adapted outside-class preparation expectations to the time students were actually able to spend on preparation, rather than assigning an amount of work that would be more appropriate for fulltime students.

Research

The department prides itself on its research productivity, and especially being published in refereed journals. And the pride is to a fair extent justified. The quantity of publications of the regular faculty is formidable, and at least one of the adjuncts also publishes a great deal. One faculty member has even won two prizes in seven years for books (on the Israeli army).

The publications credit is largely limited to four out of the six regular faculty, though a fifth seems to be working on a rather long-term project on concerning the functions of the “third sector” in Israeli society that may yield publications in the future.

We would note that one of the adjuncts is a coauthor with three other individuals of a thousand-page book entitled *Public Policy*, published by Open University Publications of Tel Aviv.

The outlets for nearly all the journal articles are journals of what we take to be the medium rank, mostly rather specialized, and in some cases “peer-reviewed” only in a very loose sense (for example, with review only after the editor has commissioned a paper for a special issue).

Still, all things considered, BGU has an acceptable record of quantitative productivity and of making contributions to various fields of public policy.

Ben Gurion Recommendations

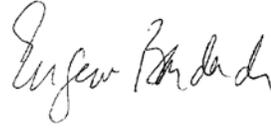
All of the recommendations in our General Report apply to Ben Gurion University. In addition, we make the following specific recommendations:

1. The program should be restructured so that almost all students take the mandatory core at the same time.
2. To take advantage of synergies with the business school, the program should look for ways to increase cross-registration in business school courses.

Signed By:



Prof. Steve Kelman, Chair



Prof. Eugene Bardach



Prof. Mark Kleiman



Prof. David Nachmias



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 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 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



**THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
BEN- GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV
13-14 March 2011, Room 300 Building 15**

Day 1 – March 13, 2011

| Time | Subject | Participants |
|-----------------|---|---|
| 09:30- 13:00 | Closed door working meeting | |
| 13:00- 13:30 | Meeting with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment | Rector- Zvi Hacoheh Deputy Rector- Yael Edan Dean- Arie Reichel Dept. Chair- Shlomo Mizrahi |
| 13:30- 14:00 | Meeting with Academic head of Faculty of Business and Management | Former Dean- Arie Reichel |
| 14:00- 14:45 | Meeting with the academic head of the department of Public Policy and Administration | Dept. Chair- Shlomo Mizrahi |
| 14:45- 15:45 | Meeting with faculty and representatives of relevant committees (teaching/curriculum committee, admissions committee, appointment committee)* | Teaching Committee: Dr. Miki Malul Library Committee: Dr. Fany Yuval Research students Committee: Dr. Guy Ben Porat Lecturers: Dr. Eran Manes Prof. Rafi Bar-El |
| 15:45- 16:00 | Tour of campus (classes, library, offices of faculty members, computer labs etc.) | |
| 16:00- 16:45 | Closed- door working meeting | |

Day 2 – March 14, 2011

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Subject</u> | <u>Participants (tentative)</u> |
|-------------|---|---|
| 9:00-9:45 | Meeting with adjunct lecturers* | Dr. Rotem Bresler Gonen Thila Baruchi Amur Omri Shamir |
| 9:45-10:30 | Meeting with Masters students*** | |
| 10:30-11:15 | Meeting with PhD students*** | |
| 11:15-12:00 | Meeting with Alumni*** | |
| 12:00-12:45 | Observation- Lecture | |
| 12:45-13:30 | Lunch with Students** | |
| 13:30-14:15 | Closed working meeting | |
| 14:15-15:00 | Meeting with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment | Rector- Zvi Hacoheh Deputy Rector- Yael Edan Former Dean- Arie Reichel Dept. Chair- Shlomo Mizrahi |

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

** Please make sure that these are different students than those who met with the committee in the first meeting.

*** 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.