

Response to the report of the Committee for the Evaluation of Civil Engineering study program

Department of Civil Engineering
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We appreciate the committee's comments on our program and our department and while being complemented with their description of the teaching and learning outcome as "well stated" and teaching assessment process as "outstanding", we identify three major challenges in the Committee's reports that need to be addressed:

1. "Increase the number of full-time academic faculty members in the program".
1. "Increase collaborations with research-intensive universities in Israel and abroad".
2. "Initiate planning to host national and international Civil Engineering conferences and workshops at AUC that would promote the visibility of the College and attract new research active academic staff".

We agree with most of the committee's findings and recommendations, especially with the recommendation that the department must increase the number of full-time academic faculty members in the program. We totally agree with the recommendation to increase our research co-operation with local and foreign universities, to host national and international conferences at AUCS. While some of these challenges coincide with the AUCS strategic plan, and can be implemented immediately (some have already been implemented), others will have to be addressed together with the AUCS management. Following is our detailed response to the Committee's report and a list of planned activities.

1. **Senior staff.** As observed by the Committee, it is the AUCS management policy to recruit senior staff that shares fractional joint appointments in several units. The rationale behind this policy comes from the fact that a full time lecturer in AUCS is required to teach 12 hours/week. Limiting each faculty member to one specific unit results in a limited exposure of the students to a variety of lecturers, disciplines and teaching methodologies. This policy has a significant effect on the staff of all academic units that

engage multi-disciplinary studies, particularly the Department of Civil Engineering. In addition to the elementary engineering courses of Mathematics and Physics (that are covered by the relevant units), the program in Civil Engineering includes core courses like Engineering Mechanics, Strength of Materials, Statics, Structural Dynamics, Reinforced Concrete Structures, Steel Structures, Seismic Design, Construction Management, Principles of Engineering Design, etc. that are taught by faculty members of our department. Courses like Environmental Engineering, Engineering Geology, General Studies are taught by lecturers from other departments or adjunct faculty. We have a candidate for a full time faculty position. The department has initiated the appointment procedure and the new lecturer will start to work in the next academic year. We are advertising a full time faculty position in construction management and as an appropriate candidate will be found, he will join the department. We also increase the number of full time faculty members by promoting the currently part-time lecturers to full time positions.

2. **Collaboration with research universities.** Presently our department has a long-term collaboration with four foreign universities. In the frame of the co-operation we carry out experimental and theoretical research. As an outcome of this research we have written a monograph and papers that were accepted for publication in ISI journals. Faculty members from the partner universities have visited AUCS and our faculty members also worked at foreign universities. We are planning to continue our common research activities with the foreign colleagues and to establish new contacts to promote research and teaching.
3. **Organizing international conferences.** In 2007 an International Conference on Modern Trends in Structural Engineering for Seismic Design was organized at the AUCS. In 2010 an International Conference "The Order of the Day – Intercultural Ties in Higher Education and Academic Teaching" was organized. It included a special session on Technology and Engineering Education. The delegates visited the Statics and Dynamics laboratory at the department and discussed possibilities for co-operation in teaching using the program used in our department. Next year an international workshop on applied mechanics, structural engineering and seismic design is organized.

We have additional comments to some points that are mentioned in the Committee's report:

- 1. Reducing the number of courses taught by adjunct lecturers.** After the new faculty member will join the department the proportion between the number of hours taught by adjunct lecturers and faculty members will change. In the long run, we plan to recruit at least two more faculty members with CE background in order to strengthen the current program, as it is recommended by the Committee.
- 2. "AUC's mission statement as mentioned in the Self Evaluation Report includes providing access to higher education to broad sectors of the population, but there is little evidence of this in the Civil Engineering program".** It is not clear what exactly the Committee members have expected to see. The self evaluation report reflects the actual admission criteria and the social-economical characteristic of our students.
- 3. "The institutional focus should remain on teaching and on educational research aimed at perfecting the teaching activities assigned to the Department".** In our opinion, a good teacher is first of all a high reputed scientist, teaching students the latest achievements in his research area. Therefore we pay attention to promoting research at the department, in spite that the AUCS is not budgeted by the CHE as a research institution. This year the AUCS has decreased the teaching load of faculty members that have demonstrated active research, including publishing papers in ISI journals, receiving research grants, etc. by up to 4 hours. Faculty members carrying out research receive additional salary (up to 20%). We are sure that a strong research record of each faculty member can result in excellence.
- 4. "The only full time professor in the Department is among those who are close to retirement".** Presently there are 3 full time professors (Prof. J. Bloch, Prof. I. Iskhakov and Prof. Y. Ribakov) and one part time professor (Prof. U. Komornik) at the department. Prof. Y. Ribakov and Prof. U. Komornik are under the retirement age. With increase of the students' number we are planning to change the contract with Prof. U. Komornik from part-time to full time. We have also initiated promotion of Dr. M. Adan and Dr. R. Gilat to Associated Professor position.
- 5. "AUC should commence recruitment of new academic staff in some of the emerging areas of building and construction automation, computational mechanics, risk and uncertainty mitigation, natural disaster response, and**

structural health monitoring '. Presently Prof. Y. Ribakov, Prof. I. Iskhakov, Dr. B. Blostotsky carry out research in seismic design, structural control and related areas. It covers the area of natural disaster response. Dr. M. Adan works in the field of structural health monitoring. Dr. E. Efraim and Dr. R. Gilat work in the field of computational mechanics.

6. **"Initiate new efforts to hire additional faculty members to reduce teaching loads of the existing staff and reduce reliance on adjunct faculty"**. The subjects, taught by the adjuncts, are subsidiary. Therefore it is not possible to have full time faculty members to teach them. We are checking the possibility to have two adjunct lecturers as part time faculty members. The new lecturer that will start to work in the next academic year will teach one of the courses taught by adjunct lecturers. It should be noted that even presently the number of hours taught by adjuncts versus that by senior faculty members is not so high.