

Netanya Academic College

The School of Behavioral Sciences at Netanya Academic College has offered thoughtful responses to the 2009 recommendations and suggestions of the committee appointed by the Council for Higher Education to evaluate the school. At the same time, although the committee's report concluded with several pages of clear recommendations that provide a clear template for the institution's report on implementing these recommendations, the College did not adopt this format in its implementation report. Instead, it presented two documents, described below, which do not fully address the recommendations made. The documents lack relevant information needed for evaluating implementation of the recommendations, and this is of concern in and of itself. It also makes it quite difficult to assess compliance. Nevertheless, it seems that Netanya took the recommendations largely in the spirit in which they were offered, to help their program improve, and that a number of the core recommendations regarding faculty and program were taken, though more work remains to be done.

One of the two documents just noted begins with a wordy note addressed "**To the reviewer of the amendments to the Behavioral Sciences Program at Netanya Academic College:**" Some of the issues raised in the 2009 report are addressed in this document, which then proceeds to include the required and elective courses for the major and for each of the two tracks, psychology and resource management, some course syllabi, and the CVs of recently hired faculty.

Faculty. One document (*Faculty Tables-netanya*) provided a table called "Teaching Staff-2012" which has a column called "Percentage of job in the college (titled, *planning data 2011*, making the status of that information unclear). Fifteen people are listed as full-time faculty in the College. Some are listed as teaching 6 courses; some only 1-2, so clearly only some of the listed faculty members are primarily in the Behavioral Sciences department. Many faculty members are teaching courses across such a broad spectrum (e. g., perception, cognition, and social psychology) that it is likely they are teaching classes far beyond their own areas of expertise, one of the original concerns of the evaluation committee.

The *faculty-tables*, the curricula, the syllabi, and the CV's are inconsistent, e. g, many people whose CV's were supplied are not listed as faculty. Many courses in *faculty-tables* are not in the curricula and vice versa. Some new faculty members are not in the *faculty-tables* or the curricula.

Some of the new faculty members whose CV's were provided have PhD degrees in core areas and a record of publication in international journals and books the field. Others do not have PhD degrees; one claims a PhD from a "Newport University" in California, which no longer exists and which, according to Wikipedia "was not accredited by any higher education accreditation organization recognized by the [United States Department of Education](#) or the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#)." Some have no publications in standard academic journals. Several are from fields far outside psychology and human resources. One faculty member has an "HDL" degree in Hebrew literature, two are studying business, and another has degrees in law. In short, some of the new additions do

not have relevant training or expertise. At the same time, more expertise in psychology and sociology remains needed and exists in the country.

Curricula. The set of required courses now appears to be appropriate both for the major and the two tracks. However, several of the elective courses and seminars appear to be peripheral or outside the domain of the program, e. g., “Structure of and Holidays on the Jewish Calendar” and “Marital Law in Jewish Law.” There is a course in “The involvement of the emotional considerations in decision-making,” but no course in Decision Making and Judgment, which is a vital and thriving area, especially in Israel.

Syllabi. Although the compliance report did not need to include all the course syllabi, including those of all of the core courses in psychology would have been appropriate. Unfortunately, only that of cognitive psychology was included. Many others are missing, and some of those included do not seem to be in the curricula. It is not our job here to comment on the courses; nevertheless, some of the syllabi contain long intimidating reading lists that even proficient readers of English with strong disciplinary backgrounds would have trouble mastering. It would be preferable to assign a smaller number of key readings allowing students to master the material. More comments on the syllabi under 3a below.

Below are the major recommendations of the 2009 report in italics, followed by comments on the college’s compliance from what could be gleaned from the documents supplied.

1. *In order to fulfill the department’s stated mission to provide a disciplinary basis in each area of Behavioral Science in the department (regardless of the department’s decision on #2 below), the committee strongly recommends that the department make at least one faculty hire in psychology that is a full-time. Such a hire is needed to revamp courses in psychology and to ensure that courses central to the discipline are in fact offered on a regular basis by faculty trained in the field.*

It appears that one social psychologist (Lily Cherniak-Hai) and one cognitive psychologist (Hadas Erel) are among the new hires whose CV’s were provided. Both seem to have been trained in the basic cores of those disciplines. This is a welcome development.

a. *Specifically, it is appropriate for the program to focus on psychology and a large number of psychology courses are indeed offered. Yet many courses that are the core of the discipline of psychology (e. g., social psychology) are taught by people from other disciplines and a number of critical core courses in psychology are missing altogether.*

Although the curriculum now includes core courses in the major fields of psychology, many of those seem to be taught by the same faculty, whose training is not in these fields, stretching their expertise.

2. *As presently constituted, the psychology track itself is inadequately staffed, with only one psychologist on the regular faculty. If the department aims to offer a psychology track, as the self-statement indicates it does, it needs to offer this program in a more deliberate manner, and to make the targeted faculty hires in psychology needed to fully staff it as a track within the Behavioral Science BA. Hence, the committee strongly recommends that*

the department prepare a strategic plan for the future, including a decision about whether or not to retain the psychology track.

It now appears that the department may have sufficient faculty to maintain a psychology track, though the structure of that is not yet clear, and as noted, many of the core courses still seem to be taught by faculty whose expertise is far from that topic.

a. If the Department decides to retain psychology as a track specialization, the committee recommends that the faculty be strengthened by one additional full-time faculty hire in psychology (beyond what is specified in #1) whose doctoral training is at the core of the discipline (e.g., cognition, social psychology) and who has done good research and is a strong teacher. Many new, exciting fields in psychology have great relevance to behavioral science and could profitably be represented: culture, social psychology (e.g., prejudice), cognitive development, social development, biological approaches to behavior (e.g., brain imaging, genetic approaches), and more.

As noted, the department seems to have hired two psychologists with training at the core of the discipline (cognitive and social), as recommended. Expertise in the emerging important area of biological approaches to behavior still seems to be lacking. Research in the brain and in genetics is increasingly basic to all areas of psychology, personality, developmental, social, perception, cognition, and clinical and must be included in any psychology curriculum.

3. A final issue concerning psychology involves the cores courses offered in this behavioral science department: Introductory courses in psychology should be broad survey courses that cover the expanse of the specific field comprehensively, and this seems not to be so in all cases. For example, the committee recommends that a course entitled "Social Psychology" should consist a broad survey of the field, requiring a textbook that covers the expanse of this field within the discipline of psychology and also lectures on the full range of the field, to represent the full range of the field rather than focusing a region or exclusively on Israel, which should be offered as an special topics seminar.

The curriculum now contains a broad set of required introductory courses, including Introductory and Social Psychology as recommended; however, except for cognitive psychology, the syllabi for these courses were not included, and hence the degree to which these courses comply with recommendations, by being fully comprehensive survey courses, cannot be evaluated.

a. The committee recommends that the department examine all core courses in each of the three disciplines represented in the department to determine whether each should potentially be re-tooled to provide a sufficiently comprehensive survey course that offers a full introduction to the relevant field, consistent with the course title. An evaluation along these lines should be undertaken in the first year and changes implemented in the second. Changes should also include new courses as needed, and in some cases new instructors to design these courses. At least one of these core courses and preferably more should use a comprehensive up-to-date textbook in English. Similarly, seminal journal articles in English should be included in at least one and preferably more advanced courses or seminars.

As recommended, the department indicates that it has undertaken a review of all courses and course syllabi, and plans regular reviews of programs, courses, and syllabi. Deficiencies in the resulting syllabi, however, are noted above.

The curriculum now requires introductory courses in psychology, in the basic sub-fields of psychology, in anthropology, in sociology, and in economics, a commendable change.

Further, many of the syllabi that were provided include readings in English. The syllabi for most of the core courses were not provided, however, again making implementation of central recommendations impossible to evaluate. It is not clear if the department has adopted a policy for the inclusion of English texts and readings in many courses. As noted, some of the syllabi contain far too many references for students to master, a policy that can lead to superficial skimming or neglect as well as relying on translations or summaries instead of reading the original English. In short, some of the syllabi have reading lists but no clear week-by-week assignments so it is not clear what students are expected to read.

5. In terms of the full interdisciplinary curriculum, it would better serve the interdisciplinary goals of this behavioral science program if special attention were given to advanced courses to ensure that they truly integrate the disciplinary perspectives gained in introductory courses.

a. The committee thus recommends that two or more of the substantive courses in the third year are team taught by faculty from different disciplines, with an emphasis on how each discipline examines specific issues (as may be done currently in "Youth Violence"). These courses should also heavily emphasize the research questions and methods of each discipline as well as the substantive conclusions that can be drawn from the research.

There do not appear to be team-taught interdisciplinary courses that bring at least two disciplinary perspectives together.

b. The committee recommends that the teaching committee develop a strategic plan for making this substantive change in the advanced courses and for identifying the faculty who will teach each course, and in at least some courses it should be by team teaching.

A committee was formed to insure the integration of research methodologies into the advanced courses. Many but not all the current courses meet those requirements, and it is not clear what methodologies are emphasized. Furthermore, the *natanya college.doc* states

1. The Sub-committee recommends that lecturers shall present the more basic research methods through articles in Hebrew, while the more sophisticated research methods are presented in English.

This recommendation is of concern because the fields are international and publications in English have undergone rigorous editorial procedures to insure that methods and reasoning meet international standards. Because publications in Hebrew cannot undergo this process, there is no guarantee that they meet the research standards accepted by the fields.

6. Likewise, the committee further recommends that the strategic plan for teaching include the aim of making second and third year courses more demanding of students by involving more empirical and statistical reasoning (e.g., reading empirical journal articles in addition to other texts). It is valuable that first year students take two semesters of statistics, but this material would be far more relevant and better remembered by students if they put this technical preparation to use in the substantive, advanced courses. Certainly advanced courses in which statistical reasoning is particularly influential (e.g., social stratification, as noted) really must focus on such reasoning.

The department has added advanced courses that are vetted by a committee to insure that they entail empirical and statistical reasoning. Some caveats are noted above.

a. The department should thus include in its strategic teaching plan a way to ensure that empirical and statistical reasoning will be used in advanced courses, and the plan should be implemented in the second year.

The department has added required courses in statistics and methods, though it is not clear how exactly this material will be put to use in advanced courses.

7. As for research, the committee recommends that the department develop clear guidelines on this topic both for students and for faculty and a strategic plan for ensuring that students gain hand-on experience in doing research. The guidelines and plan should acknowledge that to achieve its teaching mission in Behavioral Science, the department will need to revamp its offerings in the area of student research. Students cannot learn contemporary behavioral science merely by reading about it in textbook. They require hands-on research experience – even in an institution that does not aim to train researchers.

a. The committee recommends that the department design and require two or more research seminars (also known as lab courses) in which students gain hands-on research experience by learning to develop interesting and yet feasible research questions, learning how to design a study and what methodology to use, learning how to collect data and analyze them, and how to write research reports. Such courses should fit the state of the science at the undergraduate level in each of the main behavioral science disciplines in the department.

There was no response to this recommendation.

b. The committee encourages the department as well to develop a research internship or honors program in which excellent students are offered the opportunity to work with faculty on faculty research projects – to deepen students' knowledge of and experience in behavioral science and to better prepare them both for graduate school and for employment.

There was no response to this recommendation.

c. The committee recommends, in addition, that the department's leadership develop clear guidelines for faculty as to the amount and quality of research expected for promotion and

retention – when these are controlled internally by the college – including the number of publications and type of publication outlets that would be appropriate.

There was no response to this recommendation.

8. The committee recommends, moreover, that an internship program be established for excellent students to have the opportunity to work at nearby companies, in government, or with the military. This would benefit students by giving them experience in human resource management or human factors, as the case may be, and it would benefit the companies, government, or military as well.

There was no response to this recommendation.

9. The committee recommends that the administration ensure that the library offers better access books and academic journals (both current and past issues), either onsite for students and faculty or in a loan program that should be developed with a nearby university. Even more urgent, modern data bases, search engines, and e-journals must be available on campus that are easy to access for all faculty and students, and are also regularly updated. One possibility for doing this would be to form a consortium with the other colleges in Israel or with one or more universities to purchase on-line journals and data bases with multi-site licenses.

There was no response to this recommendation.

10. The committee recommends as well that the department conduct an alumni survey that can be informative about what graduates do after graduation, by enabling the department to track job placement and further education over time. This will be useful for planning purposes and for keeping the department up to date with needed improvements and changes as they are implemented.

11. The committee also suggests that the department establish ongoing contacts with alumni to build an alumni culture, which can be valuable to the institution and to the department. If the department were to establish a newsletter for alumni and to organize communities of graduates, perhaps by current employment or geographic region, this would keep students involved with the college. Alumni groups often offer financial support to their alma maters as well, and support them in other ways too, making it in the college's best interest to have ongoing alumni contacts can foster this.

The department says it is now developing a website of alumni as a response to recommendations 10 and 11.

Remarks regarding Sociology and Anthropology:

I read the detailed evaluation report and reviewed the response from Netanya Academic College (NAC) to the recommendations made by the evaluation committee. My understanding from the report provided by NAC is that two issues were addressed in some detail; namely,

applying students' methodological training in advanced courses, and the extent to which syllabi are up-to-date. While my impression is that NAC took these issues very seriously (establishing sub-committees and developing guidelines) I also find the solutions somewhat mechanical focusing more on organizational surveillance than on the internalization of these practices by the teaching faculty. This may be exemplified with respect to the course on Social Stratification.

With regard to this course the evaluation committee stated that **"Based on the syllabi provided by the department, for example, the third-year course on social stratification does not list readings grounded in statistical argumentation, which is particularly unfortunate since this field has become quite technical and there are many examples of statistical reasoning that students could usefully read."**

The syllabus provided with NAC's response makes reference to methodology in a rather technical way by stating upfront the following:

Methodology: in the course the students will be exposed to different qualitative and quantitative methodology.

For example: An ethnographical analysis of symbols and ceremonies (Sharabi, 2009)

In-depth analysis of interviews (Sasson-Levi, 2001)

Scrutiny of the tables of the Central Bureau of Statistics and multiple correlation methods (Yizraeli, 1999; Leshem, 2005; Levin Epstein & Semyonov, 2000).

Pearson correlation (Dehan & Yonah 2006).

Results of surveys and regressions (Shamir & Shamir, 2000)

Yet, a review of the syllabus reveals that only one of these references is listed as required reading material for the course. Furthermore, as social stratification is one of the central concerns of sociological studies one expects that students will benefit from greater exposure to a more varied array of studies, including studies of stratification in other societies. In this regard it is noteworthy that all required readings are in Hebrew. One would expect that in a third year course students would be required to do at least some reading in English. Such exposure is important for their further training and employment in a more globalized world.

Other advanced courses such as *Job Analysis and Personnel Selection* and *Occupation Assessment and Employee Performance* do not make specific mention to the way in which the course aims to advance students' methodological understanding. As the assignment requirements are not listed it is hard to judge what is expected from students. It is noteworthy that in both these courses the majority of required reading is in English as might be expected from advanced courses.

Another important platform for the implementation of methodological knowledge (as proposed by the evaluation committee) is the research seminar. By definition this is an advanced course in which students should engage in empirical research based on methodologies they learned in previous years. The NAC document lists 10 such seminars (p. 12) but I could not find the syllabus of any of these seminars. It is therefore, difficult to assess to what extent NAT's commitment described on pp. 5-6 of the document is translated into actual requirements of the students.

The evaluation committee noted the absence of interdisciplinary courses and recommended (p.14) “...that two or more of the substantive courses in the third year are team taught by faculty from different disciplines, with an emphasis on how each discipline examines specific issues...” The committee also recommended that a plan should be made “... for identifying the faculty who will teach each course, and in at least some courses it should be by team teaching.” In the reply prepared by NAC there is no attempt to address this issue along the recommended lines. In fact NAC seems to prefer the opposite strategy; that is to shy away from interdisciplinarity by fortifying a distinction between the study tracks of Psychology and Human Resources (p. 2, the NAC’s response). **I am not sure whether this issue is part of the evaluation committee’s mandate, but my own view is that as long as students are enrolled in one undergraduate program for which they receive accreditation this strategy does not make much sense and may be misleading.**