



Committee for the Evaluation of Computer Science Study Programs

**Netanya Academic College
Computer Science and Mathematics School
Evaluation Report**

October 2014

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Chapter 1: Background

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Computer Science during the academic year of 2012-2013.

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. Maurice Herlihy - Computer Science Department, Brown University, USA - Committee Chair
- Prof. Robert L. Constable - Computer Science Department ,Cornell University, USA¹
- Prof. David Dobkin - Department of Computer Science, Princeton University, USA²
- Prof. Sarit Kraus - Department of Computer Science, Bar Ilan University, Israel³
- Prof. Dmitry Feichtner-Kozlov - Department of Mathematics, Bremen University, Germany
- Prof. Joe Turner, Jr. - (Emeritus) - Department of Computer Science, Clemson University, USA - ABET Representative
- Prof. Moshe Vardi - Department of Computer Science, Rice University, USA

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:⁴

¹ In accordance with the CHE's policy, Prof. Robert L. Constable did not participate in the evaluation of the Computer Science department at Ben Gurion University to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interests.

² Due to scheduling constraints, Prof. David Dobkin did not participate in the site visits to the Jerusalem College of Technology, Hadassah Academic College, Ariel University, the Weizmann Institute of Science, the College of Management Academic Studies, and the Holon Institute of Technology.

³ In accordance with the CHE's policy, Prof. Sarit Kraus did not participate in the evaluation of the Computer Science department at Bar Ilan University to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interests.

⁴ The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Computer Science, 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 2011).

Chapter 2: Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meeting on May 21, 2013, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Computer Science Study programs in Israel.

In May - June 2013, the Committee held its first round of visits of evaluation, and visited the Hadassah Academic College, Jerusalem College of Technology, Ariel University, Tel Aviv University and Bar-Ilan University. In January 2014, the committee held its second round of visits of evaluation, and visited Ben-Gurion of the Negev, the Open University of Israel, the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College, Netanya Academic College, the Weizmann Institute of Science, the College of Management Academic Studies, and the Holon Institute of Technology. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report deals with the program of Computer Science at the Computer Science and Mathematics School at Netanya Academic College. The Committee's visit to the College took place on January 9, 2014.

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

As part of the evaluation process, the committee appraised the compliance of Computer Science departments to the CHE standards for studies in Computer Science, set in 2008. The CHE standards are attached as **Appendix 3**.

The Committee thanks the management of Netanya Academic College and the Computer Science and Mathematics School for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Computer Science Study Program at Netanya Academic College

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.

1. Executive Summary

Computer science is central to the Israeli economy and even to its security. Among winners of the Turing Award (generally considered as the “Nobel Prize” for computer scientists), Israel has more recipients than all but one other country.

The committee is impressed by the computer science program that has been developed at the Netanya Academic College. Students feel very well served by the school and the academic staff is very committed to delivering the type of education that the college provides. The college has a program for high school students. There is also a preliminary year for students who do not have the necessary background to enter the program.

An admirable aspect of the programs at Netanya Academic College is the effect that they have had on the local environment – they have transformed the local neighborhood and have provided education to many students who would not otherwise get higher education.

The undergraduate program at the college is built upon a curriculum that covers computer science well. The students are trained well and the academic staff members understand what it takes to deliver an appropriate education. The dedication of the academic staff is remarkable. The academic staff is available for consultation at all time; indeed, students have the cell phone numbers of the academic staff and feel comfortable calling with

questions at all times. The academic staff is involved with students and keeps in contact even after graduation. The course materials we saw were of high quality.

The undergraduate program provides multiple tracks. There is a daytime track and an evening track, and a track for high school students. There is a 4-year track for students with insufficient background, who are admitted for a preliminary year in which they are required to take math courses as well as a few beginning computer science courses.

After the first year, about 15% of the students drop out, and about 25% repeat the year. Of these, about 60% succeed (and 40% drop out). It is important to continue to monitor this process to ensure that it benefits a clear majority of the students who repeat the first year.

There is a desire to create a master's program at the college. The approach to the program would be unique to Israel as it would have an experimental focus. While we applaud this effort, we strongly believe that it would be premature to establish such a program at this time. The current academic staff would need to expand to meet such a challenge. And, the new faculty members who would be added would be difficult to find as there is a shortage of potential faculty members. Every department in Israel is looking to hire such faculty members. As a result, it is our judgment that new academic staff members should be identified and hired before such a program is launched.

Overall, the college did a good job addressing and implementing the previous committee's recommendations.

2. Organizational Structure

Observations and findings

The organizational structure appears to be adequate, although the committee was concerned that we saw no clear strategic plan for the future.

3. Mission and Goals

Observations and findings

Overall, the college seems to be fulfilling its mission statement. An admirable aspect of the programs at Netanya Academic College is the effect that they have had on the local environment – they have transformed the local neighborhood and have provided education to many students who would not otherwise get an education.

4. Study Programs

Observations and findings

The undergraduate program provides multiple tracks. There is a daytime track and an evening track, and a track for high school students. There is a 4-year track for students with insufficient background, who are admitted for a preliminary year in which they are required to take math courses as well as a few beginning computer science courses.

The committee is impressed by the computer science program that has been developed at the Netanya Academic College. Students feel very well served by the department, and the faculty is very committed to delivering the type of education that the college provides. The college created a preliminary year for students who do not have the necessary background to enter the program.

The college also has a program for high school students, which the committee judges to be distinct from the regular accredited college program. At least

some of the courses are taught separately, and in a different sequence. The committee was not able to evaluate the high school program because its details were not provided in the self-evaluation report and there are no CHE guidelines for such a program.

The undergraduate study program is reasonable and comparable to the programs at other college computer science programs, although somewhat inflexible. It is unclear the extent to which the curriculum designers were aware of internationally-accepted models such as the ACM / IEEE-CS curricula.

There is a desire to create a master's program at Netanya. The approach to the program would be unique to Israel as it would have an experimental focus. While we applaud this effort, we strongly believe that it would be premature to establish such a program at this time. The current faculty would need to expand to mount such a program. And, the new faculty members who would be added would be difficult to find as there is a shortage of potential faculty members. Every department in Israel is looking to hire such faculty members. As a result, it is our judgment that new faculty members should be identified and hired before such a program is launched.

Recommendations

Intermediate term [~within 2-3 years]:

- a) The department should identify and hire the faculty members needed to run a master's program before starting such a program.
- b) The department must offer more elective courses.

5. Human Resources / Faculty

Observations and findings

The academic staff is very committed to delivering the type of education that the college provides.

Professional development of the staff is important. An example of a formal professional-development program is to require all academic staff members to submit annually an individualized academic development plan (IADP). Each IADP is a confidential "road map" for career development conducted by the academic staff member, in discussion with the department chair.

The IADP document includes: Review of current teaching, service, and research activities; Assessment of progress toward next academic promotion (if applicable); Plans for academic development activities, such as conference attendance; Suggestions for actions and resources to achieve objectives Timeline/action steps (if applicable). Some academic staff members appear to have adequate support for professional development.

Recommendation

Short term [~ within 1 year]:

The college must constitute a comprehensive professional development program for its academic staff.

6. Students

Observations and findings

The students who graduate from the program appear to do well in the job market.

7. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Observation and findings

The teaching and learning outcomes stated are appropriate, but no systematic effort has been made to determine whether they have been achieved.

Recommendation

Short term [~ within 1 year]:

The department should set in place a process to reflect on the attainment of teaching and learning outcomes in a planned, periodic manner.

8. Research

Observations and findings

The research level is appropriate for a college, but not yet strong enough to support a master's degree.

9. Infrastructure

Observations and findings

The infrastructure appears to be adequate.

10. Self-Evaluation Process

Observations and findings

The committee was impressed with the quality of the self-evaluation report and the response to the previous report.

Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations and Timetable

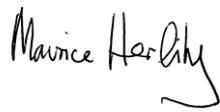
Short term [~ within 1 year]:

- 1) The college must constitute a comprehensive professional development program for its academic staff.
- 2) The department should set in place a process to reflect on the attainment of teaching and learning outcomes in a planned, periodic manner.

Intermediate term [~ within 2-3 years]:

- 1) The department should identify and hire the faculty members needed to run a master's program before starting such a program.
- 2) The department must offer more elective courses.

Signed by:



Prof. Maurice Herlihy
Committee Chair



Prof. Robert L. Constable



Prof. David Dobkin



Prof. Dmitry Feichtner-Kozlov



Prof. Kraus Sarit



Prof. Joe Turner, Jr



Prof. Moshe Vardi

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



הוועדה לתכנון ותקציב | Planning & Budgeting Committee

12.5.2013
Jerusalem

Professor Maurice Herlihy
Computer Science Department
Brown University
USA

Dear Professor Herlihy,

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, provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, as well as ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this most important endeavor we reach out to world-renowned scientists to help us meet the critical challenges confronting Israeli higher education by extending our invitation to participate in an international evaluation committee. This process represents an opportunity to assess the current state of the field and plan for the future. This systematic process of quality assessment also establishes a framework for the interactive consultative process taking place between scientists around the globe regarding common academic dilemmas.

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 Computer Science. The composition of the Committee will be as follows: Professor Maurice Herlihy, Committee Chair, Professor Moshe Vardi, Professor (Emeritus) Joe Turner Jr., Professor Robert L. Constable, Professor Sarit Kraus, Professor David Dobkin, and Professor Dmitry Feichtner-Kozlov.

Ms. Yael Herzstein 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 deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

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

Sincerely,


Dr. Avital Stein
Director General,
The Council for Higher Education

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Ms. Michal Neumann, The Quality Assessment Division
Ms. Yael Herzstein, Committee Coordinator

ת.ה. 4037, ירושלים 91040, ISRAEL, Fax: +972-(0)2-5094686, Tel: +972-(0)2-5094500(02)
www.che.org.il | email: director-general@che.org.il

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Computer Sciences - schedule of site visit

Netanya Academic College

Thursday, January 09, 2014 All meetings will be held in room 108

Time	Subject	Participants
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with Quality Assessment	Prof. Zvi Arad Prof. Sinai Deutch Prof. Bernard Pinchuk
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Dean of the School of Computer Sciences	Prof. Amos Israeli
10:15-11:15	Meeting with senior academic staff (whom are representatives of relevant committees)*	Prof. Michael Muzychuk, Prof. Udi Rotics, Prof. Moti Schneider, Dr. Oran Sharon, Dr. Noa Lewenstein.
11:15-12:00	Meeting with Junior academic staff *	Mr. Ahmad Jbara, Ms. Hana Zimmermankarl.
12:00-12:45	Lunch (in the same room)	<i>Closed door meeting of the committee</i>
12:45-13:30	Tour of facilities: labs, classrooms, library, offices	With Prof. Israeli.
13:30-14:15	Meeting with BA Students**	
14:15-15:00	Meeting with Alumni	
15:00-15:15	Closed door meeting	
15:15-15:45	Summation meeting with heads of institution and school	Prof. Zvi Arad Prof. Sinai Deutch Prof. Bernard Pinchuk Prof. Amos Israeli

* 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.

Appendix 3: CHE standards for studies in computer science

**CHE decision of 17.7.08 regarding standards for Computer
Science Studies**

Bachelor's Degree Programs

A. Graduates

1. In determining these criteria, the committee felt that it would be beneficial to define the "final product", or the ideal graduate of a Computer Science bachelor's degree program:
2. A graduate has an in-depth understanding of Computer Science Theory, Computational Theory, Computational Mathematics, and staunch mathematical knowledge.
3. A graduate has broad knowledge in Computer Science applications (programming languages, software engineering, operations systems and computer design).
4. A graduate is capable of joining development teams in computer-related high-tech industries.
5. A graduate is able to carry out computer-based industrial projects.
6. A graduate is competent in applied analytics, and is capable of developing and integrating effective algorithms in software systems.
7. A graduate has independent study skills and can prepare Computer Science presentations.
8. A graduate is aware of the effects of computerization on individuals, organizations and on society, as well as its ethical, legislative and political ramifications.
9. Excellent graduates are capable of continuing their studies in master's degree programs.
10. To assure that their graduates attain these capabilities, bachelor's degree programs must adhere to the following criteria:

B. Curricula

Programs must include required courses as well as an adequate selection of elective courses.

1. Required (core) courses should include:
 - Advanced-level mathematics courses, taught by experienced Ph.D.-level mathematics professors. These should include: Discrete Mathematics, Calculus, Algebra and Introduction to Probability.
 - Courses in Computer Science Theory, including: Automata Theory (or a similar subject), Data Structure, Algorithmic Theory and Computational Theory.
 - At least one seminar and one applications project that includes accepted industry development processes.
 - Applied Computer Science courses in Programming Languages, Software Engineering, Operating Systems, Computer Design and Logical Content.
2. The program should offer as many elective courses as possible in Computer Science and related fields (Economics, Management, Mathematics), as well as Humanities courses, to provide a well-rounded education.
3. The programs should encourage independent study.

C. Students, Teaching and Learning

1. Institutions must adhere to the CHE admissions regulation requiring a matriculation certificate.
2. Students who matriculated in mathematics at a 3-unit level will not be admitted unless they complete (passing a final exam) a preparatory course at the 4 or 5-unit level.
3. "Conditional" admissions should not comprise more than 10% of all admissions.
4. Departments will present detailed support programs for weak students admitted on special terms.
5. Departments will determine rigorous requirements for continuing studies, and coherent diploma eligibility guidelines.

6. Departments will maintain adequate teaching assistant staff, and present detailed programs for providing students with feedback and appropriate laboratory experience.
7. At least 80% of required courses will be taught by full-time faculty.

D. Faculty

1. New programs will require at least six senior Ph.D.-level faculty members; three at the program's inception and an additional two to three before the program starts its third "cycle" of admissions and as a condition for final/permanent accreditation.
2. Programs will not get final/permanent accreditation if they lack the requisite number of full-time faculty members to teach at least 80% of the required courses.
3. The student-to-faculty ratio will not exceed 50:1 at colleges and 25:1 at research universities.

D. Infrastructure

The institutions must provide adequate facilities for all programs and faculty research – laboratories, appropriate computers, adequate technical support, up-to-date libraries, fully equipped classrooms, secretarial staff and adequate, fully-equipped faculty office space.

Master's Degree Programs

A. Graduates - General

1. Demonstrates good Self Study Abilities.
2. Has depth and systematic understanding of knowledge in academic discipline.
3. Has comprehensive theoretical and applied knowledge in a wide range of Computer Science topics.

B. Graduates – Research-based Master's Degree

1. Able to undertake independent research and present outcomes in writing.
2. Able to use full range of learning resources relevant to the research topic.
3. Has depth and systematic understanding of knowledge in academic discipline.
4. Excellent graduates should be able to continue their studies toward doctoral degrees.

C. Non-Research Master's Degrees

These programs will be offered predominantly at colleges, while universities will offer non-research master's degree programs only to students who can not complete their research projects, or to excellent students whose research results permit continuing directly to doctoral degree programs.

Non-research master's degree programs "produce" graduates with a broad knowledge base and a high level of applications experience, who are increasingly in demand in today's complex computer science market.

The committee found that the grade average in master's degree programs (research and non-research) at all of the universities is exceedingly high. To solve this problem, the committee recommends that at least 50% of required courses in master's degree programs should be advanced graduate-level courses.

The Council for Higher Education approved detailed requirements for accreditation of non-research master's degree programs (the decision taken on July 15, 2003 is attached). All these in addition to the following criteria:

1. Programs should include a major (year-long) applications project.
2. Master's degree students will be required to submit a final paper and/or pass a qualifying exam, to cover all of the Computer Science subjects studied.
3. At least 70% of the required courses in master's degree programs will be advanced graduate-level courses.

D. Research-based Master's Degree Programs

The Council for Higher Education approved detailed requirements for accreditation of research-based master's degree programs at non-university institutions of higher education (the decision taken on October 10, 2004 is attached). All these in addition to the following criteria:

1. Research-based master's degree programs at academic institutions will not be approved unless the faculty includes, at colleges - at least ten full-time senior faculty members at Ph.D. level and involved in active research, and at universities, twenty faculty members with these qualifications.
2. Departments will establish academically acceptable approval procedures for research proposals, and follow-up and final approval procedures.
3. Thesis advisors will be Ph.D.-level faculty members at the rank of Lecturer at least.
4. The total number of advisees (master's and doctoral candidates) per faculty member will be limited to 5-7. Exceptional cases must be approved by special committee.
5. At least 70% of the required courses in master's degree programs will be advanced graduate-level courses.