



**Committee for the Evaluation of Economics Study Programs**

**Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College**  
**School of Management and Economics**  
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 Cooper<sup>1</sup>** - 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 Winter<sup>2</sup>** - 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:<sup>3</sup>

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).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **Chapter 2: Committee Procedures**

The Committee held its first meeting on 18.12.2016, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment process, 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 and prof. David Dillenberger. However, all committee members were part of the following discussion and contributed to drafting the report.

This report deals with the School of Management and Economics at the Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College. The Committee's visit to the Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College took place on December 19, 2016.

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

The Committee thanks the management of the Tel-Aviv Yaffo Academic College and the School of Management and Economics for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

## **Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Economics and Management Study Program at the Tel-Aviv-Yaffo 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.*

The committee was impressed with the college's goal to attract and cater to a diverse student population. We find it to be a laudable cause, and support the college's activities. The institution views itself as an integral part of the community and aspires to provide an educational opportunity to students from a weaker academic background. This vision is reflected in various initiatives, such as student volunteer work in the community and scholarships provided by the college for those who live in the local area.

During the committee's visit to the college, we learned that there is a lack of clarity regarding the college's vision of the relationship between research and teaching. While the institution was established as a teaching oriented college, it has evolved and conducts more research and wishes to establish itself as an academic college, yet this has not been translated into a clear vision and strategic goals. There should be a better articulation of the balance between research and teaching, across the board, of the college's vision and goals, given the current budgetary model and available resources.

The current size of the faculty is a cause for concern, as there are only four senior faculty members in economics, which is below critical mass, especially for research. The committee took note of the department's difficulties in recruiting, given the disadvantage vis-à-vis other institutions, due to the heavy teaching load and fixed salaries. A temporary or intermediate solution the committee would recommend is reviewing the possibility of recruiting some of the adjunct faculty as senior faculty members on the Teaching track.

Given the size of the faculty, the program has had to rely heavily on adjunct lecturers. Yet, since the employment contracts are short term for adjunct faculty, there is some risk in this current employment uncertainty.

Promotion criteria seemed to be unclear to the faculty, and have a disproportionate emphasis on research. We were also surprised that there is no mentoring for new faculty, nor is there any official mid-term review for the tenure.

The committee was concerned to learn there were almost no TAs in the program. This is worrisome given the burden it places on the small faculty, as well as the negative effect on feedback to students and task grading. This situation cannot continue and must be resolved.

The study program seems to be well balanced between theory and applied aspects. Yet, there is only a small selection of elective courses in economics and even fewer in general liberal arts. We would suggest, similar to the previous evaluation committee, to increase the number of electives both in economics and in social sciences in general. The school should also consider developing a computation track or component in the study program as a way of creating and enhancing big data courses and studies.

The students the committee met with seemed positive regarding the program, and had great appreciation of its unique features (Scholarships for housing and social service, applied aspects of studies, internship opportunities). They were also very appreciative of the pre-semester program.

The committee learned there is no clear policy regarding negative student evaluations and feedback. A clear policy should be set to deal more effectively with negative teaching evaluations.

The committee was impressed with the Alumni we met during our visit, which were all very positive and appreciative of the opportunity and education the school provided them. The college should improve its mechanisms for tracking and develop connections with alumni, as they are an important resource both for analyzing and improving the study program, and for creating employment opportunities for current students.

## **Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations**

### **Essential:**

1. The college must articulate and communicate procedures for promotion to the faculty and its standards should match the mission of the institution.
2. To meet the goals that the institution has set itself, it should recruit at least two more faculty members, as it is currently below critical mass. It should prioritize candidates in applied econometrics.

### **Important:**

1. The college should articulate and communicate its mission and vision in terms of the balance between research and teaching.
2. The school should provide more TA support to the faculty, possibly by recruiting from 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.
3. A clear policy should be set to deal more effectively with negative teaching evaluations.
4. The school should offer more electives in economics and social sciences.
5. The school should develop a computation component/track in the current study program.
6. The school should develop its alumni network and involve the alumni more in its activities.

**Signed by:**



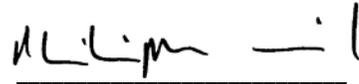
Prof. Georg Winckler - Chair



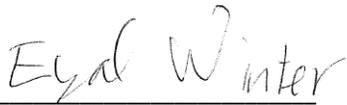
Prof. Russell Cooper



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>The Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo</u>		
Monday, December 19 ,2016 - Room 307, Building 3, 3 <sup>rd</sup> floor		
08:30-09:00	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Shlomo Biderman, President, Prof. Dahlia Moore, Vice President, Mr. Benny Alon, DG
09:00-09:30	Meeting with the Dean of the Management and Economics School	Prof. Israel Borovich
09:30-10:10	Meeting with the Head of the Economics and Management BA program	Dr. Shirit Katav -Herz
<b>10:10-10:20</b>	<b>break</b>	
10:20-11:05	Meeting with senior academic staff *	Dr. Hana Medler Liraz, Dr. Dana Landau, Dr. Odelia Heizler, Dr. Binyamin Berdugo, Dr. Raphael Snir, Dr. Eyal Benjamin, Dr. Zipi Shperling
11:05-11:45	Meeting with adjunct academic staff*	Sani Ziv, Dr. Yael Hadas, Prof. Nava Haruvi, Hadar Binsky, Dr. Tal Mofkadi , Michael Gurkov, Dr. Ziv Hagai, Yossi Levi
11:45-12:15	Open slot	Presentations of three special projects by graduates: 1. Practicum in Economics and Management- Nadav Bonfil 2. Young Entrepreneurs-Lital Saada 3. Social Business Entrepreneurship Incubator- Nofar Drukman
12:15-13:00	Lunch (in the same room)	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b>
13:00-13:45	Meeting with BA students**	
13:45-14:30	Meeting with Alumni**	
<b>14:30-14:50</b>	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b>	
14:50-15:15	Closing meeting with heads of institution, the Dean of the School, and the head of the Economics and Management BA program	Prof. Shlomo Biderman, Prof. Dahlia Moore, Mr. Benny Alon, Prof. Israel Borovich, Dr. Shirit Katav -Herz