Committee for the Evaluation of Economics Study Programs

The Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel

Department of Economics and Management

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***[1] - 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***[2] **-** 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:[3]

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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[1] 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.

[2] 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.

[3] 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. Georg Winckler, prof. Philippe Weil and prof. Eyal Winter. However, all committee members were part of the following discussion and contributed to drafting the report.

This report deals with the Department of Economics and Management at the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel. The Committee's visit to YVC took place on December 22, 2016.

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

The Committee thanks the management of the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel and the Department of Economics and Management for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Economics Study Program at the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel

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 Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel offers great learning opportunities, especially for those students who cannot easily commute to Haifa (or other places) or who want to stay in the region. The committee was positively impressed with the students, the faculty, the overall facilities, and the research strength of the Department of Management and Economics in the college.

The committee was very impressed with the alumni of the program, who seem to have benefited greatly from the opportunity the college provided, and indicated they could easily follow master's degree programs at universities, given the high learning outcomes at the college.

The committee appreciates the college's ties to the region, and its unique role in the periphery, yet feels its links to the region could be intensified. A common strategy plan shared by regional business (farming, high tech companies), local government agencies and YVC could strengthen the regional mission of the college.

The committee learned that the administration is raising the number of students per class (up to doubling the numbers). It was not clear whether that was the outcome of an institutional policy or just a misunderstanding within the institution. The committee recommends that the numbers are not increased, since the good learning outcomes at YVC also result from the fact that faculty has been easily accessible to students until now.

The study program seems to be well balanced and to prepare students well, both for the labor market and for advanced degrees. We recommend more courses on software and the use of big data be added to the program, as well as courses to enhance English skills. The committee supports the department's plans to launch a 4th year in accounting.

The placement center should be strengthened. In addition, since 30% of YVC's student body is Arab, data on dropout and careers of Arab alumni should be collected and used to widen their career opportunities.

The department plans to launch a joint MA program in economics with Tel-Hai Academic College. While we appreciate the willingness and interest to cooperate, the resources such an MA program requires, even if it is a joint one, concern us. Given the current needs of the BA program, available resources should be directed to sustain and strengthen the undergraduate education.

Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations

Essential:

1. An MA program, either joint with another institution or a stand-alone one, should not be launched at this point.
2. The institution should not increase class sizes.

Important:

1. A common strategy plan shared by regional business (farming, high tech companies), local government agencies and YVC should be developed to underline the regional mission of the college.
2. Courses on software and on the use of big data should be added to the study program.
3. Courses taught in English and ones that are designed to enhance English skills should be added to the study program.
4. The department should launch a 4th year in accounting.
5. The department should track data on dropout and on careers of Arab alumni and use it to widen their career opportunities.

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

Economics - Schedule of site visit Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel December 22 ,2016		
10:00-10:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Ariela Lowenstein - President Prof. Aliza Senhar - Rector Mr. Yoram Raz – C.E.O
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the Head of the Economics and Management Department	Prof. Shosh Shahrabani
11:15-12:00	Meeting with senior academic staff *	Prof. Nissim Ben-David, Dr. Rachel Palatnik, Dr. Andrey Kudryavtsev, Prof. Naomi Shaked-Monderer, Dr. Sharon Teitler Regev, Dr. Tamir Gedo, Aviv Rupel CPA, Dr. Sharon Garyn Tal, Dr. Shlomit Hon-Snir
12:00-12:45	Meeting with adjunct academic staff*	Dr. Vladimir Griskin, Adv. Itzhak Y. Ben-Haim, Dr. Gilat Benchetrit, Dr. Eitan Adres, Dr. Liron Amdur, Shay Tzaban CPA, Mr. Avi Zakai
12:45-13:15	Open slot	Tour - Mr. Yoram Raz – C.E.O
13:15-14:00	**Lunch (in the same room)**	**Closed-door meeting of the committee**
14:00-14:45	Meeting with BA students**	
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Alumni**	
15:30-15:50	**Closed-door meeting of the committee**	
15:50-16:15	Closing meeting with heads of the institution and the head of the Economics and Management Department	Prof. Ariela Lowenstein - President Prof. Aliza Senhar - Rector Mr. Yoram Raz – C.E.O **Prof. Shosh Shahrabani**