



## **Committee for the Evaluation of Social Work Study Programs**

**Ariel University**  
**School of Social Work**  
Evaluation Report

**March 2016**

## Contents

<b>Chapter 1:</b>	Background.....	3
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	Committee Procedures .....	4
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	Evaluation of __Social Work_ Study Program at Ariel University.....	2015
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	General Recommendations and Timetable.....	

**Appendices:** Appendix 1 – Letter of Appointment

Appendix 2 - Schedule of the Visit

## **Chapter 1- Background**

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of Social Work and Human Services during the academic year of 2015.

Following the decision of the CHE, Vice Chair of the Council of Higher Education on behalf of the Minister of Education, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- **Prof. Allan Borowski**- School of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University ,Melbourne, Australia (Ageing; Retirement; Migration; Cohesion; Delinquency) Committee Chair
- **Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak** - School of Social Work & Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California, USA (social work and management)
- **Prof. Ram Cnaan** - School of Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania, USA (faith based social services, social policy)
- **Prof. David Biegel** - Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, USA (family as a unit, family welfare)
- **Prof. Zahava Solomon**<sup>1</sup> - School of Social Work, Tel-Aviv University, Israel (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and secondary PTSD)
- **Prof. Sven Hesse**-School of Social work, Stockholm University, Sweden (poverty and children and their families in an international perspective as well as International social work)

***Ms. Alex Buslovich Bilik*** was the coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:<sup>2</sup>

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Social Work and Human Services 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 2014).

---

<sup>1</sup> 1In accordance with CHE policy, Prof. Zahava Solomon did not participate in the evaluation in order to avoid the appearance of any conflict of interest.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **Chapter 2-Committee Procedures**

The Committee held its first meetings on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Social Work and Human Services Study programs in Israel.

In March 2015, the Committee held its visits of evaluation, and visited The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Hai Academic College, Haifa University, Ariel University, Emek Yizrael Academic College, Ashqelon Academic college, Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University, Sapir Academic College and Bar Ilan University. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report deals with the School of Social Work at Ariel University. The Committee's visit to Ariel University took place on Tuesday March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

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

The Committee thanks the management of Ariel University and the School of Social Work for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

## **Chapter 3: Evaluation of Study Program at Ariel University**

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**

The School of Social Work at Ariel University offers BA, retraining BA and MA programs as well as additional courses in Judaism. The BA curriculum is broadly in line with other programs and includes a field placement/practicum. While the BA in some Israeli universities is generic, others, including Ariel University's, provide some practice methods specialization at the undergraduate level. Thus, while all students study two core practice methods (individual and family, and community), students at Ariel University School of Social Work additionally specialize in one of these practice methods.

The MA concentrates mainly on family studies and, thus, builds on the particular expertise of the small number of core faculty. Not surprisingly, given the small number of core faculty, the MA provides little by way of courses in other pertinent areas of social work and only a limited number of elective courses.

As noted, the number of senior/tenured faculty is very small and most have considerable practice experience. The university's infrastructure is lacking both in terms of library internet access and classrooms, which are overcrowded and inadequately-equipped.

It should be noted that Ariel University is in transition from a college to a university. The level of resourcing permits neither the (much lighter) teaching loads found in all other Israeli universities nor the level of research productivity that can only be achieved with lighter teaching loads, better infrastructure and at least some degree of internal budgetary allocations for research. Faculty members thus find themselves in an invidious situation where they aspire to be more research active (and the expectation of the university is that they be so) but cannot be, because current resourcing levels militate against both faculty members' aspirations and the university's expectations of its faculty.

The current Head of Social Work at Ariel University is not a professionally-trained social worker. Given the small number of core faculty, professional leadership of the educational and research enterprise is more important than in much larger schools where professional social work training and experience can be found among (the larger group of) senior faculty members.

### **2. Organizational Structure**

Ariel University was established in 1982 as a college in Qedumim, beyond the Green Line. As an institute of higher education, Ariel College operated as an

extension of Bar Ilan University. In 1996 the Council of Higher Education (CHE) accredited the College independence and as of 2002 it was granted the authority to award academic degrees without the support of Bar Ilan University. In July 2007 the CHE of Judea and Samaria approved a change of status of the College to become a University Center. Ever since then, the institution has been undergoing a transition from a college to a university.

Ariel University's four faculties (Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences and Health Science) and its Schools of Architecture and Communications offer undergraduate degrees in 26 departments and Master's degrees in 8 of these departments. While officially no PhD program is in place at Ariel University, 24 professors from various disciplines are approved to serve as PhD supervisors.

Ariel University is located on a large campus divided by a road to the upper and lower campus with 20 buildings consisting of classrooms, laboratories, a library and administrative offices.

### **3. Observation and findings**

Both faculty members and students described their learning/work conditions as inadequate. The teaching halls/classrooms are at times too small to accommodate the number of students. Some courses are held in a gym. In some cases, chairs need to be carried by the students from one hall to another. There is no infrastructure for the use of laptops in many of the classrooms. Small rooms with flexible sitting arrangements are scarce, but necessary for clinical practice and social work practice methods courses. Students have to travel from their home to Ariel University to use the library as no remote internet access to the library resources is available. Finally, books that form part of the required reading are in short supply and students indicated to the Committee that they often have to wait for a long time before they can access these books.

The faculty members of the School of Social Work, for the most part, have very small, shared offices. Under these circumstances it can be extremely difficult to meet and advise their students, let alone conduct research.

### **4. Mission and Goals**

In the self-evaluation report it is stated that the mission of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities is "to promote and conduct academic research in its fields of endeavor; to provide knowledge and tools with which they should be able to assess and critically apply what they have learnt; have insights on how they can take actions and to make contributions to society as ordinary citizens."

The stated mission of the School of Social Work at Ariel University as presented in its self-evaluation report is as follows: "The School is committed to teaching and training students to initiate social change in the various social services settings in social policy development, and in supplying effective and efficient social services to families and their community."

The evident resource constraints at Ariel University, as reflected in the small number of core faculty members in the School of Social Work (and, in consequence, their very high teaching loads) and infrastructure deficiencies (let alone monies to support research), suggest that there are major constraints to the realization of the mission of both the Faculty and the School.

## **5. Study Programs**

The School of Social Work offers two undergraduate programs: a three-year BA, serving 216 students in 2013-14 and a two year retraining/hasava BA program for students holding BA in another of the social sciences (87 students). The graduate studies leading to an MA offers two tracks: the two year track without thesis, taken by the vast majority of students (79 students), and a research/thesis track taken over three years (and serving 27 students). The thesis track has only provisional approval (given in May 2013) and, hence, is beyond the scope of this Committee's review.

The BA program consists of 38, 42 and 30 credits respectively in its three years of study. In general, the curriculum is similar to that offered in other universities and colleges in Israel and is comprised of introductory courses, practice method courses and basic research methods. All students are required to take courses in individual and family and community studies. The BA program provides for practice methods specialization. The number of elective courses is rather limited. In addition to the social work courses, students at Ariel University are required to take 12 credits in Judaism. The entire program comprises of 122 credits.

Like other BA programs in Israel, the program at Ariel University also entails field work in the second and third years. To proceed from one year to the next, students must obtain a minimum grade of 65, a minimum grade in practice methods courses and a passing grade in field work.

The School also offers an MA program that is comprised of theoretical, clinical and some research courses for a total of 46 credits, as well as a practicum of 100 hours with 25 hours of supervision. The MA program overloads the capacities of the small number of senior faculty. Thus, the focus of the MA is on family therapy and some of the program's courses fulfill the requirements of the Israel Association for Couple and Family Counseling. Given the emphasis on family studies, however, other areas of social work (e.g., mental health, rehabilitation, corrections, etc.) receive little attention, a limitation that is acknowledged in the self-evaluation

report (p. 20). The passing grade in research and statistics is 60, for other required courses 70, and for elective courses 65. The MA is designed to be completed in 2 years but can be spread over 3 years.

The School maintains a campus-based clinic (the LAHAT therapy center) where MA students serve as therapists and receive supervision using advanced methods such as live supervision via a two-way mirror.

## **6. Human Resources / Faculty**

The senior faculty of the School of Social Work is very small, consisting of only 4 individuals, namely, one full professor and three senior lecturers. However, there is considerable depth in terms of practice experience among the senior faculty.

Given the School's high academic aspirations – to offer more specializations in the regular MA program, a thesis track in the MA program and perhaps ultimately a PhD program – the number of faculty members is insufficient. Furthermore, both in the self-evaluation report and the information provided during the site visit, it appears that Ariel University is facing considerable difficulties in recruiting senior staff with the depth of scholarly research experience required to supervise the research theses of growing numbers of graduate students.

In the Committee's meeting with the Head of the School, it was indicated that the School desires, in the future, to hire of future faculty members who are researchers. While it is understandable that the School is trying to enhance the amount and quality of research by the faculty given its university status, the Head of the Department did not discuss teaching needs and practice experience of new faculty in making future hiring decisions. Given that social work is an applied profession, it is important the new faculties are hired for their teaching ability and practice experience in addition to their research expertise and interest.

The mentoring of faculty who carry very heavy loads in a context of constrained resources arguably makes *faculty* mentoring much more important than in other, better-resourced universities. However, faculty of the School of Social Work only receive mentoring from the Head of School on ad hoc basis. Given this situation, the need for a formalized mentoring program is considerable.

## **7. Students**

In both the undergraduate and graduate programs (yet more salient in the MA) the vast majority of applicants are admitted and this seems to be a steady trend over the past 5 years. This high rate of admission probably reflects the intense competition for students among the various schools of social work in Israel.



There is an admission quota for 'special cases' of up to 10% for the BA program (students with special needs, over the age of 30 who do not meet admission criteria etc.). Once admitted, chances are that the students in all programs will graduate. The drop-out rate is very low.

In its meetings with the students, the Committee was impressed with the considerable satisfaction with and even enthusiasm for the School. Students repeatedly praised the faculty for their personal attention and support. Students reported that they feel appreciated, that they count and that their voices are heard. At the same time they have serious complaints about the facilities and infrastructure including classrooms, library access, etc.

## **8. Teaching and Learning Outcomes**

MA students informed the Committee that, in addition to the oral presentations in the clinical courses, they also have to hand in written assignments and take exams.

Grades achieved by both BA and MA students (including the grades of MA students in their integrative paper) are, on average, quite high suggesting grade inflation is at play in assessment, or a lack of rigor in grading.

The scope of some of the options for the integrative final paper for non-thesis track MA students is very considerable. For example, option A, which entails a quantitative study that requires at least 60 participants, appears, on the face of it, to be akin to a thesis. In what sense the options (A through E) are "integrative" and the rationale for the integrative final "paper" is not specified in the self-evaluation report.

Like many other Schools of Social Work in Israel, the Ariel University School only recently begun to try to specify learning outcomes for its various programs (see page 46 of the self-evaluation report). Further work in this regard is needed in relation to both the intended learning outcomes for individual subjects/courses as well as those for programs of study (BA and MA).

The School relies heavily on part-time adjunct teaching staff some of whom, as far as some first year students are concerned, are not sufficiently knowledgeable about their subject matter.

## **9. Research**

Several impediments to research at Ariel University's School of Social Work should be noted.

1. Given its location beyond the Green Line, university researchers have do not access to major funding agencies such as the EU, BSF, GIF, NIH and others.

2. The core faculty at the School of Social Work is not only very small in number but also comprises, for the most part, academics whose teaching workloads have highly constrained their research productivity.

3. While the management of Ariel University, the Dean and the Head of the School acknowledged these difficulties and help faculty members with research seed money and some incentives to conduct research, improved productivity can only be expected if the teaching workloads are meaningfully reduced in tandem with formalized mentoring arrangements.

The research that is being undertaken focuses on several areas as outlined on page 90 of the self-evaluation report. Given the small number of core faculty, the School would do well to maintain its research focus on these select areas in order to, over time (and facilitated by the recruitment of additional faculty members!) build depth in the designated areas.

## **10. Infrastructure**

See earlier sections of the reports on the Committee's concerns regarding infrastructure.

## **11. Self-Evaluation Process**

The previous evaluation of the School conducted in 2007 yielded several recommendations. These were studied carefully by Ariel University. The majority of these recommendations were implemented.

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

The Committee recommends:

Essential Changes:

1. The recruitment of permanent academic faculty members with strong social work practice and research experience.. This is both urgent and imperative if the School is to realize its aim of training high quality social workers.

2. Given the aspiration for an approved MA research track (thesis), suitable advisors should be recruited possibly, at least in the initial phase from other departments or from other universities, and supervisors should be compensated. Internal supervisors should be provided with both formal training in supervision and ongoing support as supervisors.

3. With regard to infrastructure, lecture halls/rooms well equipped for seminars (the common mode of teaching Social Work methods) are urgently needed.
4. Faculty be provided with adequate offices so they can meet privately with students, and allowing them space for professional encounters with their colleagues, and have a physical base from which to conducti search.
5. Library services should be improved as follows : (a) accessibility via internet to computerized data bases and purchase of sufficient number of copies of books that have been set as required reading by course instructors.

**Signed by:**



---

Prof. Allan Borowski



---

Prof. Ram Can'an



---

Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak



---

Prof. David Biegel



---

Prof. Zahava Solomon



or Sven Hessle, Stockholm University, Stockholm

---

Prof. Sven Hessle

**Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment**

February 2015

Prof. Allan Borowski  
School of Social Work  
RMIT University  
Australia

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 **Social Work and Human services**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Michàlle Mor Barak, Prof. Ram Cnaan, Prof. David Biegel, Prof. Zahava Solomon and Prof. Sven Hessle

Ms. Alex Buslovich-Bilik 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 a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hagit Messer-Yaron  
Vice Chair,  
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

*Enclosures:* Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

## Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

### Social Work –Schedule of site visit Ariel University

Thursday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Meetings will be held at Building 53, room 2.9 (Lower Campus)

Time	Subject	Participants
9:-09:0030	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Yehuda Danon, President Prof. Michael Zinigrad, Rector Prof. Mally Shechory-Bitton, Vice Rector Prof. Nitza Davidovich, Head of quality assessment and academic instruction
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Dean of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	Prof. Elazar Leshem
10:15-11:00	Meeting with the head of the department of Social Work	Prof. Menachem Ben Ezra
11:00-11:45	Meeting with senior academic staff <b>with tenure</b> (representatives of relevant committees)*	Dr. Ahuva Even-Zohar Dr. Yaira Hamama-Raz Dr. Chaya Possick
11:45-12:30	Meeting with senior academic staff <b>without tenure</b> (representatives of relevant committees)*	Dr. Chaya Schwartz Dr. Yona Bressler Dr. Ester Zychlinski Dr. Patricia Tal-Katz Dr. Osnat Levanda Dr. Lea Zanbar Dr. Maya Kagan Dr. Alan York Dr. Michal Mahat Shamir Dr. Eti Bar-Shua Aviva Weinberger Tamar Romi Michal Nir
12:30-13:15	Lunch (in the same room)	<b>Closed-door meeting of the committee</b> <b>Room: 53.4.60</b>
13:15-14:00	Meeting with BA and MA students** (up to 12 students)	
14:00-14:45	Open slot	
14:45-15:00	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
15:00-15:30	Summation meeting with heads of institution, Dean and head of the department	Prof. Yehuda Danon, President Prof. Michael Zinigrad, Rector Prof. Mally Shechory-Bitton, Vice Rector Prof. Nitza Davidovich, Head of quality assessment and academic instruction Prof. Elazar Leshem Prof. Menachem Ben Ezra

\* 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.