



**Committee for the Evaluation of Public Health and Health System
Management**

**The Tel Aviv University
Programs in Public Health (MPH) Program in the School of Public
Health
Evaluation Report**

September 2017

Contents

Chapter 1: Background.....3

Chapter 2: Committee Procedures.....5

Chapter 3: Evaluation of the MPH program at the school of public health at Tel Aviv University.....6

Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations.....16

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letter of Appointment
Appendix 2 - Schedule of the visit

Chapter 1: Background

Following the decision of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) to evaluate study programs in the field of Public Health and Health System Management. The Minister of Education, who serves ex officio as Chairperson of the CHE, appointed a Committee consisting of:

- [Prof. Gerald Kominski](#)- Professor of Health Policy and Management and Director of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, UCLA, USA; Committee Chair.
- [Prof. Joan R. Bloom](#)- Professor of the Graduate Division, Program in Health Policy and Management, School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, USA.
- [Prof. Joseph N.S. Eisenberg](#)- John G. Searle endowed Chair and Professor of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health, University of Michigan, USA.
- [Prof. Jack Zwanziger](#)- Professor of Health Policy and Administration, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA.
- [Prof. Joseph S. Pliskin](#)¹- Professor Emeritus, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, and Department of Health Systems Management, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel.

Ms. Daniella Sandler and Ms. Inbal Haskell-Gordon served as the Coordinators of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:²

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Public Health and Health Management, 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.

¹ Prof. Pliskin did not take part in the evaluation, visit, discussion and writing of the BGU report due to Conflict of Interest.

² The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of September 2015).

Chapter 2: Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meeting on May 7th, 2017, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as Electrical and Communication System Engineering Study programs in Israel.

In May 2017, the Committee held its visits of evaluation to seven institutions: Tel-Aviv University, Ariel University, Ben-Gurion University, University of Haifa, Academic College of Emek Yizraeel, Bar-Ilan University and Hebrew University. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

This report addresses the Programs in Public Health (MPH) Program in the School of Public Health in Tel Aviv University. The Committee's visit to the University took place on May 8th, 2017.

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

The Committee thanks the management of the Tel Aviv University and the School of Public Health for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Programs in Public Health (MPH)

Program in the School of Public Health

At Tel Aviv 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

Tel Aviv University is a major public research university with over 30,000 students and has been in operation since 1956. The School of Public Health, established in 2005, resides within the Sackler Faculty of Medicine. The School consists of four academic departments and the MPH degree program with three distinct tracks: Community Medicine, Health Promotion, and Health Systems Administration. The MPH program was recently approved for permanent accreditation by CHE in late 2016.

The School of Public Health has many strengths. The faculty include many distinguished with previous and current high-level positions in government and in the healthcare system. The School has strong ties to hospitals and HMOs and has trained many students for positions of leadership the healthcare system. Current students and alumni spoke highly of the quality of the program. Nevertheless, the Committee identified several significant areas for improvement necessary for the School of Public Health to advance to the next stage of leadership in public health education and training. These recommendations are discussed in more detail in the remaining sections of this report, and are summarized below.

Briefly, the Committee found that despite having more than 80 faculty affiliated with or teaching in the School, the core full-time faculty with primary appointments in the School appears to be only 6.75 full-time equivalents. The most recent student enrollments for 2014 indicate 270 students in the program, suggesting

a student-to-faculty ratio of 40.0 to 1. This ratio suggests that faculty resources are not completely adequate for all the functions faculty serve in a School, including providing advising for masters and doctoral theses. The Committee is under the impression that up to three additional full-time faculty will be recruited to the School, but we strongly urge leadership in the Faculty of Medicine and the University to allocate even more full-time faculty positions directly to the School in order for the size of the School to reach a critical mass.

The School's current mission and organization reflects an emphasis on training health professionals that the Committee believes is too narrow for the future growth of public health education. We recommend that the School revise both its Mission Statement and its internal organization chart to reflect the broader core areas of public health that have been defined in Europe and the United States, and to reflect the fact that both health professionals and those without prior health professional degrees are candidate for training within the School to *become* public health professionals.

Finally, the Committee recommends that students be given more opportunity for practical learning experiences. In the classroom, they should have more opportunities for "hands-on" experience with subject matter; for example, exercises or labs where they learn how to use software they have been told about in lectures. In addition, the Committee believes students could benefit from more field placement experience, and with more assistance from the School in finding those field placements. This need is particularly important in a field such as Health Promotion, which has a very practical orientation.

Additional recommendations and their priority are presented and discussed in the remaining sections of this report.

2. Mission and Goals

Observations and findings:

TAU's Mission Statement is "To enhance public health through education, research, and training of health professionals as future public health leaders." The Committee found that although TAU is primarily serving to train health professionals, about 10 percent of their current students do not have prior health professional degrees or experience. Therefore, we recommend that the program modify its Mission Statement to acknowledge its important role in training non-health professionals, who are expected to be a growing share of TAU's MPH program in the future. Furthermore, the Committee believes that MPH programs, including TAU's, play a fundamental role in developing and training *public* health professionals.

Recommendations:

Essential: Modify the Mission Statement to better reflect the training of non-health professionals and the role of training *public* health professionals. To understand the definition of public health professionals, take into account the core areas in public health and the core professional competencies in public health defined by the U.S. Council of Education in Public Health (CEPH) and the European Agency for Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA).

3. Organizational Structure

Observations and findings:

The Committee found the organizational structure of the School of Public Health to be confusing. There are four Departments offering various Masters Degrees, and a separate MPH program with three tracks. However, one of those tracks, Health Promotion, is also a Department. Another MPH track, Community Health, is closely related to Health Promotion, and could, for example, be a track within the Department of Health Promotion. Moving forward, an effective School of Public Health must have strong and adequately staffed programs that reflect the core competencies of Public

Health. TAU's School has most of the elements of public health within its School on paper, but appears to be understaffed overall in terms of full-time faculty. Nevertheless, an effective School of Public Health must also have adequate faculty staffing, as discussed below in Section 5.

Essential: Create an organizational structure for the School of Public Health is more rational and coherent, and is based on adequate faculty staffing for each public health educational program included in the School.

4. Study Programs and Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Observations and findings:

a. Study Programs

The School of Public Health consists of four departments: Health Promotion, Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Emergency and Disaster Management, and Environmental and Occupational Health. Students receive the MPH with the exception of the Dept. of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine where they receive the Master of Science. The Department of Emergency and Disaster Management houses an Executive MPH program as well as the opportunity to study abroad as does the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

As indicated above, the MPH programs were approved for permanent accreditation by the CHE in 2016. Both a PhD program and post-doctoral fellowships directed by the Faculty of Medicine also exist. Within the MPH program, students are encouraged to do a research-oriented thesis (currently about 25% take this option: the goal is set at 50%, as there are financial incentives for the School for each student who decides to take the thesis option). Currently almost 90% of the students are health professionals albeit less in Emergency and Disaster Medicine. About 50-60% of the students in the Executive Program are health professionals.

b. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

While the evaluation of teaching appears to be mainly done through student assessments (sometimes a measure of the teacher's popularity), it is also done at Tel-Aviv University by visits to the classroom by persons responsible for improving

teaching and used as a basis of providing assistance to them. This is especially important for new faculty and for those who have received low evaluations from students in their classes.

The faculty appears cognizant of the importance of Learning Outcomes for their courses. In addition, a Curriculum Committee exists to review Learning Objectives and to review and approve courses in the curriculum by determining whether there are gaps or overlaps in the curriculum of required courses.

The faculty is justifiably proud of the record for those that do complete the thesis from a research perspective (publications from theses) and the fiscal incentive to the School. The self-study states that students finish their theses and final projects during their third year. However, according to the students, the thesis can take up to two or more years to complete extending the time to degree and being a burden for the students. While the thesis option makes sense for students who plan to go onto a doctoral program, it may be less useful for those who see the MPH as a terminal degree. For the latter group, a group project or field experience for the less experienced might be more useful.

In Biostatistics, it appears to us that teaching maybe too theoretical, based on “heavy math.” More applied experience with statistics through experience/examples from the field might be more appropriate.

It is not clear in the Self Study whether a specific course(s) is available whose focus is the Israeli healthcare system. This is specifically important for the Health Systems Administration track, but all of the tracks would benefit.

Many of the classes use multiple-choice exams as a means of assessing teaching performance. As the results may be affected by teacher popularity, this is only a partial means of evaluating performance. Faculty visitations to classes for both training and evaluative purposes is a strength of the programs.

A Curriculum Committee exists to review course content, the use of Learning Outcomes and determine gaps and advantages in content. This is another strength of the program.

Recommendations:

Essential:

- Scope and time to complete a master's level research thesis should be reduced. Possible alternatives include a literature synthesis, a group project, or a pilot study, etc.
- Add a course on the Israeli healthcare system for the Health Systems

Administration track, but available for students in all tracks.

- More practice oriented courses and/or field experience especially for those who seek the MPH as a terminal degree.
- Biostatistics course content could be better connected to real world problems.

Desirable:

- More consistent use of faculty to visit colleagues courses to provide additional assessment of teaching.
- Increase the number of teaching assistants so that course evaluations can be broadened to include essay and short answer questions.
- Continued use of Curriculum Committee to assess Learning Objectives of courses and required courses within each curriculum.

5. Human Resources / Faculty

Observations and findings:

The School of Public Health is within the Faculty of Medicine.

The School has only 6.75 full time faculty members belonging to four departments. Table 5 lists 9 people that are 100% in the program but only 6 are. Prof. Moshe Leshno and Prof. Jacob Glazer are full time in the Faculty of Management. Not clear to us the role of Dr. Barilan. We were told they want to hire one more faculty member.

They list 30 more faculty members as senior (Table 5). They have adjunct appointments and some of them do not teach.

Only about 5% of senior staff are minority representatives (2 of 39).

The school is very proud of the long list of adjunct faculty members as many of them hold important positions in various health systems. Two of them are former Director Generals of the Ministry of Health; some are CEOs of major hospitals and other hold various position in HMOs and other organizations. They SPH faculty view this as a ‘win-win’ situation.

From our meeting with the faculty, we are under the impression that many of the adjunct faculty are not involved in the School’s routine activities and mainly contribute some teaching (at their own discretion), not involved in School committees, etc. Some are involved in the admission process, and theses reviews. We could not get an indication what are the priority areas for hiring new faculty.

Recommendations:

Essential:

- Broaden faculty pool to accommodate the social sciences.
- Having only 6.75 full time faculty members is not compatible with a School of Public Health. We recommend the School develop a plan for faculty growth that creates a critical mass to be compatible with revised organizational chart recommended in Section 3 above.

6. Students

Observations and findings:

There are three groups within the School of Public Health's student body: those admitted to the Masters programs (either MPH or MA) after completion of Baccalaureate degree with a 80%, medical students admitted to the MD-MPH program and those admitted to the PhD program. The number of applicants has grown in 2014 and 2015 (approx 265) from the 130 range in 2011. The number accepted has grown accordingly to the 120 range from 60; the number actually registered grew from 43 to 70 in the same period. The number matriculating has increased correspondingly but not at the cost of lower standards.

Fifty to sixty percent of the student body are nurses and physicians, approximately 30% are nutritionists and pharmacists, so clinicians dominate overall. Non-clinicians are a larger proportion in the occupational and environmental health and health management tracks. The vast majority of Masters students work while pursuing their studies, most in a health related areas. Most of the attrition in the program takes place during the first year. Most students take more than 3 years to complete the program. Somewhat more than half of all Masters student elect projects rather than theses. This may reflect the fact that thesis students take roughly a year longer to complete. It appears that the seminar requirements (25 for thesis and 15 for non-thesis) are

burdensome, especially if the topics are of limited interest to the students who must leave work and travel to attend.

Students tend to continue their current employment after graduation or go to research-oriented employment. Many students expressed the need for more applied skills in their work after graduation.

Recommendations:

Essential:

- As the program broadens from its current heavy clinical emphasis, there should be an attempt to recruit students who are not clinicians.
- There may be a need to increase skills in the area of field work and the application of statistical techniques. This reflects a general demand for more applied and “real world” skills.

Desirable:

Faculty should be careful to select thesis topics that do not require excessive time to complete. The scope of some theses appear to be excessive for a Masters thesis.

Advisable:

Students who do not do lab-based research should not be required to take “Lab safety.”

7. Research

Observations and findings:

The committee found that the research infrastructure, funding and activities occur to a large extent outside of the University setting. With regards to research infrastructure, the school has two wet laboratories. Much of the research infrastructure comes from strong connection to external research institutes external

to the University (e.g., Maccabi Health Services, Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research, the Ministry of Health's Central Virology Laboratory, the Israel Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Epidemiology Division and the Clinical Research Center of the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center).

Of the \$11.3 M in grant funding obtained by the faculty in the last 3 years, only \$3.2M came through Tel Aviv University. Although the research conducted with the \$8 M that is external to the university is accessible to students, more research funds coming directly to Tel Aviv University would make for a more cohesive environment.

Much of the research associated with faculty is conducted outside of the University. The capacity of the school would be enhanced by increasing the number of faculty lines. This would result in a research program that covers a broader range of areas within public health. Increasing faculty lines may be difficult when the school is situated under the Faculty of Medicine, as it needs to compete with faculty lines under a clinical structure. Also, consistent with being situated within the Faculty of Medicine, the research also has a strong clinical orientation. Increasing the amount of social science research would broaden the public health scope and strengthen the program.

Other observations made by the committee include the appreciation that the faculty are publishing at a high rate. About a quarter of the MPH students, conduct research projects that can take two or more years to complete. These often-sophisticated studies wind up being published. It is unclear whether this is appropriate for an MPH program.

Recommendations:

Essential:

- We recommend that faculty lines should be assigned directly to the School of Public Health so that they do not need to compete with the rest of the Faculty

of Medicine.

- Increasing the funding internal to the school would allow the senior faculty to better define the vision of the school. We therefore recommend additional faculty lines that are focused in targeted areas of research.
- Priority should be made in hiring social science faculty.

Desirable:

We recommend that student be given the option to complete a practice-based thesis (see recommendation in General Report).

8. Infrastructure

Observations and findings:

The Committee was told that a separate building for the School of Public Health was a desirable goal. However, until there is a larger critical mass of full-time faculty with appointments in the School, infrastructure resources for the School appear to be adequate.

Recommendations:

Essential: Develop a long-range plan for the growth of the School, including sufficient space for accommodating that growth.

9. Self-Evaluation Process and implementation of previous recommendations

Observations and findings

The Committee had no concerns about the Self-Evaluation process.

Chapter 4: Summary of Recommendations

Essential Recommendations:

- Modify the Mission Statement to better reflect the training of non-health professionals and the role of training *public* health professionals. To understand the definition of public health professionals, take into account the core areas in public health and the core professional competencies in public health defined by the U.S. Council of Education in Public Health (CEPH) and the European Agency for Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA).
 - Create an organizational structure for the School of Public Health is more rational and coherent, and is based on adequate faculty staffing for each public health educational program included in the School.
 - Broaden faculty pool to accommodate the social sciences.
 - Having only 6.75 full time faculty members is not compatible with a School of Public Health. We recommend the School develop a plan for faculty growth that creates a critical mass to be compatible with revised organizational chart recommended in Section 3 above.
 - Scope and time to complete a master's level research thesis should be reduced. Possible alternatives include a literature synthesis, a group project, or a pilot study, etc.
 - Add a course on the Israeli healthcare system for the Health Systems Administration track, but available for students in all tracks.
 - More practice oriented courses and/or field experience especially for those who seek the MPH as a terminal degree.
 - Biostatistics course content could be better connected to real world problems.
 - As the program broadens from its current heavy clinical emphasis, there should be an attempt to recruit students who are not clinicians.
 - There may be a need to increase skills in the area of field work and the application of statistical techniques. This reflects a general demand for more applied and “real world” skills.
-
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 - Increasing the funding internal to the school would allow the senior faculty to better define the vision of the school. We therefore recommend additional faculty lines that are focused in targeted areas of research.

- Priority should be made in hiring social science faculty.
- Develop a long-range plan for the growth of the School, including sufficient space for accommodating that growth.

Advisable Recommendations:

- Students who do not do lab-based research should not be required to take “Lab safety.”

Desirable Recommendations:

- More consistent use of faculty to visit colleagues courses to provide additional assessment of teaching.
- Increase the number of teaching assistants so that course evaluations can be broadened to include essay and short answer questions.
- Continued use of Curriculum Committee to assess Learning Objectives of courses and required courses within each curriculum.
- Faculty should be careful to select thesis topics that do not require excessive time to complete. The scope of some theses appear to be excessive for a Master's thesis.
- We recommend that student be given the option to complete a practice-based thesis (see recommendation in General Report).

Signed by:



Prof. Gerald Kominski- CHAIR



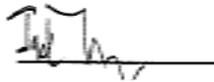
Prof. Joan R. Bloom



Prof. Joseph N.S Eisenberg



Prof. Joseph S. Pliskin



Prof. Jack Zwanziger

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment

May 2017

Prof. Gerald F. Kominski, Ph.D
Department of Health Policy and Management
UCLA Fielding School of Public Health
USA

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 Chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of the study programs in **Public Health and Health System Management**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Joan Bloom, Prof. Joseph N.S. Eisenberg, Prof. Jack Zwanziger, and Prof. Joseph Pliskin.

Ms. Daniella Sandler 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 Chair of this most important committee.

Sincerely,

Prof. Ido Perlman
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. Daniella Sandler, Committee Coordinator

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Schedule of Site Visit
MPH Program, School of Public Health, Tel Aviv University

Monday 8/5/17

Meetings will take place at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine Building, Room 203

Time	Subject
9:30-10:15	Opening session with the heads of the institution and the senior staff member appointed to deal with quality assessment : <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prof. Yaron Oz (Rector)● Prof. Eyal Zisser (Vice Rector)● Prof. David Horn (Head Of Quality Assessment)
10:30-11:15	Meeting with Dean of the Faculty of Medicine: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prof. Ehud Grossman (Dean)

Tuesday 9/5/17

Meetings will take place at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine Building, Room 916

9:15-10:15	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the school and the MPH program : <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prof. Daniel Cohen (Head, School of Public Health)● Prof. Yehuda Lerman (Chair, MPH program)● Prof. Yariv Gerber (Chair, Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine)● Dr. Leah Rosen (Chair, Department of Health Promotion)● Prof. Gabriel Chodick (Chair, Health System Administration Track, MPH program)● Dr. Tomer Ziv-Baran (Coordinator, Health System Administration Track, MPH program)● Ms. Ronit Spiegel (Secretary, School of Public Health)● Mr. Michael Brik (Academic Advisor, School of Public Health)● Ms. Saritte Perlman (Coordinator, International Summer Program)
10:15-11:15	Meeting with senior academic staff* : <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prof. Tamy Shohat● Prof. Moshe Leshno● Prof. Chava Peretz● Dr. Khitam Muhsen● Dr. Gil Fire● Dr. Raz Gross

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dr. Shahar Lev-Ari ● Dr. Itay Wiser
11:15-11:45	<p>Meeting with PhD students and junior academic staff*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ms. Tal Aperman (PhD candidate) ● Ms. Gali Cohen (PhD candidate) ● Ms. Rinat Cohen (PhD candidate) ● Ms. Vicki Myers (PhD candidate) ● Ms. Ifat Aluf-Davidi (TA, Health System Administration Track) ● Ms. Hanaa Rayyan (TA, Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine) ● Ms. Noa Theitler (TA, Health Promotion Track) ● Ms. Michal Webber (TA, Community Medicine/ General Track)
11:45-12:15	Lunch (in the same room)
12:15-13:00	<p>Meeting with MPH students :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biana Dubinsky-Pertzov (Community Medicine/ General Track) ● Corrin Shlomo-Goldenberg (Community Medicine/ General Track) ● Gany Beer-Davidson (Community Medicine/ General Track) ● Pnina Marom (Health Promotion Track) ● Sharon Margalit (Health Promotion Track) ● Stephanie Pere (Health Promotion Track) ● Keren Moshkoviz (Health System Administration Track) ● Nataly Davidovich (Health System Administration Track) ● Eveline Elkhoury (Health System Administration Track) ● Polak Elinor (Health System Administration Track) ● David Bomze (MD-MPH Track) ● Shayel Berkovich (MD-MPH Track)
13:00-13:30	<p>Meeting with Alumni**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yael Olpiner (Community Medicine/ General Track) ● Anat Yom-Tov (Health Promotion Track) ● Udi Shapira (MD-MPH Track) ● Ilan Richter (MD-MPH Track)
13:30-14:00	Tour of campus (classes, library, offices of faculty members, labs, etc.)
14:00-14:20	Closed Door Meeting
14:20-14:45	<p>Summary Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prof. Yaron Oz (Rector) ● Prof. Eyal Zisser (Vice Rector) ● Prof. Iris Barshack (Associate Dean & Head of the Medical School) ● Prof. Daniel Cohen (Head, School of Public Health) ● Prof. Yehuda Lerman (Chair, MPH program)

* The heads of the institution and academic unit or their representatives will not attend these meetings.