



DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS BEZALEL ACADEMY OF ARTS AND DESIGN

EVALUATION REPORT

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS STUDY
PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL

JANUARY 15, 2019

Section 1: Background and Procedures

- 1.1 In the academic year 2017-18 the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programs in the field of Visual Communications [VC] in Israel.
- 1.2 The Colleges participating in the evaluation process were:
 - Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem
 - Holon Institute of Technology, Holon
 - Neri Bloomfield School of Design/WIZO, Haifa
 - Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art, Tel Aviv
- 1.3 To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of:
 - Prof. Nancy Skolos: Committee Chair Rhode Island School of Design, USA
 - Prof. Bruce Brown Royal College of Art, UK
 - Prof. Leland Burke Massachusetts College of Art and Design, USA
 - Prof. Anat Katsir Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Israel
 - Assoc. Prof. Gerry Leonidas Reading University, UK

Ms. Molly Abramson served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.
- 1.4 The evaluation process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (June 2017). Within this framework the evaluation committee was required to:
 - examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the institutions that provide study **programs in VC**
 - conduct on-site visits at those institutions participating in the evaluation process
 - submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the academic units and study programs participating in the evaluation
 - set out the committee's findings and recommendations for each study program
 - submit to the CHE a general report regarding the evaluated field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study
- 1.5 The evaluation committee examined only the evidence provided by each participating institution — considering this alongside the distinctive mission set out by each institution in terms of its own aims and objectives. This material was further elaborated and explained in discussions with senior management,

lecturers, students and alumnae during the course of each one-day visit to each of the institutions.¹

- 1.6 This report deals with the Department of Visual Communications at **Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design**. The Committee's visit to the college took place on May 30th, 2018. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 1.7 The Committee thanks the management of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and the Department of Visual Communications for their self-evaluation report and their hospitality towards the Committee during its visit to the college.
- 1.8 N.B. this report will use Committee, with a capitalized first letter to refer to the international evaluation committee conducting this review.

¹Prof. Katsir did not participate in the visit to the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design or in the committee's discussions concerning the evaluation of this institution.

Executive Summary

Bezalel is the oldest art and design institution in Israel. With a mission centered on activating art and design toward social and political critique it has produced successive generations of graduates who have made significant contributions to Israel's visual culture. The School also has a long tradition of producing graduates who return to teach in higher education, so having a significant influence on the education of future generations of Visual Communicators both in Israel and abroad.

Bezalel's Self Evaluation (SE) Report was honest and exacting, and exceeded the expected threshold level of performance. Although the SE process was heavily introspective, all aspects of VC Design—curriculum, program learning outcomes, faculty development, research, and national/international collaborations—were documented and reflected upon. Most were operating at a satisfactory level; and in cases where improvements were necessary the report identified them and indicated plans for improvement.

Leadership at both the administrative and Departmental level was fully engaged, perceptive and knowledgeable, with an understanding of a collective responsibility to balance the institution's heritage with looking forward and outward.

Amongst the positive aspects encountered during the QA process there were some areas in which further development is either essential, important, or desirable. This will lead to a number of recommendations that will require the institution to create appropriate courses of action.

2. Introduction

The committee members were grateful for the open conversations they experienced during the site visit which engendered a high level of confidence. Bezalel's mission, (p.10 SE Report) "to be a center for knowledge, practice, creativity and cultural discourse" was evident during the Committee's visit and the creative synergy between the faculty and the students was tangible.

The planned move to a new facility at the center of Jerusalem with galleries, courses and events open to the public will further their aim of catalyzing cultural discourse and fostering freedom of expression in Israel.

The Committee is enthusiastic about Bezalel's goals to deepen its cultural influence and encourages it to extend dialog even further into the international community.

3. Quality Assurance (QA) and Self-Evaluation Process

In the Committee's meetings with Bezalel's leadership and teaching faculty, it was clear that the process within the institution for producing the SE Report was open, rigorous and inclusive and foregrounded to the institution the value of developing an internal institutional framework for continuous independent QA which isn't in place at this time.

The Self Study document was well-crafted and illuminated a carefully-developed VC program. Criticality began on page one with aspirations presented as clearly as accomplishments. Where shortcomings were identified, steps were outlined, and improvements were already underway. One strong improvement is the ongoing implementation of the new Teaching Development Center to grow capacity for learning and teaching. Other identified aspirations included expanding capacity—teaching staff, facilities and student support to meet the needs of the increasing student population, providing more connectivity to practice and to alumni, being proactive in diversity hires, and fostering transparency for faculty advancement and evaluation.

4. Character and Mission

4.1 Institution

Our meetings and discussions over the course of the visit verified that Bezalel is meeting the aims laid out in its mission statement and enriches Israel's visual cultural through art and design education.

The SE Report (p.3) reflected a desire for more collaboration between the Department of History and Theory and the Department of Visual Communication. There is also a need for more collaboration across Studio Departments. Elective and studio courses within VC are open to other majors if there is space (p. 28). There is no mention of whether courses outside Department are open to VC students or if non-major studio electives count as studio electives toward degree requirements.

4.2 Department

An energetic commitment to the institution's mission followed through from leadership, to Department, to teaching faculty, and to students. All indications were that the Department is dedicated to creative learning and critical thinking.

Characteristic of VC programs, the Department faces the ongoing challenge of the ever-expanding demands of the discipline. This necessitates a more deliberate mapping of curricular objectives in order to cultivate thematic rather than skill-based objectives.

5. VC Curriculum Design and Delivery

5.1 Curriculum

In looking at the scope of the curriculum, the student work, and syllabuses, the Committee's impression was that the Department delivers a unique VC education that leads through artistic expression.

The program has made strides to address the ever-expanding technical aspects of the discipline of VC. The current curriculum gives students agency in their third and fourth years to customize a program from offerings in Typography and Graphic Design, Illustration, Interaction Design, and Game Design. Game Design, in its pilot year is interdisciplinary by nature and has proven to be a catalyst for bringing many aspects of the discipline together.

The Committee observed that this open structure with two years laying the groundwork for a student-curated curriculum was well-aligned with Bezalel's mission "to provide a rich polyphonic student-driven learning experience." The challenge moving forward is to continue curating the best offerings, and to provide guidance for students as they seek unique pathways.

5.2 Embedding of Learning Outcomes (LO's)

Pages 55-56 of the SE Report outlined a comprehensive list of LO's—skills and values—for the VC Program. However, the Committee observed that further work is needed in mapping the program's overarching LOs to the individual courses and syllabuses. This is especially critical with an open structure and menu of topics for students to navigate. Mapping will also provide a matrix upon which to overlay the larger Department mission of cultural discourse.

5.3 Assessment Documentation & Clarity

The VC program requires a pass mark of 55 but from the data provided (p. 61 of SE Report) the grades appeared to fall primarily between 80 and 89. Grade inflation was acknowledged and the Committee determined that a more nuanced effort is needed to ensure that assessment criteria are applied equally to a grading range that is meaningful. There is too much empathy and not enough objectivity in assessment procedures with extremely vague criteria listed on the syllabuses—some even with conflicting criteria across sections of the same course.

Teaching staff will also require support to navigate the assessment rubric to ensure that assessment is applied evenly. It is further recommended by the Committee that the numerical grades be accompanied by written evaluations. Currently the most significant feedback is given during course critiques and due to large class sizes the critique time available for each student is limited.

5.4 Syllabi

Syllabi evidenced a collective understanding of the essential structure and content required but the quality was somewhat varied with some syllabi having extensive LOs, assessment criteria and bibliographies and others seriously lacking detail.

5.5 Facilities

Overall the Committee was impressed with the quality of the facilities—library, classrooms, furniture, equipment, and workshops however the existing space isn't adequate to meet the needs of the growing number of students and more technical facilities are needed for innovation. The new building promises to increase the space and provide more capacity for classrooms and shops, as well as flexibility for the multidisciplinary curriculum.

6. Faculty Members and Professional Development

6.1 Faculty Composition

Students are drawn to the school because of the high-profile reputations of the teaching faculty. Faculty members in turn are energized by the creativity of the students that the school attracts.

The Committee noted that the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty is seriously out of

balance. The SE Report (pp. 80–85) indicated that the core faculty members ranked Full, Associate, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer numbered only 22 with only one, the Department head, employed at 100%. Of the remaining 21, only 6 were listed as being employed at >50%. Moving to the next level, there were 10 Teaching Fellows with an average of only three and four teaching hours per week. Adjunct Faculty numbered 39 with an average of 3.5 hours per week.

This current configuration puts too much onus on the Department head. Without a core group of full-time faculty, (at least 10) working at 100% capacity, it will be unfeasible to oversee and successfully monitor and shape the curriculum forward.

There were also substantially more male than female faculty members and little diversity. The Committee agrees with the SE Report's acknowledgement that a more vigorous effort to promote faculty diversity is imperative.

6.2 Faculty Engagement

Teaching faculty are passionate, engaged and clearly at the heart of the program's success. However, their one-day-a-week schedule does not facilitate faculty-to-faculty coordination and collaboration. Faculty are giving more to the program than one day affords and the limited time on campus inhibits an ongoing dialog from faculty to students over the course of the program. One consequence of this is that the student experience is often fragmented and sometimes unnecessarily pressured.

6.3 Faculty Collaboration

Course teams within the VC Department seem to be well coordinated but collaboration is limited due to the one-day-a-week schedule of most faculty. There was also little to no evidence of collaboration among Departments.

6.4 Professional Development

The Teaching Development Center has been effective in advancing teaching practices and mentoring systems are in place for new lecturers. The SE Report communicated a desire for a more "systematic mechanism for promoting lecturers, including a measurable multi-annual program and agreed-upon criteria for promoting or terminating lecturers." The Committee agrees that this is critically important.

7. Student Experience

Because students come to Bezalel for its reputation, their expectations for their education and performance are often set to a high level that perpetuates stress even before they arrive. After entering the program, the heavy intensive workload is often difficult to manage. Indications were that they rely primarily on their classmates for emotional support and critical input into the development of their body of work as a whole.

7.1 Supporting Student Progression

Student support comes primarily from the Department head and teaching faculty. The faculty member sees the student from the limited perspective of one course and there is no overview person to guide students through the evolving, multifaceted curriculum. A more structured advising system is essential. Because of the friction inherent in addressing political and social issues, the committee also recommends that multiple points-of-view are consciously cultivated as students explore social and political issues.

7.2 Alumni

The program's focus on the theoretical, conceptual aspects of design produces graduates who often become leaders in the field. The SE Report (p. 3 and p. 28) indicated a wish to develop a more active alumni network and the Committee agrees that this is key in cultivating a professional community beyond school and into practice.

8. Diversity

The Committee recognizes Bezalel's initiatives to promote diversity through programs such as its Center for Arabic Culture and its Ultraorthodox Jewish Extension. Discussions and the SE Report outlined efforts both outward-looking and inward looking through including more diverse subject material in the curriculum. However, in order for diversity to be realized, a more exacting plan needs to be implemented.

9. National and International Collaboration

In addition to the robust infrastructure for international student and faculty exchanges and workshops the Committee was enthusiastic about furthering international networking around the uniqueness of VC education at Bezalel, especially its potential to foster freedom of expression. Its model for art and design to

impact society could be influential on a global level.

10. Research

Bezalel has been proactive in developing pathways to research through their Research and Innovation Authority as well as with partnerships with Hebrew University and local industry.

The SE Report (page18) reflected Bezalel's in-depth understanding of the role and potential of research in design practice but unfortunately because of their status as an academy rather than a university, funding is currently limited. (See page 10 of the General Report.)

Recommendations

1. Essential

1.1 Learning Outcomes

Map the LO's of the entire curriculum at each key stage of students' progression to better construct overarching thematic curriculum goals. (See 5.2)

1.2 Assessment Criteria

Define and document consistent assessment criteria and an assessment framework for the program as a whole at each key stage of the student's progression and accompany the numerical grades by written evaluations. (See 5.3)

1.3 Syllabuses

Audit and vet syllabuses to ensure that a consistent and comprehensive and format is implemented. (See 5.4)

1.4 Increase Full-time faculty

Bolster the full-time faculty cohort and increase the percentage of time that faculty are on campus.

1.4 Supporting Student Progression

Implement an advising framework to support each student as they progress through the academic program. (See 5.1 and 7.1)

2. Important

2.1 QA Process

Take ownership of embedding the CHE QA framework within the institution on a regular basis and lead the implementation of the CHE QA process into the Department. (See 3)

2.2 Diversity

Step-up diversity initiatives to include under-represented groups in students, faculty and staff and tailor support for the student experience to the specific needs of all ethnic groups in order to ensure successful completion of the academic program. (See 8)

2.3 Faculty Professional Development

Carry out plans for clear faculty hiring and promotion procedures as outlined on page 3 of the SE Report: “A well-organized mechanism regulating lecturer promotions must be in place, including a measurable multiannual program and agreed-upon criteria for promotion or termination.” (See 6.4)

2.4 Research

Establish clear guidelines on criteria for research in VC and mentor lecturers in this development. Provide an institutional infrastructure that will train and support the enhancement of research and its impact on communities outside the institution. (See 10)

3. Desirable

3.1 National and International Collaboration

Continue to expand the range of possibilities for national and international collaboration. (see 9)

3.1 Alumni Relations

Create institutional channels and actions for developing alumni relations. (See 7.2)

Signed by:



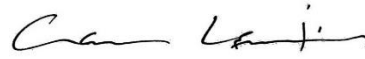
Prof. Nancy Skolos - Chair



Prof. Bruce Brown



Prof. Leland Burke



Associate Prof. Gerry Leonidas

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



May 2018

Prof. Nancy Skolos,
Professor of Graphic Design, former Dean of Architecture and Design
Rhode Island School of Design
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 **Visual Communication and Graphic Design**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Bruce Brown, Associate Prof. Gerry Leonidas, Prof. Leland Burke, and Prof. Anat Katsir.

Ms. Molly Abramson 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. 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. Molly Abramson, committee coordinator

Visual Communication & Graphic Design – Schedule of Site Visit
Bezalel - Wednesday 30/5/18

Contact person: Lilach: 052-6443003 Shira: 052-8722201 Location: Faculty room, 8th floor

Time	Subject	Participants
9:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Adi Stern, President Dr. Yuval Karniel, Rector
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the Visual Communication Program	Erez Gavish, Heads of the Visual Communication Program, Lilach Dawidowicz, Administrative Coordinator
10:15-10:30	Break	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
10:30-11:15	Meeting with Senior Academic Staff*	Orit Bergman Orit ; Rutu Modan ; Ronel Mor; Michal Sahar; Guy Saggee; Merav Salomon; Ori Succary; Ruti Kantor
11:15-12:00	Meeting with Junior Academic Staff + Adjunct Lecturers*	Nomi Geiger ; Maayan Levitzky; Adam Feinberg; Alon Braier; Koby Levy; Sharon Etgar; Dana Elkis
12:00-12:45	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
12:45-13:30	Meeting with Students**	Noa Afek, Fourth year student; Danielle Haltovsky, Fourth Year Student; Gal Sharir, Fourth year student; Nuni Noa, Fourth year student; Kineret Noam, Third year student; Bar Levi, Second year student; Eitan Zelwer, Second year student; Yarin Ben Hamo, First year student; Ashger Zamana, First year student
13.30-14:15	Meeting with Alumni**	Daniel Grumer; Anat Warshavsky; Itamar Toren; Almog Sella
14.15-15:00	Open slot	Erez Gavish, Head of the Visual Communication Program; Merav Salomon; Nomi Geiger; Liat Etgar-Brix The Teaching Space project; The ultraorthodox extension
15:00-15:45	Tour of Campus (Studios etc.)	Erez Gavish, Heads of the Visual Communication Program; Liv Sperber, Vice President for International Affairs
15:45-16:05	Closed Door Meeting	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
16:05-16:30	Summation Meeting	Prof. Adi Stern, President; Dr. Yuval Karniel, Rector; Erez Gavish, Head of the Visual Communication Program; Liat Ben Harush, Head of Student Administration; Moran Zarchi, Evaluation report's project director, on behalf of the Teaching Center

* 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.