DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS
THE NERI BLOOMFIELD SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND EDUCATION

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 **Neri Bloomfield School of Design**. The Committee's visit to the college took place on May 28th, 2018. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

1.7   The Committee thanks the management of Neri Bloomfield School of 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.

---

[1]Prof. 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.

1. Executive Summary

The Neri Bloomfield School of Design (NBSD) holds a unique position within Israel.

As defined in its mission "to craft a Visual Communication (VC) Design program resting between design teaching, teacher training and social engagement," NBSD combines its objectives with a prime location in Haifa's German Colony. The diversity inherent to Israel's North sets the stage for broad social engagement.

NBSD's Self-Evaluation (SE) Report represented a strong effort towards the process of self-evaluation and the Visual Communication (VC) Design's— curriculum, program learning outcomes, faculty development, research, and national/international collaborations—were documented and reflected upon. While most areas for review at the institution were operating at a level of desired competence; in cases where improvements were necessary, the report and conversation on site indicated an understanding of the need for improvement.

Passionate leadership at both the administrative and departmental level was evident. The committee members were grateful for the frank and open conversations they experienced during the site visit which acknowledged that the SE report process served as an important vehicle for drawing out the character of the institution and facilitated a more in depth understanding of the VC department in its relationship to NBSD as a whole.

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's experience at the campus reflected a warm community with a lively, flexible environment that seeks to cultivate a personalized approach to design education.

Meaningful institutional objectives include a planned physical expansion that would double its facilities. Adjacent to its current building, a new building would further assert its footprint in Haifa and mark the institution as a significant contributor to creative education. Another initiative and staged goal, concerned an outreach to other institutions for partnerships, notably Haifa University. This

was in an effort to help establish NBSD as a facility for research in the fields for which it specializes. Independent of the Haifa University direction, NBSD can foster greater connection to the other VC programs and the numerous domestic and international programs, both academic and professional. A higher profile for the institution would assist it on many fronts. The Committee is enthusiastic about NBSD's commitment to its mission and its momentum towards furthering its position within the collective of higher educational institutions in Israel and beyond.

3. Quality Assurance (QA) and Self Evaluation Process

In the Committee's meetings with NBSD's leadership and teaching staff, it was evident that the process for the SE Report was thoughtful and demonstrated a clear recognition of the importance for developing an institutional framework for continuous QA.

During its site visit, leadership expressed an appreciation of the QA process as a way of drawing out the character of the institution and telling its story. The Committee underscored how establishing a more regular self-initiated evaluation process and expanding the assessment with external voices could further insight toward improvement. These comments were made in response to stated concerns that the "magic of learning" might be compromised with too much oversight and analysis.

4. Character and Mission

4.1 Institution

Meetings and discussions over the course of the visit affirmed NBSD's stated mission to help train "cultural architects" whose understanding of both the practice and education of art and design could have significant impact. Senior VC projects shown to the Committee affirmed the interest among students to engage with societal concerns.

A gallery space on the ground floor of NBSD's core building was also open to the public, and used to showcase professional artists' responses to challenging social topics. Continued shared vision from administration to department and faculty of the best practices to keep this an ongoing focus should be fostered.

4.2 Department

The Committee found that the VC Department, from its teaching staff to its students and alums to be a welcoming community of creative learning and positive critical thinking that shapes VC to serve humanistic engagement. An objective of educating "cultural architects" within the department and college was stated. However, when challenged to clearly define what constituted a "cultural architect," an answer wasn't articulated. It's important for the VC department to closely monitor its ambitions, definitions and achievements.

5. VC Curriculum Design and Delivery

5.1 Curriculum

The determination of the Committee is that the curriculum in VC at NBSD shows a commitment to its students to become advocates and designers of their own personal directions. This is particularly evident as they move into their third and fourth years of study. Course choice is at the student's discretion with an encouragement to push into areas of knowledge that expand their understanding of multiple platforms. While the Committee supported these student-directed tracks rather than faculty imposed ones, it becomes even more imperative for the department to provide a concrete and comprehensive advising structure to assist students in decisions. It was also brought to the Committee's attention that while the vast majority of VC graduates ultimately practice rather than teach, the teaching methods they learn greatly complement their professional interactions.

5.2 Embedding of Learning Outcomes (LO's)

Beginning with page 40 of the SE Report, NBSD outlined a comprehensive list of learning outcomes—skills and values—for the VC Program. However, the Committee observed that further work is needed in mapping the program's overarching learning outcomes to the course briefs, individual courses and syllabuses. How each course contributes to the collective learning outcomes should always be transparent.

5.3 Assessment Documentation and Clarity

From the data provided the final grades appeared to fall primarily between 85 and 94. A wider reach that doesn't bunch too many in the 85-90 percentile (p.

55 in the SE Report) should always be the goal. Failing to allow for such a span could undermine a robust environment of evaluation and critical discourse.

What was of greater concern was emphasis on final performance with final project grades providing the most weight for the grade. This approach doesn't give full appreciation for the total learning experience. Additionally, reliance on only verbal delivery of any expanded criticism leaves students without ongoing documentation of their progression outside of their final grade.

Some students are proactive in recording verbal feedback they receive; however a more consistent and embedded protocol would ensure that all are provided the benefit of reflection over the course of their education. This would also allow staff and faculty to reference a more comprehensive road map of performance as they track a student's progression. It is recommended by the Committee that the numerical grades be accompanied by written evaluations that are kept on file and accessible at all times.

5.4 Syllabi

Syllabi evidenced a collective understanding of the essential structure and content required of such a document. However, the quality was varied, with some syllabuses having a more comprehensive goal description, course structure, and bibliographies and others lacking detail. All syllabuses should be modified to include a clear description of LOs and assessment criteria in order to inform the students of the learning expectations that are placed upon them.

The Department should establish a standard template for syllabus descriptions that includes all of the key information a student will need to know about, and then ensure that each one is quality controlled. Such coordination within the department isn't to inhibit the individuality of instructors, but to better communicate departmental shared objectives.

5.5 Facilities

NBSD's location within Haifa provides a strong presence in the city with challenges and opportunities for outreach to its surrounding community. NBSD's facilities and open gallery could be seen as a foothold at the base of the city, reflecting Haifa's identity as a port and crossroad of cultures, industries and beliefs.

Some within NBSD expressed affection for the transparent walls of the earlier location's facilities and classrooms. However, while not ideal and already

crowded with insufficient workspace and beyond full capacity, the current facilities—showcased a pride in NBSD's intimate nature and underscored those strengths. The initiative to double the size of the institution's footprint through new facilities in an adjoining property has reached full funding. By moving forward on ground breaking and building, NBSD can build on the promise it demonstrates.

6. Faculty Members and Professional Development

6.1 Faculty Composition
The dependence of the Department on its alumni and on a larger number of part time faculty raised concern with the Committee that this could impact its ability to deliver the most comprehensive and substantive program. Reliance on adjuncts puts undue pressure on FTE's (full-time employees) for management of adjuncts and in retaining a consistency of message, content, quality and uniform evaluation. While pride was taken in the hiring of alums, it could also foster an isolated culture of thought and practice. NBSD exists within the greater design community. Varied voices in faculty would help widen perspective and enhance student's experience and ultimately their professional impact.

6.2 Faculty Engagement
The faculty and staff within the department demonstrated a clear passion for their work and pride for the uniqueness of NBSD. Teaching staff are enthusiastic, engaged and clearly at the heart of the program's success. However, their part-time presence on campus does not facilitate faculty-to-faculty coordination and collaboration or provide space for ongoing dialog from faculty to student over the course of the program. One consequence of this is that the student experience is often fragmented and sometimes unnecessarily pressured.

6.2 Faculty Collaboration
Collaboration is limited due to teaching staff's schedules on campus. However, there appeared to be a strong sense of collegiality and respect among faculty. There is a culture of volunteerism beyond contracted duties that raised concern by the Committee. It may put unspoken pressure on all to participate outside of contracts in order to demonstrate a commitment to the program's vision. The VC department and NBSD administration was very proud of its VC Weekend

Marathon, and it was uniformly appreciated by students. However, the college should be cautious in regard to taking advantage of the giving nature of its personnel.

6.4 Professional Development

NBSD is an institution with an embedded history in teacher education. There should be a more formalized structure for new faculty training in VC. It would seem almost imperative that NBSD be at the forefront of this effort. It must also be noted that when relying on a less experienced faculty pool this becomes even more essential. Establishment of a vehicle for professional development would be a boon across disciplines. It could extend to the entire northern region's efforts in arts education,
and beyond.

Having a more systematic mechanism for promoting lecturers should be addressed, including measurable criteria for promotion or termination. Reliance on ad hoc practices and a dedicated staff undermines a transparent workplace.

7. Student Experience

All indications were that NBSD's open atmosphere among students and faculty, small class sizes, and variety of course selection provides a supportive learning community in which students have agency. At the same time the Committee feels that more articulated LO's and assessment criteria would further shape a productive student experience.

7.1 Supporting Student Progression

Student support comes primarily from the Department head and teaching staff who often see the students from the limited perspective of a single course. While there is an assigned faculty to help guide each course year, not having a specific assigned faculty member to guide each individual student through their full range of studies is a concern. This is especially true in an evolving, multifaceted curriculum. A more structured advising system is essential to help students navigate the program and enjoy a more optimal learning experience. The current structure is not sufficient.

7.2 Alumni

The Committee sensed that NBSD's alumni have confidence, flexibility and range when they enter the workplace. The SE Report indicated a wish to

develop a more active alumni network and the Committee agrees that this would be beneficial, cultivating a professional community beyond school and into practice. The graduates and students of NBSD held their experience with tremendous pride. The potential for return by a concerted effort in this area could be substantial.

8. Diversity

The Committee recognized a desire to promote diversity by the institution, and NBSD seems to be in an ideal position to foster such outreach. However, there has not been enough done to put this into practice and no formal structure to accommodate for diverse needs is in place. The location in Haifa is a huge advantage for outreach to newer immigrants, more isolated communities, and the very diverse ethnic and religious populations of the North. Efforts towards this would be in direct keeping with the stated objectives of their mission. It seems counter intuitive to neglect putting more serious efforts specifically in this direction.

VC also did not have faculty representation from underserved communities, while they did serve in other departments at NBSD. For VC, a field of study by definition about communication, this seems particularly out of step. Capable personnel should be actively pursued and integrated.

9. National and International Collaboration

NBSD noted in its report some individual initiatives for national and international collaboration, however, much more could be put in place. A more robust outreach to the greater design world would counteract an inclination towards regionalism and inwardness. NBSD's own stated mission towards creating "cultural architects" guided by humanistic perspective also suggests more desired efforts towards outward engagement.

10. Research

NBSD states interest in developing pathways to research. This includes a structure of working as an academy within Haifa University or another academic institution. The committee suggests adding in other opportunities for research. Suggestions are partnerships with other art academies both in Israel and abroad, and a more coordinated push towards other existing structures.

Recommendations

1. Essential

1.1 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.

Coordinate these processes collaboratively and with open dialogue. (See 3)

1.2 Learning Outcomes

Map the learning outcomes of the entire curriculum at each key stage of the student's progression. (See 5.2)

1.3 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)

1.4 Syllabuses

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

1.5 Supporting Student Progression

Implement an advising framework that will better guide each student through the evolving curriculum, and will give him/her an informed overview feedback on his/her progression

(See 7.1)

1.6 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. Important

2.1 Faculty Professional Development

Establish clear guidelines on criteria for faculty development, promotion and training; and provide more structured opportunities for professional development. (See 6.4)

2.2 National and International Collaboration

Expand the range of possibilities for national and international collaboration. (See 9)

3. Desirable

3.1 Research

Establish clear guidelines on criteria for research in VC, seek partnerships, and mentor lecturers in this development. (See 10)

3.2 Alumni Relations

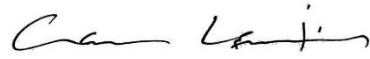Create institutional channels and actions for developing alumni relations. (See 7.2)

Signed by:

(signature)

Prof. Nancy Skolos - Chair

(signature)

Prof. Bruce Brown

(signature)

Prof. Leland Burke

(signature)

Associate Prof. Gerry Leonidas

(signature)

_____

Prof. Anat Katsir

מועצה
להשכלה
גבוהה
مجلس التعليم العالي
COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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 Communications & Graphic Design –Schedule of Site Visit

Wizo College - Monday 28/5/18

Time	Subject	Participants
9:30-10:00	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. David Alexander; Prof. David Zinder; CPA Yoav Sharf; Nira Nachmuly
10:00-10:45	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the Visual Communication Program	Yaron Shin
10:45-11:00	Break	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
11:00-11:45	Meeting with senior Academic Staff*	Ruven Kuperman; Ada Vardi; Terry Schreuer; Yael Barnea Givony; Onna Segev; David Oppenheim; Dan Shaham; Eitan Machter
11:45-12:30	Meeting with Junior Academic Staff * + Adjunct Lecturers	Tal Tamir; Moran Barak; Michal Cederbaum; Noa Segal; Asa Cirlin; Batia Dezabeli; Ilan Weintraub; Stas Korolov
12:30-13:15	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
13:15-14:00	Meeting with Students	
14.00-14:45	Meeting with Alumni**	Hen Libman; Mor Glik; Yiftach Koronio; Moshe Basrawi; Aviram Ben- Shushan; Avi Ben- Zaken
14:45-15:30	Open slot	The uniqueness of NB School of Design & Education; The program and the advantages/disadvantages of an integrated degree; Visual communication department atmosphere
15:30-16:15	Tour of Campus (Studios etc.)	
16:15-16:30	Closed Door Meeting	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
16:30-16:50	Summation Meeting	

* 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.