



DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL
COMMUNICATIONS
SHENKAR COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING,
DESIGN AND ART

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:
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| • 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 programme
 - 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 **Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art**. The Committee's visit to the college took place on May 31th, 2018. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 1.7 The Committee thanks the management of Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art 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.

1. Executive Summary

Shenkar places Visual Communication (VC) Design within a broad environment of related disciplines encompassing engineering, design, and art. The VC Department is the newest and by far the largest department within the institution and its mission is designed with a clear goal of serving the professional field. Shenkar's location within metropolitan Tel Aviv allows engagement with a rich professional and cultural environment and students graduate with excellent career prospects.

The VC department is still establishing its position within the large and growing institution and faces challenges in the areas of staff capacity and infrastructure. Shenkar's Self Evaluation (SE) Report and the Committee's on-site visit revealed concerns about the working relationships within the institution with shortcomings in the documentation and disconnects among the stakeholders in the process.

The QA process identified areas where further development was 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, Quality Assurance (QA) and Self-Evaluation Process

The SE given to the Evaluation Committee prior to the on-site meetings was not sufficiently resolved to form a sound basis for the Committee's work and, possibly, should not have been allowed to leave the institution in this state. The Committee noted that the SE Report did not cover a number of processes relating to teaching and learning, and documentation was incomplete especially in areas of syllabuses and program learning outcomes. This exposed some serious issues, especially regarding quality assurance in program development, assessment criteria, feedback mechanisms and student learning across units and years of study. Information requested explicitly as part of the SE Report authoring process was either missing or confusingly presented. The document was difficult to navigate, lacking a table of contents, page and section numbers, cross-referencing between sections, and supporting appendices.

However, discussions during the on-site meetings helped the Committee to better understand institutional and departmental objectives and to properly appreciate the quality of the educational environment offered by Shenkar. Clearly, there is a culture of innovation, a strong international profile and national and international recognition of achievement in some of the disciplines within the school that offer opportunities for strategic interdisciplinary development.

This said, the committee was not confident that there was a robust internal process for QA within Shenkar or that one person was charged with the authority for this process across the institution. In view of this the Committee would strongly recommend that a comprehensive

review is undertaken of the internal processes for QA within Shenkar, to include the structuring of authorities and responsibilities between the institution and its departments.

3. Character and Mission

3.1 Institution

Shenkar has a clearly defined mission, centered on the development of skills relevant for successful professional careers through study in an interdisciplinary environment covering design, art, and engineering. The mission is supported by an academic environment with innovation and research-orientated units in engineering and other areas of design. Shenkar's strong industry contacts, and engagement with professional networks, in conjunction with the academic program is aligned with its mission to prepare students for careers in the industry.

3.2 Department

The self-evaluation document recognized the importance of synergies in learning and research across design, art and engineering in the institution's mission, and their relevance in the mission of the VC department. This stated integration with other departments and research units was not evident in the documentation supporting the program, and did not come through in the interview discussions with staff and students. In that respect, interdisciplinary studies represent an aspirational element in the mission of the VC department, rather than a realized one.

The Committee recognized that the mission of the department to prepare students for professional life is clearly embraced by teaching staff at all levels. The commitment and engagement of teaching staff, and the positive response by the students, are abundantly evident; together these unquestionably provide the foundations for the students' success after graduation.

4. VC Curriculum Design and Delivery

4.1 Curriculum

The Committee observed that the curriculum design would benefit from more engagement with critical ways of thinking beyond the current demands of the market. With a program of study assembled as a collection of projects focusing on deliverables rather than a framework of staged learning outcomes, it is unmanageable to carry out the mission of the department in a visionary way. The difficulty reported to the Committee around compiling the syllabuses for the SE Report was a clear indication of a lack of an apparent framework for constructing the curriculum. Although the Department head coordinates the components within and across years, the focus on individual deliverables rather than overarching learning outcomes makes cohesion and clarity for staff and students a particular challenge. This approach to

building a curriculum also has significant impact on the workload of students, especially in the first two years, on the assessment regime, and the ability of the institution to reflect and self-evaluate.

The course organization around “slots” in the later years allows for some tailoring of the student experience, but is not explored fully, with little provision for options from programs in other parts of the institution, especially engineering. In addition, connections between the real world and academy could be made stronger by sponsored research and more opportunities for student exchange.

4.2 Embedding of Learning Outcomes (LO's)

The Committee determined that LO's are not explicit, either at program level or in the syllabuses, and are not mapped onto clear criteria for student progression. This has significant effects on how staff conceive projects, how students respond to the project requirements, and the ability of the institution to focus its mission as staff rotate and class sizes change.

Clear embedding of specific learning outcomes throughout the curriculum would have an immediate positive impact on student learning, as well as facilitate a progressive development of critical skills, and cultural and theoretical insights. The current structure focused on product rather than program, leaves feedback, and assessment without a broader spectrum of objectives.

4.3 Assessment Documentation & Clarity

The data provided concerning grading shows a widely distributed range of marks indicating a thoughtful implementation of the grading scale. Only 34% fall in the 94-85 range and a fraction of a percentage are given 95 or above.

Throughout their studies students get verbal critiques on work in progress and final deliverables, but no written feedback, and no explanation of how their progress maps onto explicit LO's. The discrepancy between verbal feedback and grading has been picked up by a student questionnaire. It is 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. A more structured advising system is also essential to guide the students through the evolving curriculum, and to give them holistic feedback on their progression.

4.4 Syllabi

The committee found the syllabi to be lacking a comprehensive goal description, course structure, and bibliographies. 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.

4.5 Facilities

Even though the institution seems to provide substantial resources for other disciplines with specialist equipment, the Committee did not see the same attention reflected in the VC facilities. The teaching spaces were crowded, and there was a clear lack of studio space for independent work. More dedicated spaces for small group collaboration outside scheduled class sessions would boost productivity and community.

Given the focus of Shenkar on engineering, the Committee notes the absence of workshops equipped to bring together the software and hardware focus of the VC and engineering programs respectively.

The library appeared well resourced, although the Committee could not establish whether VC-relevant material was well represented in its book stock or how actively its holdings were updated for the VC program.

5. Faculty Members and Professional Development

5.1 Faculty Composition

The teaching staff brings a wide range of expertise and industry experience, in line with their fractional contracts. The Committee noted that there is a high (although not extreme) proportion of adjunct staff in comparison to core staff. This represents the intense engagement of the school with the professional networks in the region but brings clear challenges in coordination, training, and support across the full range of staff.

The SE Report identified a need for “teaching assistants,” but the divergent feedback and assessment practices of a large number of teaching staff on short contracts suggests that the school does not yet have the internal processes in place to develop another layer of teaching staff.

5.2 Faculty Engagement

The Committee was impressed with the engagement and commitment of the teaching staff and it was clear that staff work beyond their contracted hours to support students and deal with the pressures of increasing class sizes. The teaching staff was reflective and committed to improvement, but the Committee noted the absence of established channels for all staff to share concerns and best practices.

5.3 Faculty Collaboration

The high ratio of adjunct staff and the fractional contracts inhibits collaboration within the

school. Furthermore, there is little institutional organization for collaboration across departments and faculties.

5.4 Professional Development

5.4.1 Promotion Transparency

There are no clear procedures for promotion, recognition of staff contribution, and career planning. Although the Committee noted that the Department head meets with staff individually, there is no record of published criteria for personal and career development reviews.

There is a clear discrepancy between the motivation of teaching staff for improvement and even integration of research into school activities, and the institutional processes for staff development.

5.4.2 Teaching and Learning Skills

The Committee identified a critical need for professional teaching development at Shenkar to bridge market-based proficiencies with teaching strategies. The Committee also noted that while work is under way on developing workshops for teaching and learning training for staff, these Advancement of Teaching activities appeared to be initiated by the CHE, and not fully supported or integrated into Shenkar's internal processes.

6. Student Experience

The Committee recognized the deep engagement of students with their studies, but notes a consistent observation about workload, especially in the first two years of the program.

6.1 Supporting Student Progression

Noting the issues raised in Section 5, students lack clear criteria for performance and progression. Students developed close relationships with teaching staff, who act to support students across a range of issues; although this is a credit to teaching staff, it highlights the absence of explicit advising roles and training for key staff to identify students in need. Although there is evidence of reflection by teaching staff, and clear availability of the Department head to discuss matters of concern, the school lacks mechanisms to monitor the workload of students, and review progression and drop-out patterns.

6.2 Alumni

The Committee recognized that alumni considered themselves well prepared for professional life but also noted that the alumni interviewed had built up substantial work experience alongside their studies. There is no formal association of alumni, and no school-

led mechanisms to engage with the alumni community. Alumni visit the school on the initiative of individual teaching staff. Social media hosted and initiated by alumni is used to share job opportunities with no support from the school.

7. Diversity

The Committee recognizes that diversity initiatives are prescribed by both the discipline preferences and the location of Shenkar. However, there is clear opportunity to strengthen the diversity of the student body as well as the student experience through promotion of regional and international collaborations. Additionally, diversity can be made more prominent in staff recruitment and promotion procedures.

8. National and International Collaboration

The Committee recognizes the considerable potential for Shenkar to develop its profile through regional and international collaborations, especially along interdisciplinary axes, taking advantage of its collocation with the engineering faculty. However, at the moment any such activities are scarce and rely more on initiatives by individual staff members rather than a concrete institutional agenda.

9. Research

The Committee recognizes a strong desire by teaching staff to develop research activities, and to explore research-focused collaborations within and outside the school. There is no evidence, however, of an opportunity for such concerns to be raised within the Department, or to be explored within contracted work hours. The Department does not seem to have a strategy for developing research activities. This is regrettable given the presence of innovation and research centers within the institution, and the success of other departments in Shenkar that are referenced in the SE Report that do have established research cultures.

Recommendations

1. Essential

1.1 Management and Procedures

Revise management responsibilities and procedures within the department and within the institution to provide more support and integration of the Department into the institution as a whole.

1.2 QA Process

Provide transparent and precise processes for internal self-evaluation with clear objectives for quality assurance and enhancement. (See 2)

1.3 Learning Outcomes

Map the LO's of the entire curriculum at each key stage of the student's progression. (See 4.2)

1.4 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 with written evaluations. (See 4.3)

1.5 Syllabuses

Audit and vet syllabuses to ensure that a consistent format is implemented, and embed LO's at program, syllabus and brief levels. (See 4.4)

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 7)

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 5.4)

2.2 Facilities

Grow infrastructure and facilities to accommodate the number of students and provide support for technology and independent collaborative study.

2.2 Institutional Collaboration

Create an institutional mechanism to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration between different faculties within the institution. (See 3.2)

3. Desirable

3.1 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 among departments. (See 9)

3.2 Alumni Relations

Create institutional channels and actions for developing alumni relations. (See 6.2)

Signed by:



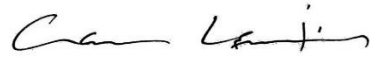
Prof. Nancy Skolos - Chair




Prof. Bruce Brown



Prof. Leland Burke



Associate Prof. Gerry Leonidas



Prof. Anat Katsir

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

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

Visual Communications & Graphic Design –Schedule of Site Visit

Shenkar - Thursday 31/5/18

Time	Subject	Participants
9:00-9:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Yuli Tamir
9:30-10:00	Meeting with the Dean of Faculty of Design	Prof. Yael Moriya
10:00-10:45	Meeting with the academic and administrative heads of the Visual communication Program	Mr. Dekel Bobrov; Mrs. Heli Itach
10:45-11:00	Break	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
11:00-11:45	Meeting with senior Academic Staff*	Prof. Yirmi Pinkus, Michal Pauzner, Itamar Daube, Nirit Binyamini
11:45-12:30	Meeting with Junior Academic Staff * + Adjunct Lecturers	Prof. Hanan Kaminski, Avigail Rainer, Avi Neeman, Efrat Nir
12:30-13:15	Lunch (Suzan Gal conference room)	Closed-door working meeting of the committee
13:15-14:00	Tour of campus	
14:00-14:45	Meeting with Students**	
14:45-15:30	Meeting with Alumni**	Yoav Gati, Hagai Itach, Roten Adrian, Alis Eschido, Ovadia Benishu.
15:30-16:15	Presentation	Formative research by Avi Neeman + Nadav Barkan;
16:15-16:30	Closed Door Meeting	Closed-door working meeting of committee members

16:30- 16:50	Summation meeting	Prof. Yuli Tamir; Prof. Yael Moriya ; Mr. Dekel Bobrov;
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* 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