

October 27, 2022

**Moskowitz School of Communication’s Response to the Evaluation Committee’s Report**

Dear Ms. Anat Haina,

We would like to thank the members of the Evaluation Committee for their comments and suggestions, and to thank the Council for Higher Education for the chance to examine and evaluate comprehensively, the Moskowitz School of Communication’s successes and opportunities for improvement.

The table presents a summary of the committee’s comments and our corresponding responses.

| <b>Committee Recommendation</b>   | <b>The School's Response</b>   |
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| <p>1. Students noted a concern that they were graduating without sufficient English skills, as the general University English-language training courses were not effective in helping students achieve their desired proficiency level. [T]he School is planning on offering coursework in English. The possibility of giving individual lectures in English in each class may also be considered. The evaluation committee also heard that much of the reading material was in Hebrew.</p> | <p>The school has already begun integrating courses in English to its undergraduate curriculum. The course “Media Structure and Functioning”, mandatory for students enrolled in the Journalism track and an elective for all other students of the school, will be taught in English beginning this coming year.</p> <p>The University intends to add two English courses to its curriculum with the start of the 2023-24 academic year. All students will be required to take both English courses during their studies.</p> <p>The school is currently designing an international MA program in strategic and digital communication, to begin, subjected to the approval of the CHE, in the 2023-24 school year. This program will enable us to offer student exchange programs to both our MA and BA students, which will also provide an excellent opportunity to improve their English language skills.</p> <p>With regard to the syllabi, there is a noteworthy difference between the syllabi for workshops which are highly practical and taught as part of the specialization tracks curriculum and those for academic, theoretical courses. In academic</p> |

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|   | <p>courses, the syllabi rely more on English reading materials than Hebrew. In contrast, workshops which are primarily “hands-on” and experiential, utilize fewer written materials and those used are generally in Hebrew. The University’s teaching committee will urge lecturers to integrate more English language materials in their next review of course syllabi.</p>   |
| <p>2. While the University has agreements with several foreign universities, the evaluation committee was not provided with information on current programs in which students could study abroad.</p>   | <p>The University is currently designing an international MA program in Strategic and Digital Communication, to begin in the 2023-24 school year. This program will provide our MA and BA students the opportunity to participate in student exchange programs.</p> <p>Additionally, we are updating and translating our faculty web pages to English, which will make information regarding the faculty more accessible to international scholars and program coordinators. Planned completion for this project is the end of the first semester.</p> <p>We have also scheduled a meeting between the University’s faculty and AU International Affairs office to discuss optimizing recruitment methods of international doctoral and post-doctoral students, and to advance the new International MA in Communications program.</p> |
| <p>3. Instructors who do not receive a score above a 3 (on a scale of 5) receive mentoring. They meet with the track head and are asked to participate in workshops focused on helping them to increase their scores. The evaluation committee was told that this seemed rather like a punishment than an opportunity for growth.</p> | <p>Meeting with lecturers who received lower-score evaluations offers the lecturer an opportunity to present their position. Additionally, by discussing their rating score it can identify and clarify issues while the workshops can provide the tools to help them develop and improve as lecturers. This approach is intended to prevent avoidable dismissals.</p> <p>The comment that the meetings/workshops feel more like a punishment than an opportunity for growth was presented to the track chairs and the head of the school, with a recommendation that the aims of the programs should be emphasized to the lecturers, and to discuss possible ways for improvement in a constructive and supportive manner.</p>  |
| <p>4. The evaluation committee encourages the School to continue its experimentation with teaching</p>  | <p>The school is committed to leading the field of teaching innovation in the University. A meeting was set for the beginning of this coming</p>   |

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| <p>models and to systematically track its successes and note areas for improvement.</p>  | <p>school year with the head of the digital teaching unit at the University to survey advance tools and innovative teaching practices.</p> <p>The school has decided to continue the practice of recording theoretical and mandatory classes, and our new MA program will be taught in an online and hybrid mode, integrating synchronous and a-synchronous classes.</p>   |
| <p>5. According to the self-evaluation Report, (p. 72), a larger proportion of students are allowed admission as probationary students [...]<br/>According to the decision of the Council for Higher Education from 12 September 2017, institutions will be allowed to accept only 10% of all students in each program on probation. [...] According to these numbers, the School is in violation of CHE standards on admissions.</p>  | <p>The evaluation report used the term “on-probation” to describe students that applied to study in the school and have a matriculation average of 85-88. This is not the standard set by the CHE. According to the basic requirements for admission to Ariel University, a minimum matriculation average of 85 is required. However, the school has decided that in the case of an average of 85-88 an admission committee will be held, and applicants will be requested to write a short essay and undergo an interview. Applicants then are accepted on probation, but this is an internal probation set by the school, with the aim to encourage excellence among all students and especially students who were accepted with a lower matriculation average. As the committee report states, many of our on-probation students excel in their studies and even enter our outstanding program. Probationary acceptance is a limitation that the school has decided to apply as a mechanism to promote excellence, but the students that enter on our internal probation are not considered probationary in terms of the CHE’s standards.</p> |
| <p>6. The faculty will lose some members in the coming years due to retirement and will need to search for faculty replacements. This search should be guided by a more focused vision for the School. The new recruits should be hired based on their ability to help the School develop its specialization, areas of strength, and uniqueness</p> <p>7. [...]An issue that arose is that the faculty does not currently have a particular research focus or foci [...]<br/>As the School continues on its path toward becoming a well-regarded</p> | <p>In response to recommendation made regarding the need for the school to develop its focused specialization, during the committee’s visit some discussion has begun to take place in faculty meetings. The faculty has decided to establish a committee to evaluate and make recommendations regarding specific areas of research to encourage faculty to focus on. While the committee has not yet delivered its recommendations, some work has already been done in that area. For example, in light of the approval of our MA program, focused on Media, Information and Governance, the school has recently recruited a new faculty member, Dr. Chen Sabag Ben-Porat, who specializes in political communication, with the understanding</p>   |

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| academic unit, there is an absolute need to focus.   | that one of the areas of focus will be political communication.  |
| 8. The evaluation committee sees a lot of internal funding for research support, and suggests that the faculty actively compete for external research grants. Specifically, the evaluation team suggests international competitive grants such as the German-Israeli Foundation, the US-Israel Binational Science Foundation, the Israel Science Foundation, and agencies within the European Union. | The school puts much effort in applying for competitive external grants. Unfortunately, many opportunities are denied to the faculty of the School of Communication due to the University's location. Among them, the German-Israeli Foundation and all agencies within the European Union are closed to Ariel University. The US-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) began accepting application from Ariel University one year ago, and some of the faculty is currently working on their BSF proposals, however, several proposals were recommended by the foundation to be withdrawn because the foundation does not support research in communication. With regard to ISF, the rate of application to ISF among the school's faculty is high: In the last round of submissions, 11 out of 13 academic faculty members submitted an ISF proposal. We are aware of the need to secure external funding, and will be grateful if the committee can assist us in removing the sanctions that prevent us from applying to much of the opportunities accessible to other scientists. |
| 9. The faculty carry a heavy teaching while also being asked to provide university service, in addition to research, without much in the way of course reductions.   | The Rector of the University is aware of the heavy burden on faculty. In the last two years, the University has applied the benefiting system to reduce teaching hours for excellent faculty in research and in teaching.  |
| 10. The faculty did not have a clear idea about the evaluation of their work: What is the weight given to teaching, to research, to administrative functioning? A better introduction to and transparency of the faculty evaluation is required.   | In the period after the committee's visit, a process has begun with the University's unit for evaluation and promotion of faculty, and to increase the transparency and involvement of faculty in evaluation and promotion processes. A meeting was held between the school faculty and the unit, and we have been working with the unit for several months on creating a clear and detailed document, adjusted specifically for the faculty of the school, providing the relevant information about the evaluation and promotion processes and conditions. A meeting was scheduled between the head of the school and the unit for promotion and evaluation of faculty for the beginning of this coming school year to discuss further ways to increase transparency of the faculty evaluation process.   |

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| <p>11. The University and the School were, in general, well aware of the issue of diversity of students and faculty. They are implementing several measures to achieve more diversity [...]At the School level, however, the success is partial.</p> | <p>As the report mentions, the issue of diversity is a known challenge for the school. While the school excels in some contexts (e.g., gender, religious populations, periphery residents, first generation of higher education students) there are clear obstacles to achieving better representation of students from minority communities, such as Arab students. While we continue former programs and efforts (such as hosting high schools from the periphery and from Arab cities) the school will establish a think-tank that will examine previous efforts and their results, as well as draft an organized strategy and recommendations for activities to recruiting students and faculty among these populations. It's worth mentioning that in the first class of our new MA program beginning this coming school year, we will have one Arab student and one student with autism spectrum disorder, both are graduates of our BA program.</p> |
| <p>12. One issue that came up was “a shortage of offices for the faculty,” as described in the self-evaluation report.</p>   | <p>The University is examining an option to build a third floor on the roof of its current building, and has begun soliciting donations for this project.</p>  |

Sincerely,

Prof. Sabina Lissitsa



Head of The School of Communication