



EVALUATION OF ARCHITECTURE STUDIES

ARIEL UNIVERSITY

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF ARCHITECTURE STUDIES IN ISRAEL

April 2022

Section 1: Background and Procedures

1.1 In the academic year 2021-2022 the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programs in the field of Architecture in Israel.

1.2 The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:

- Ariel University - School of Architecture
- Bezalel Academy of Art and Design - Department of Architecture
- Neri Bloomfield School of Design (WIZO) - Department of Architecture and Education
- Technion - Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning
- Tel Aviv University - Azrieli School of Architecture

1.3 To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed an International Quality Assurance Review Committee [EC; 'the evaluation committee'], under the auspices of the CHE's Committee for the Evaluation of Architecture studies in Israel¹, consisting of:

- Prof. Michael U. Hensel, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Vienna University of Technology, Austria, *Committee Chair*
- Prof. Tal Alon-Mozes, Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion, Israel
- Prof. Alessandra Battisti, Department of Planning, Design and Technology of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
- Prof. Per Olaf Fjeld, AHO Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway
- Prof. David Leatherbarrow, Weitzman School of Design, University of Pennsylvania, USA
- Prof. Rafi Segal, Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

Ms. Anat Haina, 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 (January 2020). Within this framework the evaluation committee was required to:

- examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the HEIs that provide study programs in Architecture;
- conduct on-site visits at those institutions participating in the evaluation process. The visit to Ariel University took place on 20.03.2022;
- 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;

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

- 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 alumni during each one-day visit to each of the institutions.

1.6 This report deals with the School of Architecture in Ariel University. Prof. Rafi Segal did not participate in the evaluation of this institution.

The EC would like to thank the management of the School of Architecture for their self-evaluation report, supportive interactions with the evaluation committee during the evaluation process, and hospitality towards the committee members who visited the institution.

Section 2: Assessment and Observations

1 The Institution

The institution started as a college that became a university in 2007 and received accreditation in 2012, now consisting of 4 faculties and 3 schools. Authority and infrastructural planning are centralized. Central administration claims to view the School of Architecture favorably. The president and rector stressed the desire and preliminary plans to promote and support all academic units as research programs, as well as the willingness to allocate time, funding, and grants for research in architecture. For architecture, the president has recognized strengths in teaching. The focus on research will require changes in both the faculty and curriculum. The president indicated a willingness to recognize new faculty types that would foster the development of research, such as a practitioner-educator that would be equivalent to a clinical-educator.

Observations

The central administration voiced commitment to support the development and needs of the School of Architecture but placed responsibility exclusively on the Head of School.

There exists an unclear situation concerning the status of the Head of School. In Chart 2.1 in the Self-Evaluation Report, the Head of School is not listed as a Dean, while most other faculties and schools list a Dean. Currently the Head of School cannot effectively participate in university-wide planning and decision making as would commonly be expected by a “Dean”. For example, the Head of School does not serve on the University Appointments Committee. As a result, the Head of School only makes recommendations to the appointment committee, especially for tenure appointments. This disempowers the standing of the Head within the university. The institution presents itself as embracing diversity, however, recent faculty and student numbers do not seem to fully reflect this.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that senior administration of the Institution implements measures that allow school leadership to participate in university-wide planning and decision making. Most importantly, the Head of School should be promoted to full professorship status to serve on the university appointments committee.

2 Infrastructure

The School's building, facilities and resources, such as studios and workshops, are in a poor state. Workshops close at an early hour that collides with students' regular studies time. The EC's assessment is shared by the faculty and school leadership, as described in the Self-Evaluation report.

Senior faculty do not have dedicated office spaces. It was stressed that it is important to fully occupy their own building.

Observations

Infrastructure needs to support the increase in student numbers. Studio spaces need expedient upgrading. 1st and 2nd year students do not have their own workspaces. The plans for a fourth-floor addition sound promising, however, the EC was not informed of concrete plans for implementation. The auditorium is currently under construction. The School would benefit from integrating the planned labs in the architecture building. The central administration indicated plans for research collaboration between faculties, however, an infrastructural plan to support such collaboration seems missing.

Recommendations

The School needs to draft and implement a plan for expedient upgrading studio spaces.

The central administration needs to support the School in drafting and implementing a plan for research collaboration between faculties, especially concerning infrastructural needs and resources.

The EC recommends that the recently relocated library materials must be returned to the architectural building.

3 Human Resources

The School foregrounded thus far recruitment of highly qualified architects from the profession as faculty ("practitioner educators"). There is a clear lack of senior faculty/full professors. Recent appointments of young assistant professors on a tenure-track are a positive indication of faculty planning, especially with a focus on research output. More work should be done to rejuvenate the faculty.

Many adjunct faculty teach a considerable number of courses, practice, have significant administrative responsibilities, and participate in various committees. There are positive consequences for this, in so far as those roles empower and involve individuals who have teaching authority with

administrative authority. However, if there is no appropriate compensation for this role, these individuals are likely to feel unfairly treated. Faculty salaries are perceived to be low.

There exists good communication between faculty members and students.

Observations

The EC finds it difficult to articulate observations and conclusions concerning the faculty make-up, due to the School's use of atypical and ill-defined nomenclature for faculty types. The Self-Evaluation report lacks information on the number of faculty, and plans for recruiting faculty, especially in light of the growing student numbers. Yet, based on its observation on-site, the EC found a faculty that is both dedicated and well-utilized.

Presently, faculty members seem not adequately informed of promotion criteria and recruitment procedures

Distinct tracks for practitioners and tracks for researchers were presented. However, it is unclear how these tracks relate to the delivery of teaching and research. The absence of full professors is a serious concern for the School's representation in the university. The promotion of associate to full professors will enable faculty to participate in university-wide planning and decision making, giving the school of architecture a voice within the university.

The School's administrative staff – Head of School's office and workshop administration – seem sufficient in number and effective in their work, but will need to be increased in the future to provide for a growing student population.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that the central administration enables the Head of School to participate in committees, and together with the Head of School develop a plan for promoting faculty or hiring full professors.

The EC recommends that the relationships between teaching and research be discussed, defined, and used as a basis for making decisions about appointments and promotions.

4 Diversity

The School has a good gender balance in the faculty and student population. Religious diversity was stated as a goal and as an accomplishment.

The School feels there is a diversity in staff and sees the integration of female lecturers as its strength.

Direct engagement with local Palestinian communities is impeded by security requirements.

Observations

The faculty composition shows a lack of progress towards the goal of increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities. No specific plan was mentioned to address this. Such a plan should be developed.

During the visit, faculty stated that final projects take up themes related to or informed by diversity aspects. However, the EC cannot comment on this since no related student work that illustrated this concern was provided.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that the School develops and implements a plan for increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in the faculty.

5 Study program

Across the School there exists evident pride in and dedication to teaching, and a high level of agreement and collaboration, especially between faculty teaching studios within the same level. The plan for the development of the School includes a new research faculty profile. The study program prepares the students to practice with the aim to educate good practitioners based on humanistic values. The School aspires to engage in sustainable architecture and places emphasis on conservation and restoration. The possibility to obtain a certificate in conservation and restoration is integrated in the curriculum of BA studies as an elective course.

Currently, students cannot take electives from other departments and other department students cannot take architecture classes. However, plans exist to make it possible in the future.

Student exchange is not supported and therefore entirely reliant on student motivation. The School does not currently receive foreign exchange students.

Observations

Plans for curriculum development are in place and involve faculty and administration. There is good collaboration in the revision of the curriculum. The curriculum and syllabus clearly detail teaching modules. However, the relation between the modules and the build-up is not described but should be.

There is no formal education in the humanities and little indication of basic science in the curriculum. Both deficiencies should be addressed in future curriculum planning.

Students indicated that it would be desirable to place more focus on a better understanding of the profession in the curriculum (for instance visit to construction sites).

The future Master's program requires clarification in terms of content, faculty, and collaboration with other schools and faculties.

The conservation and restoration elective course leads to a certificate and is recommended by the EC for further development, perhaps in the future as a research center.

Recommendations

Plans for the landscape program and the sustainability program need to be articulated before implementation.

The EC recommends that the school drafts and implements a plan to address the deficiencies in the humanities and in basic science in the curriculum planning.

6 Teaching and Learning Outcomes

The teaching outcomes are meant to foster professional identity and abilities to work in various fields of architectural design. Graduates feel that the teaching prepares them well for practice and that their education serves as a good base to become registered architects.

The Self-Evaluation report did not include student work. Some student work was provided at a later stage.

The school provides faculty training to ensure the quality of teaching.

Observations

Clarification is required on how the integration of research activities will inform teaching and learning topics, approaches, and outcomes.

It is important that the various courses and year levels discuss their individual content together and work towards a shared pedagogical and educational goal.

The work that the EC had access to seemed to indicate poor attention to detailed design beyond standardization, and a low level of “craft”. The works did not display an integration of theoretical and design aspects provided by different teaching modules. The attention to traditional methods in 1st and 2nd year seems strong and consistent.

Part of the visit focused on studios and the EC found the studio activity to be informative.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that the School draft and implement a plan for integrating research activities with teaching and learning topics, approaches, and outcomes.

The EC recommends that the School draft and implement a plan for shared pedagogical and educational goals between the various courses and year levels.

7 Students

Students seem generally enthusiastic and happy with the study program.

Students felt well prepared for professional careers, felt they are attractive in the job market, and appreciate job opportunities afforded by a degree from Ariel University.

Many students work in parallel to their studies but still find the workload manageable.

Students feel part of the decision-making of the school and have frequent direct contact with the Head of School. Students indicate that faculty are always reachable. A students-teachers forum exists that focuses on student welfare. A student union exists on a voluntary basis.

Students indicate that the grading is fair, but they would considerably benefit from written feedback on their outcomes, especially related to studio work. The admission process is also perceived as fair.

Normally graduates are contacted by faculty to fill available teaching assistant positions, but since the start of the pandemic, these positions have not been available.

Students desire international exchange but find it difficult to meet the existing benchmarks including self-financing requirements, with students even having to pay for tuition. There are no summer courses; however, the studio in Florence was described as a summer activity.

Students indicate good ethnic integration. There exists an online blog for Arabic students.

There exists some financial support for students with financial and special needs.

Observations

Since many students work outside the school, the teachers should be aware that the class and studio time together is somewhat limited, and this can affect the general quality of the academic education.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that written feedback on student outcomes related to studio work is provided.

The EC recommends that plans for international collaboration and exchange, and related financing, are developed and implemented.

8 Research

The University aspires to make the School of Architecture research-based. At the School there exists a strict division between Practitioner and Researcher tracks.

Currently, there exists no formal research training in the School. Yet, there is an orientation toward research. Faculty contribute to this focus and prepare articles for publication, especially for the School's own peer-reviewed journal.

While research by design is a subject of discussion, there exists no tangible definition of this type of research or program in this school. There is a lack of adequate infrastructure to support research related to specific areas such as sustainability. There exists only a limited network of partners inside the university, outside of the university, and internationally.

There is a plan for hiring three tenure-track faculty for research and to develop laboratories for them.

The School is the only one in Israel with its own peer-reviewed journal "Architext" which includes texts in Hebrew and English.

Observations

It is important to recognize that increased dedication to research might change the identity of the currently existing five-year program.

Given the current composition of the faculty, a significant increase in research output will take time and should be planned for. Meeting defined expectations will require articulation of the intended types of research in architecture. An important aspect of that scheduling will be a program of mentoring junior faculty by senior colleagues.

The School needs to develop specific research areas in relation to the teaching program and integrate the planned laboratories thematically with the research areas.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that the School develops a strategic plan that identifies and details where and how research is to be placed in the existing and new programs.

The EC recommends that new and re-contracted faculty be identified and discussed in relation to overarching research themes at the School and research collaboration. A clear plan for this purpose needs to be drafted and implemented immediately.

9 Internal Quality Assurance

Little information was provided.

The self-evaluation report states that at the end of each semester there is a general course evaluation survey filled out by students.

Observations

Clarification is required on the quality of teaching that enters into consideration of the promotion process.

Recommendations

The EC recommends that the School develops a clear guideline as to how the quality of teaching enters into consideration in the promotion process.

Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The School needs to sharpen its identity as a program that seeks to graduate professionals that meet the multifaceted needs of society, and rules of ethics within the profession, and reinforce professional identity. This entails clarification concerning the School's definition of the type of practicing architect the School intends to educate.

The School has given itself an ambitious task in terms of introducing research into a context that currently focuses mainly on teaching. Given the current make-up of an effective teaching faculty, the development and support of architectural research – something now expected by the university administration – will require careful planning, oversight, and resource investment.

The School faces a clear need for a major infrastructure upgrade, including studio spaces, workshops, and other critical facilities.

The EC recommends that the School develops a plan for improving the students' work in relation to the quality of the outcome.

Recommendations

Essential Recommendations:

The EC recommends that the school solicits and requests infrastructure upgrades, which include plans and resources allocated for the fourth floor, and refurbishments.

The EC recommends that the School leadership prepare a faculty development plan, in consideration of their commitment to educating practicing architects and their new expectations for research outputs.

The Institution needs to prepare the appointment of a research coordinator or dean, whose charge includes heading the group that will establish what research in architecture means and how it contributes to the educational program.

The School needs to develop a plan for the appointment of faculty who would achieve better diversity. This implies a clearly improved balance in ethnic diversity in adjunct faculty and TA employment.

Important Recommendations:

Co-authored publications are recommended to address research in the cross-over areas of design, theory, and architectural practice. This can be beneficial for the strategic development of the profile of the school and its faculty with view on the tasks ahead.

The EC recommends that the School develops, schedules and sets into motion a plan for international student exchanges, and scientific collaborations for research and teaching with foreign lecturers.

Desirable Recommendations:

The EC recommends that the study programs in architecture in Israel collaborate on organizing an annual joint research day during which current research of each study program is presented and exhibited. Additionally, and perhaps in conjunction with the research day, it would be desirable for the study programs to jointly organize an annual PhD colloquium in which researchers can gain knowledge of research undertaken in architecture in Israel, exchange peer-review and build research networks.

Future Assessments

The following recommendations are made for future assessments:

The EC recommends that the School develops a detailed plan and resource allocation for the fourth floor and refurbishments. This plan and ensuing steps should be reviewed within the next two years.

The EC recommends that the School develops a plan for faculty members to produce scientific articles - also the result of a joint collaboration between professors at different levels and different disciplines. This plan and ensuing steps should be reviewed within the next two years.

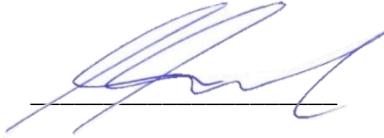
A plan for international collaboration (international workshops, lectures, and visiting professors) needs to be drafted and should be reviewed within the next two years.

A plan for increasing ethnic diversity in adjunct faculty and teaching assistant employment needs to be produced and should be reviewed within the next two years.

Signed by:

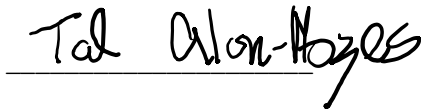
Prof. Michael U. Hensel

Committee Chair



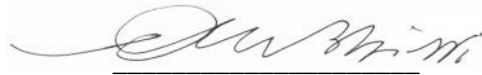
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Prof. Tal Alon-Mozes



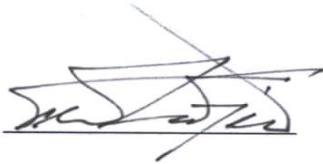
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Prof. Alessandra Battisti



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Prof. Per Olaf Fjeld



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Prof. David Leatherbarrow



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Appendix I: Letter of Appointment



January 2022

Prof. Michael U. Hensel
Department of Digital Architecture and Planning
Vienna University of Technology
Austria

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 **Architecture** departments. Other members of the Committee will include: Prof. Tal Alon-Mozes, Prof. Alessandra Battisti, Prof. Per Olaf Fjeld, Prof. David Leatherbarrow, and Prof. Rafi Segal.

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. Maria Levinson-Or, Senior Advisor for Evaluation and Quality Enhancement, CHE