

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS

HADASSAH ACADEMIC COLLEGE

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL

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 Communication in Israel.
- **1.2** The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:
 - Ariel University
 - College of Management
 - Emek Yezre'el Academic College
 - Hadassah Academic College
 - The Hebrew University
 - Kinneret Academic College
 - Netanya Academic College
 - Reichman University
 - Sapir Academic College
 - Tel Aviv University
- 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 Communication in Israel¹, consisting of:
 - Prof. Patricia Moy Department of Communication, University of Washington, USA; Committee Chair
 - Prof. Andrea Hickerson College of Information and Communications, University of South Carolina, USA
 - Prof. María Len-Ríos Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia, USA
 - Prof. Richard Ling School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
 - Prof. Karen Ross School of Arts and Cultures, Newcastle University, UK
 - Prof. Gabriel Weimann Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy, Reichman University, Israel

Ms. Anat Haina served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

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

- 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 institutions that provide study programs in Communication;
 - conduct on-site visits at those institutions participating in the evaluation process (the visit to Hadassah Academic College was conducted on 28.03.2022);
 - 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;
 and
 - 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 and considered it 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, faculty members, students, and alumni during the course of each one-day visit to each of the institutions.
- 1.6 In undertaking this work, the evaluation committee considered matters of both quality assurance and quality enhancement. It applied its collective knowledge of developments and good practices in the delivery of higher education in communication (mainly from European countries and from the USA) to the evaluation of such provision in Israel.
- **1.7** This report deals with the Department of Politics & Communication at Hadassah Academic College. The institution was evaluated by Prof. Andrea Hickerson, Prof. Patricia Moy, and Prof. Karen Ross.
 - The EC would like to thank the management of the Department of Politics & Communication for its self-evaluation report, supportive interactions with the evaluation committee in the course of the evaluation process, and hospitality towards the committee members who visited the institution.

Section 2: Executive Summary

This assessment is based on a review of the self-evaluation report prepared by the Department of Politics & Communication, and the site visit conducted 28 March 2022 by the evaluation committee (Prof. Andrea Hickerson and Prof. Patricia Moy on site, and Prof. Karen Ross via Zoom). During that visit, the evaluation committee met with the College leadership, School leadership, senior academic faculty, adjunct faculty, BA students, and alumni. The on-site team members also were given a campus tour.

The Department offers a unique BA program, focusing on politics and communication, and a sub-program, the Excellence Program in Public Diplomacy and Communication. The faculty study key issues at the nexus of political science and communication and publish them in leading disciplinary and interdisciplinary area-specific journals. Uniquely, faculty at Hadassah can achieve tenure based primarily on their teaching and not research. The Department appears to have sufficient and appropriate infrastructure, equipment and resources to meet student and faculty needs and to stay current with industry trends.

Hadassah Academic College has a strong commitment to diversity and seeks to represent and serve the diverse populations in Jerusalem. Regardless, the Department has a lower percentage of Arab students than the overall College.

Section 3: Observations

3.1 The Institution

Hadassah Academic College was approved by the Council for Higher Education in 1996. Its 13 academic departments sit within two schools: the Interdisciplinary School for Sciences, Health and Society, and the Interdisciplinary School for Society and Community. The Department of Politics & Communication sits within the latter. The College's mission aspires to excellence in higher education and to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to prepare for successful careers. It strives to promote meaningful academic achievement, along with the relevant hands-on training, to enhance employment opportunities for a diverse and inclusive body of students from all sectors of Israeli society.

3.2 Internal Quality Assurance

According to the self-evaluation report, the primary mechanism for assuring academic quality is the Academic Administration Unit. The Unit is chaired by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and is responsible for monitoring the activity of all the College's departments and setting the academic standards. Complementing the unit is the Center for the Development of Quality Instruction, which is responsible for

coordinating student evaluations as well as supporting the professional development of teaching faculty.

The Head of Department and departmental coordinator took pivotal roles in coordinating the process of producing the self-evaluation report. A member of the adjunct faculty was recruited to coordinate, collect data, and contribute to report-writing. Meetings were held with senior faculty and writing tasks were allocated. During the process of self-evaluation, colleagues realized that they should be collecting more data on alumni and resolved to do this in the future. The final document was signed off by the President and Vice President. The evaluation committee has noted the strengths and weaknesses of the Department and the recommendations made at the end of this report should support the Department's ambitions towards excellence.

3.3 Parent Unit

According to the self-evaluation report (p. 10), "Hadassah Academic College views itself as a parent unit that fills the roles parallel to a university faculty." The Interdisciplinary School for Society and Communication, in which the unit under review is housed, "is a cooperation forum ... [and] does not have the authorities, nor the subcommittees of a parent unit, as faculties have in a university." 3.4 Study program

The Department offers one BA program that[specializes in political communication. It is a unique pre-structured double-major program among the Israeli institutions of higher education, and was described as particularly attractive to the students with whom the committee met. In 2016, the Department developed a sub-program on political diplomacy which was later developed into the Excellence Program in Public Diplomacy and Communication. High-achieving students can opt to join the sub-program in their second year. The program accepts about 15 students from each cohort (about 80 students), and includes a field trip abroad with no further costs. Students taking the sub-program view it as highly desirable, and feel they are part of an exclusive program that will enhance their subsequent employability.

According to the self-evaluation report, the high entrance requirements of the Excellence Program encourage students to excel in their first year of studies. Regardless, some students perceived the first year as competitive and stressful, due to the pressure to be viable applicants. It can be noted that the sub-program could be further developed if resources permit. However, students also expressed a desire for more opportunities to interact with other students in the wider BA cohort. To address these concerns, the Department should offer some shared courses across the curriculum for all students, or provide informal opportunities for all students to come together in the second and third years.

The study program is composed of a mix of theory-based and practice-based courses which students greatly appreciated, not least because they would graduate with a portfolio of work that would enhance their employability. The second and third years comprise a small number of mandatory courses and a large number of electives. Regardless, some electives are only open to students on either the general program or the sub-program, and are therefore more prescribed than they appear.

The course syllabi accompanying the self-evaluation report include mostly similar content in terms of background context, learning outcomes, form of assessment, and a week-by-week topic guide. Some were a lot more detailed than others, for example, including readings for each week. The evaluation committee assumes that students themselves are provided with more detailed course guides, including what each assignment actually entails. It would be useful for course leaders to use a common template. Some of the course syllabi have quite a few dated references. This is especially unhelpful when working on highly topical issues such as internet democracy and alternative media. Faculty should be required to review their essential and suggested readings and refresh/update them, not least to take account of new research and practice in both English and Hebrew publications.

Alongside the standard content expected in a political communication program, other courses considered aspects of popular culture (e.g., sport and music) and their relationship to politics and media. The workshop "Promoting Social Campaigns" takes a practical approach to designing a campaign and is a good addition to the study program. Regardless, this was one of the very few courses that engaged with social issues such as domestic violence and the environment, both of which are explicitly political. The evaluation committee also noted discussions of gender and race in the "Central Issues in Political Communication" course and in "Field initiative C." Faculty should consider the topic mix across the program and consider developing/refreshing courses which focus, for example, on informal political processes, the use of social media in political activism, feminist politics, perhaps replacing some of the existing courses.

We noted the gender-exclusive language used in at least one course title – (Spokesmanship, PR and Crisis Management) – and in the content of another course (Political Consultation) that should be revised. The practical workshop on video storytelling that focused on how smartphones could be used to shoot and edit is an excellent example of using everyday tech to produce journalism, as is the course on writing viral news. It also was heartening to see a course on radio which is still such an important medium in many parts of the world. Students also appreciated the range and diversity of course content that complemented the more traditional courses characterizing a political communication program.

The study program is structured to provide teaching-free days to enable students to gain work experience and undertake other activities. It seems like a very student-centered approach to teaching and learning, and one which students themselves

appreciated. The committee also heard considerable appreciation for the small-group teaching format. It contributes not only to deeper learning with faculty paying close attention to students, but also to an open and transparent environment characterized by the informal style of relations between students and faculty.

The study program is planned and managed by the Teaching Committee, which comprises the Head of the Department and all senior faculty, plus other members external to the unit. This Teaching Committee, which considers the shape and content of the program and discusses new courses, meets regularly. Significant changes to course content must be approved by the Head of Department. Adjunct faculty can suggest new courses but are not formally involved in the Teaching Committee. However, they were broadly satisfied with their level of involvement.

3.4.1 Training

The study program offers various training opportunities to students. Besides the workshops taught by media professionals, a number of politicians and media personalities are regularly invited for guest lectures. Courses also include a range of field trips, including outings to the Knesset and the Supreme Court, and they provide useful exposure to the worlds in which students may enter after graduation. In addition, special "field project" courses for students taking the Excellence program, provide area-specific practical experience in the production of articles and podcasts. All students also have the opportunity to publish their work in the in-house magazine, Shomrei Hasaf (Gatekeepers) which the evaluation committee believes is an excellent initiative and contributes to students producing a portfolio of published work to use when seeking future employment.

The College's Career Center prepares, selects, and places students in various workplaces according to their interests and priorities (radio, television, PR, spokesperson, etc.). The internship program is composed of 120 hours, which span the year. The program is available to students from their third year. Over the past year, more students (currently 15) have taken up an internship opportunity in the third year of their study than in previous years, and the range of internship hosts has also increased.

The Excellence Program in Public Diplomacy and Communication also includes an international field trip (see below), and three field project options, each one with a different focus (international media, Israeli media, and podcasts) where students interview different actors and produce copy that can be included in the in-house magazine. These are useful and practical opportunities to enhance employability. However, they appear to only be available to students on the Excellence Program, although we understand that there are ambitions to open more such courses for all students. Such opportunities should be provided for all students to engage in similar fieldwork activities.

3.4.2 Internationalization

The Department has been involved in several initiatives that have enabled their students to connect with those outside Israel. These include exchange visits with students from the University of Mainz, and a visit from a delegation from a Spanish university in 2019. However, such activities are only open to students on the Excellence Program, although the evaluation committee understands that the wider College has ambitions to develop international-exchange opportunities for all students.

3.5 Teaching and Learning Outcomes

3.5.1 Teaching

According to the self-evaluation report, departmental pedagogical efforts are supported by the College's Teaching Center, which offers a host of activities to enhance teaching. For instance, the Center offers workshops on various subjects such as active learning, teaching diverse student populations, making effective PowerPoint presentations, creating exams that accurately gauge student learning, and managing the classroom. Some workshops are also tied to online teaching and learning, including improving student engagement and assessment in online settings.

Within the unit, the Teaching Committee has oversight for teaching quality. The self-evaluation report did not mention any formal departmental program for professional development of lecturers. Regardless, informal mechanisms exist, such as newsletters giving information about courses and mentoring by senior faculty.

Student feedback on teaching is gathered three times a year via surveys which are completed in class at the end of each semester. The results are discussed between the course leader and the Head of Department, and between the Head of Department and senior management. As noted briefly in the self-evaluation report, the results also feed into the institution-wide Teaching Excellence Awards given to lecturers. Outside course evaluations, student representatives meet with the Head of Department on an ad-hoc basis, and were broadly satisfied with the feedback mechanisms in place. The Department should establish a student-faculty liaison committee with a regular meeting cycle.

Because the provided exam scripts and presumably feedback were in Hebrew, the evaluation committee was unable to comment on the quality of feedback for those assignments.

3.5.2 Learning outcomes

The generic learning outcomes (LOs) for the program as a whole are typical of and appropriate for a BA program. All the provided course syllabi identified the LOs that are specific to the course and seem appropriate to communication studies.

There curriculum includes multiple modes of teaching delivery, ranging across lectures, workshops, seminars, and exercises. It was good to see a range of assessment activities including in-class presentations and short writing tasks. Two types of assessment appear to be used more or less equally across courses (essays, 44%, and exams, 56%). Use of these assessments changed during the pandemic but was resumed subsequently. It would have been useful to see which LOs relate to specific assignment tasks. Faculty should make the link between individual LOs and the assessment tasks explicit in the course descriptions.

3.6 Students

3.6.1 Admission and graduation

The admissions process is clearly described. Since the pandemic, applicants are interviewed online, a practice which now has been established as part of the admissions process. Applications and acceptances have been stable over the past few years, although there was a rise in the current year.

There are two modes of admission, one based solely on matriculation score and the other combining matriculation score plus psychometric test score. According to the self-evaluation report, students admitted on probation exceeded the maximum in 2016-17, but these numbers have come under control in subsequent years. In general, to progress, students must pass their first- and second-year courses, attaining at least an average score of 70 in the first year. Students whose proficiency did not meet the admissions threshold must have reached English-language proficiency. Students must pass the research methods course in the second year. For finishing the third year, students should have successfully completed a specific number of workshops and seminars.

In order for students to enroll in the Excellence Program in Public Diplomacy and Communication, they must have achieved 85% (with some exceptions) in their first year and must maintain that high score across their second and third years. Some students noted that the English-language requirement posed a challenge, but such a requirement is made clear from the outset. The evaluation committee was told changes are currently underway to make the language training more relevant to courses of study.

The different numbers of students across cohorts make it difficult to determine trends in final grades. Regardless, the pattern seems stable. On the other hand, there has been a gradual decline in the number of drop-outs which is a good sign.

3.6.2 Graduate students

There is no graduate program at this institution.

3.6.3 Student support services

Students in the Department of Politics & Communication are supported by a single academic advisor who keeps track of their progress, and when grades or assignments are not satisfactory, contacts and them refers them to a unit on campus that can assist.

As well, the Challenge Center is responsible for working with students who have special or additional needs. According to the self-evaluation report, these groups include: students with physical disabilities, limitations, or medical conditions; students with learning disabilities, or cognitive or sensory issues; and students for whom Hebrew is not their first language. During the site visit, the evaluation committee learned that the Challenge Center also serves many students from East Jerusalem, students from an Ethiopian background, and students who are suffering from mental-health issues.

Students can also avail themselves of the Career Counseling Center, which was described during the site visit as oriented toward "making students get to the finish line with the maximum number of benefits." The Center focuses on internships and provides about 200 a year. Each internship involves 100 hours and the Center looks for students who are devoted, seek academic credit, and want to build their networks. The Center also offers career workshops such as learning how to write professional CVs. The evaluation committee heard several times how alumni help new graduates to secure internships and gain access to full-time employment opportunities.

Student support also comes in the form of financial assistance. According to the self-evaluation report, scholarships are awarded based on socioeconomic criteria, although first-generation university students, those without family support, and those dealing with other circumstances might receive funding as well. Additional scholarships were given to students who were particularly affected by the pandemic. As well, students of Ethiopian origin receive assistance in the form of a rent subsidy.

3.6.4 Alumni

The Department recognizes that it has inadequate data about its alumni. There is no organized alumni network, although informal mechanisms exist by which graduates and faculty keep in touch with one other. Through the College's alumni surveys, the Department has some knowledge about where its alumni are employed. Its Facebook

page for alumni is used to post job advertisements and other information. It serves as an unofficial network which alumni found useful in keeping in contact with the Department.

Graduates appreciated the ongoing commitment that faculty have toward them, including using personal contacts in relation to job opportunities, and writing letters of recommendation. Alumni believe the Department's reputation enhances their employability, and that they constitute an important network for creating new employment opportunities for each other as well as current students. The evaluation committee would support the School's ambition to develop an alumni network.

3.7 Human Resources

The self-evaluation report offers a clear overview of faculty and staff in the Department of Politics & Communication. The expertise of the faculty reflects the unique combination of politics and communication. Faculty expressed satisfaction in their research, teaching, and service commitments. They also expressed that adequate support was provided for international conference travel and sabbaticals.

Although many faculty engage in research and research traditionally has been the basis on which tenure is granted, Hadassah has recently implemented teaching-based tenure. Faculty saw this as a plus as it aligns with what they enjoy doing. As one said, "I don't have to be modest or apologetic about loving teaching." As teaching-based tenure is new at Hadassah, it is expected the procedures and metrics to achieve tenure will naturally mature over time. The evaluation committee are confident this will happen as the College appears to be transparent in communicating its many other processes and procedures.

Similar to full-time faculty, adjuncts are passionate about serving and mentoring students. Adjuncts have impressive professional credentials and take pride in bringing their skills into the classroom. They feel encouraged to pitch new workshop ideas based on trends or needs they see in the industry, but the materialization of the course depends on the Head of the Department and management. Students and alumni are very grateful for the applied expertise of the adjuncts.

3.8 Diversity

Diversity and inclusion are core to the mission of Hadassah. The institution's commitment to this mission surfaced organically in many conversations during the site visit. The College seeks to reflect the diversity of Jerusalem, as it mainly serves the local populations. Senior leadership in and outside the Department are reflective about this both in the self-evaluation report and in person.

The evaluation committee heard that the College has made special efforts to increase the populations of Arab and Ultra-Orthodox students. Additionally, 50% of their

students are first-generation college students. The self-evaluation report details a number outreach efforts for Arab students. For example, the College website and programs have been translated into Arabic. An Arab Hadassah alum (a full-time employee of the College) meets with interested applicants and their families and provides relevant information in Arabic. In addition, the College runs two preacademic programs for Arab students to help them get acclimated to academic studies. Similar efforts are taken to help Ethiopian students integrate into the institution.

Although the College overall has 22% Arab students, significantly fewer are studying in the Department. The evaluation committee understands this is, in part, because of the type of writing-intensive and communication-heavy nature of the program. The coursework is in Hebrew, and many minority students require language support before matriculation. The Department can and should leverage the networks of distinguished alumni to create outreach to this population. As well, it should develop a more tailored outreach program to Arab communities.

While many diversity efforts focus on students, effort should be put into faculty diversity as well. Finding full-time and adjunct faculty is challenging due to the location of the College, and the Department can invite diverse guest speakers to contribute to courses as a small, short-term effort.

3.9 Research

Comprising six tenure-stream staff, the faculty at Hadassah Academic College study key issues at the nexus of political science and communication: traditional media and newer communication technologies; democratization and social movements; diplomacy and international relations; and political discourse. Faculty research appears both as monographs by international publishers, and as articles in leading disciplinary and interdisciplinary area-specific journals (e.g., International Journal of Communication, International Journal of Press/Politics, International Studies Quarterly, and Political Behavior).

Despite their strong commitment to teaching, as befitting the mission of Hadassah Academic College, the faculty in the Department of Politics & Communication continue to advance their research. In their meeting with the committee, senior faculty expressed great appreciation for the support afforded to their research by both the Head of the Department and the college. In particular, they noted opportunities to have student research assistants paid by the college, and to apply for course-load reductions, both of which increase and/or make more efficient the time spent on research.

3.10 Infrastructure and Facilities

Stakeholders believe the Department has sufficient infrastructure, equipment, and resources to stay current with industry trends. For example, they have industry-standard video and radio equipment.

The College also has an innovation/entrepreneurship lab and coaching space in a high student-traffic area near the library called "The Blender" (officially, "The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.") While impressive, it was unclear how many students from the Department of Politics & Communication are involved in its projects or how it related to departmental teaching or research.

The evaluation committee also toured the Azrieli Center for Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Employment, a suite of offices where students are advised. The Azrieli Center includes, among other offices and central units, the Challenge Center and Career Counseling Center described earlier. Its goals are to promote higher education for underprivileged populations, and to assist them financially and through improved study skills and learning reinforcement. The Center strives to engage students meaningfully with their community and ultimately help them transition into a promising career.

The College's library has quiet and collaborative meeting spaces for students. Of note, most of the books and databases are in Hebrew. As the College looks to internationalize, it should seek to grow its English-language holdings. It might also consider increasing resources in Arabic to accommodate easy access to this minority population.

Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the self-evaluation report and site visit, the evaluation committee finds much to commend about the Department of Politics & Communication. It has a clearly articulated vision and mission, in alignment with the College. Its student orientation is compelling and the unit is clearly committed to student success. The Department and central administration strongly support faculty research, particularly notable in an environment marked by a clear commitment to teaching and one where tenure can be earned based solely on teaching. Adjuncts appreciated the transparency in their interactions with the unit, students were laudatory, and alumni were passionate.

At the same time, the evaluation committee identified some concerns to address. Specifically, how can the unit bolster the diversity of its student body? Is the Excellence sub-program leading to a two-tier program, in which one group of students is perceived to be more elite?

Based on the committee's review and the aforementioned concerns raised, this report ends with a summary of the list of recommendations made:

4.1 Recommendations

Essential

Regarding issues of diversity, the Department should develop tailored outreach strategies to reach out to Arab communities. In the meantime, faculty can invite diverse guest speakers to contribute to course content.

Similarly, the College could grow its English language holdings and consider increasing resources in Arabic to accommodate easy access to this community.

Given the sense that students in the Excellence program and those not in the program felt quite separated, the Department should offer some shared courses for students on both tracks. At the very least, it should provide informal opportunities for all students to meet and interact in their second and third years.

With the recent implementation of teaching-based tenure, criteria for tenure and promotion should be widely circulated with all faculty.

To take into account the latest research and best practices, faculty should to review and update their essential and suggested readings.

Important

In matters related to curriculum and pedagogy, the Department should regularly review the topic mix of courses across the program.

All course leaders should use the same course template, thereby standardizing the information students receive.

Desirable

To the extent possible, the Department should provide fieldwork opportunities for all students, not only those in the Excellence program.

To build a feedback system for students, the Department should set up a student-faculty liaison committee with a regular meeting cycle.

Finally, related to syllabi, faculty should make the link between individual learning outcomes and the assessment tasks explicit in the course descriptions.

Signed by:

Prof. Patricia Moy

Committee Chair

Prof. Andrea Hickerson

Andrea E Hickerson

Prof. Karen Ross

Appendix I: Letter of Appointment



November 2021

Prof. Patricia Moy Department of Communication University of Washington 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 **Communications** departments. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Mark Deuze, prof. Richard Ling, prof. Karen Ross, prof. Dhavan V. Shah, and prof. Gabriel Weimann.

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