



# EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS

## **THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY**

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL

July 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 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 Israel<sup>1</sup>, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 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 Communication and Journalism in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The institution was evaluated by Prof. María Len-Ríos, Prof. Richard Ling, and Prof. Gabriel Weimann.

The EC would like to thank the management of the Department of Communication and Journalism 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 report is based on an examination of the self-evaluation report prepared by the Department, and the site visit carried out by the evaluation committee on 28 March 2022. During that visit, the evaluation committee met with the university leadership, the head of the Department, full-time and adjunct faculty, BA and graduate students, and alumni. The committee also was given a tour of the campus.

The Noah Mozes Department of Communication and Journalism at Hebrew University is a top-ranked program with a clear research ethos. Further, the Department is active in its diversity-oriented activities for recruitment of Arab students and Ultra-Orthodox Jews. There is a general sense of collegiality that includes mentoring and a positive social atmosphere.

The evaluation committee noted that there is a high dropout rate among undergraduate students that needs to be monitored. One dimension of this may be language competence among students who do not have Hebrew as a first language. In addition, there is the need for better techno-pedagogic support, particularly in the wake of COVID. The new demands for digital teaching and access to digital resources for innovative forms of teaching, provide the Department to reconsider how to best carry out its pedagogical mission.

## **Section 3: Observations**

### **3.1 The Institution**

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a central university and research institution in Israel. It was founded in 1918, and opened seven years later. At this time, the university has approximately 1,000 faculty members, about 2,000 administrative staff, and 24,000 students. The University offers education in the humanities, social sciences, exact sciences, and medicine, in addition to engaging in research in these areas. The University wins competitive grants from a variety of sources including the European Research Council.

The Hebrew University is highly ranked internationally. The faculty is productive in its publications. Many have registered patents or have won a variety of international prizes including Nobel, Abel, and Fields prizes.

### **3.2 Internal Quality Assurance**

The Hebrew University has an internal Office of Assessment & Evaluation (OAE) located in the office of the Rector's Office. THE OAE asks academic units to complete internal assessments and then invite international bodies to review the unit reports

and evaluate them. Units then provide a response to the reviewing body and these are further assessed by the University's Academic Policy Committee comprising University administration, unit faculty and non-faculty members. Further discussion is led by OAE and the academic unit.

This self-evaluation report was managed primarily by the department head and a senior faculty member in consultation with the faculty. The report draft was reviewed by pertinent staff and the department's full professors and was approved by the Rector. The Office of Assessment & Evaluation assisted in the preparation of the self-evaluation report examined herein.

In the previous evaluation in 2008, the Department was asked to recruit new faculty. According to the current self-evaluation report, the Department has filled several posts with productive younger scholars (p. 11).

### 3.3 Parent Unit

The Noah Mozes Department of Communication and Journalism is within the Faculty of Social Sciences at The Hebrew University. Other units in this faculty include Economics, Geography, International Relations, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Statistics.

The Rector, Professor Barak Medina, said that the University has a 10-year plan for the university and has allocated 7 to 8 new faculty positions for the social sciences. Furthermore, the University overall is increasing its focus on active learning across all units as well as helping the faculty promote diversity and multiculturalism.

### 3.4 Study program

The Hebrew University is known as one of the top research universities in Israel, and the Noah Mozes Department of Communication and Journalism is ranked as one of the top programs internationally. It is known for producing top-level scholars who produce research in the highest-quality international journals. The Department offers degrees at the level of the BA, MA, and PhD level (counting 374, 22, and 47 students respectively, as of 2021-22).

The Department concentrates its teaching and research efforts in six areas. These are 1) Internet and New Media; 2) Political Communication; 3) Language, Discourse, and Communication; 4) Journalism; 5) Cinema and Visual Culture; and 6) Theory, History, and Philosophy of Media and Communication. Their alumni are top-flight scholars, as well as earn positions in the media professions. It should be noted that this status has been maintained during the duress of the COVID era.

The Department has started several new initiatives that are noteworthy. One is an honors program at the undergraduate level, whereby 20 outstanding students are

offered special content that prepares them for academic research and bolster their ability to continue to an MA program. In the program, students are given the opportunity to take a research track that includes a research paper. Participating students remarked to the evaluation committee that they find the courses rigorous, updated, and useful in preparing for further academic studies. Another initiative is special introductory courses taught in Arabic, which will be elaborated on in the diversity section.

At all degree levels, students have a small set of mandatory courses in which they must enroll. The self-evaluation report says that the program of study is determined by the BA advisor, the Department Head, and members of the department's Teaching Committee (Vice Dean for Teaching, Head, Academic and Student Affairs). A list of courses for the BA and MA level was provided on p. 39 of the self-evaluation report. In addition, students have a wide array of elective courses from which to choose. Students said they enjoyed the opportunity to choose their electives and determine the courses and research topics that piqued their curiosity.

The pedagogical philosophy of the Department is more theoretically focused. This is seen in the list of courses, the list of practical instructors, and the comments on the students' works. The study program in The Hebrew University is not geared toward professional training. It was noted that students can "taste" practical aspects of communication work in the workshops and in the internships. However, the practical direction is not the central "spirit" of the program.

The evaluation committee noted the students and alumni chose this department because of its emphasis on research and academic work.

### 3.4.1 Training

The Department's program offers workshops and structured internships. The Departmental Internships Program, a part of the Faculty of Social Sciences' Internship Program, is coordinated by an academic manager and a coordinator. A management committee reviews the internships at the beginning of the year, and the coordinator oversees the internships during the year. About 10% of the students participate in the internship program. The self-evaluation report includes a list of organizations where students were placed (pp. 41-2). These included high-level organizations (e.g., Channel 12 News, Israeli Public Broadcasting, Municipality of Jerusalem). The evaluation committee heard from students who participated in the internship program that it was a valuable experience. It allowed them to get hands-on skills to learn more about professional opportunities. Others noted that it helped them apply the theoretical concepts that they had learned in the classroom.

Some students noted that because they had worked prior to attending university, they need not avail themselves of the internship experience. One student reported being

unaware of the internship opportunity, which suggests a need to better publicize the program.

### 3.4.2 Internationalization

Much of the internationalization of the Department is through research collaboration, service in international research organizations, as well as through teaching collaborations and postdoctoral training. The Department maintains these connections through hosting international scholars and students, and particularly through its involvement in professional academic organizations such as the International Communication Association. The self-evaluation report (p. 44) noted the Smart Institute for Communications has supported bringing speakers to campus. The Department also has hired professors from Germany and the United States, thereby internationalizing its faculty. Lastly, the faculty have won grants allowing them to bring in international students for collaboration. These types of research projects are to be commended.

## 3.5 Teaching and Learning outcomes

### 3.5.1 Teaching

While teaching is not what brings international renown to the Department's programs, it is known for training students to be strong academic thinkers. The self-evaluation report and the findings of the evaluation committee indicate that students can go out into the workforce with advanced problem-solving and analytical skills.

In preparation for teaching, new faculty engage in mandatory workshops, and faculty are evaluated by students' surveys at the end of each semester. According to the self-evaluation report (page 44) new faculty take a 14-hour workshop on teaching skills. In addition, the Faculty of Social Sciences provides advising for new faculty and offers time-management workshops as well as workshops on grant writing and professional development.

For the most part, students said that they chose to come to Hebrew University for its name recognition. They knew that they would receive strong academic preparation. Students at all levels said they are encouraged to get involved in academic research. The fact that the faculty are engaged in active research provides the students valuable experience in being a part of the research process "from start to finish."

In reference to the pandemic, students said they appreciated the lectures being recorded. This has become a common practice for many courses, even in the post-COVID era. This is seen as positive because it allowed the students to review them at a later time. It was noted that the department's default recording of lectures has enhanced learning and allowed students more flexibility in ways to learn, especially those working full-time. One student noted they had been in a "flipped" class where

they watched pre-recorded lectures with the expectation that in-class activities would be more interactive. Regardless, the in-class experience was still in the form of a traditional lecture. The digital forms of pedagogy can mean that the traditional form of lecturing needs to be reworked.

### 3.5.2 Learning outcomes

Due to COVID, there had been a change from classes with a final exam, to classes with several papers and essays written during the semester. Instructors or teaching assistants graded the work. The faculty noted in conversations with the evaluation committee that there is now better technological support for recording class and video, which has allowed for teaching flexibility and a diversity of ways to assess student learning. In a way, faculty noted this has propelled the University forward in its goal to increase interactive learning because it led to use of the flipped classroom and other innovative teaching techniques. To continue down this path and maintain research excellence, the faculty noted there needs to be continued support for teaching assistants and improved WIFI and other technological infrastructure.

There has been a move to use the top honors students as teaching assistants in some courses. Some students said the quality of the TA grading and pedagogy can be somewhat uneven. This can be something for the department to look into.

The students felt that they were prepared for the workforce. The doctoral students with whom the evaluation committee spoke were not working in academia but in other educational roles or consulting. Some did express an interest in obtaining positions in higher education institutions. It would be interesting to understand the different placement opportunities for doctoral students outside academia.

Generally, the students and alumni whom the evaluation committee met were satisfied with their studies and the careers they pursued. Indeed, a majority of alumni were inspired to pursue higher degrees in communication as well as in education, including graduate degrees in other fields such as psychology and international relations.

## 3.6 Students

### 3.6.1 Admission and graduation

The Department manages the admissions to its programs. Its target enrollment is about 120 undergraduate students in each cohort. In 2018/19 the Department admitted 64% of undergraduate applicants for its programs, making it relatively selective. The MA program had had a reduction in students admitted, with several students admitted on probation. Per discussions during the site visit, the preparation of applicants for the MA program from other institutions was uneven. For the students who have a BA from Hebrew University there was the sense that they were prepared



to start the MA program. However, students from some other more practically oriented universities and colleges were not equally prepared. Thus, faculty described having felt that it was difficult to teach MA courses because the students entered the program with very different levels of preparation.

A new honors program at the BA level has helped to develop a track for students going into the MA program. The number of applicants to the doctoral program is small and steady, with an average of five students admitted per year. This appears to be a good number given the size of the faculty.

The self-evaluation report (table 12, p. 58) noted the rather high dropout rate for undergraduate students. This was discussed during the site visit, with some students indicating the practical aspect did not meet their expectations. We would recommend the Department monitor these numbers to see if it is a trend or an aberration.

### 3.6.2 Graduate students

The program currently has 75 graduate students (47 MA, 28 PhD). There is a stated policy to recruit top BA graduates into the MA program and further, encourage MA students to continue to the PhD level. The MA offers 3 specializations, and usually, a student completes the studies within approximately 2 years. PhD students are required to submit their dissertation within 5 years.

The students we met were very satisfied with the graduate programs. They highlighted the importance of attending the departmental colloquium (twice a month) and valued joint MA/PhD courses. They also noted the importance of attending special lectures and workshops of visiting and resident faculty. One student noted that they "make us feel that we are joining the game of the grown-ups."

The evaluation committee noted several indicators of the graduate programs' success. These include the fact that this is the largest graduate program of communication in Israel. It attracts excellent students. The graduate students are well socialized for research and publication careers; indeed, numerous graduate students had papers accepted by selective conferences like the International Communication Association. Finally, there are students who publish articles in refereed journals during their studies.

### 3.6.3 Student support services

Student support services were mentioned in the self-evaluation report and discussed somewhat during the site visit. A major dimension of this area is seen in the Diversity section below. In addition, there are advisors at the BA and MA levels. There is also support for students with special needs.

It needs to be noted that student support services were not a strong focus in either the self-evaluation report or the site visit.

### 3.6.4 Alumni

The self-evaluation report notes that many BA students continue on to other degrees. This was also reflected in the meeting of the evaluation committee with alumni. In general, the alumni were very positive about their experience in the department. They reported that it was an excellent research department, and felt a sense of prestige based on their studying there. The alumni (including several first-generation university students) spoke of how the department and the university had cultivated them. One alumna simply noted that “a professor saw something in me,” which gave her a sense of empowerment.

The alumni with whom the evaluation committee spoke mentioned the positive experience of the honors program as well as the internships that they had held, some of which led to a professional career.

### 3.7 Human Resources

The Department enjoys a relatively large number of faculty (22 full-time faculty, 18 adjunct faculty, 27 teaching assistants, and 3 emeriti). The ratios of academic faculty to students, and academic full-time faculty to adjuncts are very good: 1:20.5, and 1:22, respectively. The committee was impressed with the size of the faculty as well as their high quality, as indicated by their productivity (see section on Research). The evaluation committee noted that the faculty often carry a variety of academic as well as service commitments. The service commitments include serving on committees and heading initiatives within the University as well as service activities for the wider disciplinary community.

The Department has hired several excellent younger scholars in recent years. Noteworthy from the self-evaluation report is that newly hired faculty are mentored by senior faculty. The Department has plans for additional hires in the next few years. The type of people who will fill these new positions will allow the Department to develop its focus and enhance its diversity. There is a dialogue between the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Department, and the University concerning these new hires.

### 3.8 Diversity

The evaluation committee understood that there is a very strong motivation by the University to encourage diversity. The institution has in place several diversity-oriented policies and formal procedures to enrich and diversify the student population and the faculty. These include targeting the recruitment of Arab students (both from East Jerusalem and from Israel in general), Ultra-Orthodox Jews, and others. According to the Rector, the University is developing a one-year preparation program with

separate courses for men and women to help recruit Ultra-Orthodox students. Also, the University is offering additional first year courses in Arabic to facilitate recruitment from East Jerusalem.

The Department has developed a specific program to aid Arab students. The program includes offering Arab students introductory course content in their native language to further their understanding of concepts and technical language. The Department, as well as the university, should be commended for putting this action in place to support the diversification of the student body.

Moreover, as stated in the self-evaluation report (p. 87), a new Vice President of Strategy and Diversity was nominated (a new position), thus adding a formal dimension to the actual implementation of diversity policy. The committee also heard Arab students praising the Department and faculty for assisting in their transition into the university. The evaluation committee was able to speak to several Arab students who do not have Hebrew as a first language. In addition, some of these students were first-generation university students. They noted that it had been a major transition coming to Hebrew University given the prestige of the university and the fact that instruction is in Hebrew. They recalled that the special services provided by the university had facilitated this transition. The language courses and mentoring were mentioned in this context. Such support services should continue and be expanded.

It is also worth noting that there is a near gender parity in the faculty. Albeit, according to the self-evaluation report, at the levels of senior lecturer and full professor, there is a dominance of males. Females make up about 70% of the student population.

### 3.9 Research

The Noah Mozes Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a well-established voice in the Israeli and the global research community. It is highly regarded for its research activities that, in turn, reflect back on teaching and the preparation of students. The students noted that the professors are quite diverse in their research and that they are “up to date” in the themes that they address. The students also noted that the faculty encouraged critical thinking which allowed students to participate in active research.

Faculty have published 51 articles and chapters published within the last year. They are active in grant-winning, with 15 research grants (including very prestigious ones, such as those from the European Research Council).

There is a clear ethos in the Department that research and publication are core activities. These expectations were understood and respected by the faculty. It was easy to see from the faculty with whom the evaluation committee met, that they were proud of their record and geared to continue in their academic pursuits. As noted above, the Department has six well-formulated research foci, which indicates an

emphasis on depth and not breadth. At the same time, the faculty know that they should continue to seek out new research areas as time goes on.

There is also a laudable focus on the inclusion of diverse research voices. The productivity of the faculty can be seen in both their own writing and research, as well as the inclusion of their students (at all levels) in the writing of articles. As an example, the evaluation committee was presented with a document outlining the papers that had been accepted to the upcoming International Communication Association. It was an extensive (and impressive) list of papers that included several dozen student-led and faculty-led papers.

The committee noted that both senior and junior faculty enjoy a collegial atmosphere. This is seen in joint work, the research teams, the sharing of reports and findings, the mutual assistance, and the mentorship provided by senior researchers for newer faculty. The excitement regarding research also spilled over onto the students who noted this in their meeting with the evaluation committee.

Beyond publication, many of the faculty members are providing service to the research community, both within the university and the broader disciplinary community (e.g., the International Communication Association) as editors of journals and as the heads of committees. Further, the faculty extend this sense to others in the wider research community through their international engagement.

According to the self-evaluation report, the Department can be somewhat more oriented toward the Israeli context. It also mentioned concrete plans to sharpen their focus on more traditional communication sub-disciplines, e.g., journalism.

### 3.10 Infrastructure and Facilities

The evaluation committee was briefed on the infrastructure and toured the campus and its facilities. Since this department is research-oriented, we did not see many production labs, editing rooms, and studios. However, we could see the media center, the research labs, the library, and the classrooms, that appear to satisfy the Department's needs. Thus, unsurprisingly, the self-evaluation report section on Infrastructure concludes with the statement (p. 146) that "overall, the infrastructure and facilities available to the faculty are adequate."

There is, however, the need to think about the effect of remote teaching and digital interaction during the pandemic. Some people interviewed by the evaluation committee mentioned how the institution's digital infrastructure needs to be reviewed in the wake of this digital pivot. There is a specific need to consider the techno-pedagogic support for active teaching. There is also the need to better define the notion of active teaching while understanding it is an evolving concept.

## Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

The Department of Communication and Journalism at Hebrew University is ranked as one of the top programs in Israel and internationally. There is a clear ethos in the department that research and publication are core activities. In addition, several diversity-oriented policies and formal procedures aim to enrich the student population and the faculty. These included targeting the recruitment of Arab students (both from East Jerusalem and from Israel in general) and Ultra-Orthodox Jews.

The department enjoys a relatively large faculty (22 full-time faculty, 18 adjunct faculty, 27 teaching assistants, and 3 Emeriti). The ratio of academic faculty to students is very good: 1 to 20.5. The ratio of academic full-time faculty to adjuncts is also very good: 1:22. The evaluation committee had the impression that there was an atmosphere of collegiality that included efforts to mentor younger colleagues. In addition, there was a positive social atmosphere.

During the site visit, it was noted that there is a need for better techno-pedagogic support. In the wake of the pandemic, there are new demands for digital teaching and access to digital resources for innovative forms of teaching. The Department should consider upgrading its infrastructure in this area. Also, the Department should consider compensation for faculty who carry an administrative load.

### 4.1 Recommendations

#### Essential

There is a rather high dropout rate for the undergraduate students. The Department needs to monitor these numbers and take steps to ensure that students have the resources that they need in order to succeed.

The language courses and mentoring for Arabic students should continue and be expanded.

#### Important

The digital infrastructure of the university needs to be reviewed in the wake of the recent application of online teaching, hybrid teaching, new modes of interaction, etc. The Department should collaborate with the University in developing a strategy to build the unit's digital infrastructure.

Support needs to be provided for graduate school and students, particularly incoming MA students from different universities to help transition them to becoming doctoral students.

There has been a move to engage the top honors students as teaching assistants in some courses. Some students said the quality of the TA grading and pedagogy can be

somewhat uneven, which suggests a need for training and increased communication between instructors and TAs.

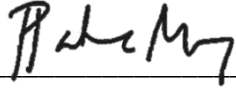
**Desirable**

To help the unit rebound from faculty attrition, as noted in the self-evaluation report, the Department should pursue the hiring of a journalism position.

The Department should seek to increase compensation for faculty with administrative loads.

Signed by:

Prof. Patricia Moy  
*Committee Chair*



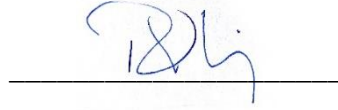
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Prof. María Len-Ríos



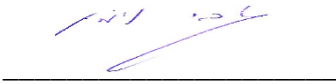
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Prof. Richard Ling



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Prof. Gabriel Weimann



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## 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ido Perlman'.

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