

**School of Social and
Policy Studies**
The Gershon H. Gordon
Faculty of Social Sciences
Tel Aviv University

**בית הספר ללימודי
חברה ומדיניות**
הפקולטה למדעי החברה
ע"ש גרשון גורדון
אוניברסיטת תל אביב

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION PROGRAMS TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

Steps to be taken following the Committee Recommendations

October 2022

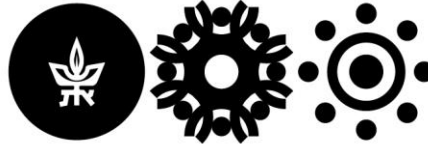
Dear committee members,

We would like to thank you for the time and effort in reviewing our report and meeting the people at the DAN Department of Communication at Tel Aviv University. We were very pleased to read your evaluation and useful suggestions, some of which we already started to address with great enthusiasm. Thanks to your recommendations the university has already approved another tenure-track position for the department, and we have begun the recruiting process. This is certainly one of the most urgent steps to take in order to meet the growing demand for our bachelor program.

Below you can find the actions we plan to implement following your recommendations:

Crucial

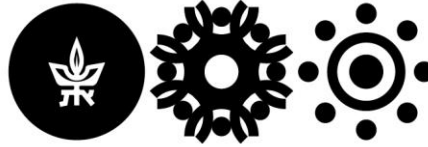
Committee recommendations	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
First and foremost, the Department must hire more faculty, both tenure-track and, potentially, adjuncts.	The university has given us the go-ahead to hire a tenure-track faculty member, who will start in the department in the 2023-24 academic year. We are currently in the process of soliciting applications from qualified candidates and anticipate making an offer to the selected applicant this coming winter. We are also in the process of establishing a regular position for a video editing instructor. Given the growth of our student body and program offerings, we will continue to make every effort to receive approval for additional faculty and adjuncts. We hope that the university may be more receptive to this in light of the recommendations expressed in the report.



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<p>To potentially reduce the dropout and non-graduation rates, the Department should ensure that promotional materials align with course content.</p>	<p>Upon reviewing student comments on this matter, it appeared that part of the concern has to do with our joint program with the Sociology Department. We will collaborate with them in the following year (2022-3) to better align the promotional materials with the program content. Our department finds the combination between theoretical and practical content to be especially important. We emphasize this to prospective students and provide a clear explanation of what they can expect during their studies. As course descriptions appear online, revamping them (see next point) should augment our efforts with respect to the promotional materials.</p>
<p>Similarly, course descriptions need to be revised so that they more accurately describe the content. The Department needs to ensure that faculty teaching those courses teach the content described.</p>	<p>In order to ensure that, the teaching committee will request access to the syllabi before their publication on the course website (for each year starting from 2022-3). It will make sure that the course description is not too broad and vague and that it reflects the content that the lecturer described in the detailed syllabus (which includes the list of lectures, with their titles and reading lists). If the final detailed syllabus is not yet available when the Teaching Committee does its review, a member of the Committee has to meet with the teacher and ask her/him to give more details about the content and to complete the course description accordingly.</p>
<p>Faculty should be required to review their essential and suggested readings and refresh/update them, not least to take into account the latest research and best practices.</p>	<p>When reviewing the syllabi, the teaching committee will check the publication dates of the essential readings and, except for the “classics”, ask the lecturer if (s)he can think of a replacement for publications that seem dated. In particular, if the course has been taught for several years, the teaching committee can compare the reading list for the coming year to the ones proposed in the previous years and evaluate the extent to which the lecturer has refreshed her/his list.</p>
<p>Relatedly, all courses must articulate a specific set of learning outcomes, and include assessments that illustrate whether these</p>	<p>The teaching committee has sent a format of a syllabus to all registered teachers (July 2022), asking them to mention in all syllabi specific set of learning outcomes, and include assessments that illustrate whether these outcomes have been achieved. Members of the committee will read all syllabi of practical courses/workshops before each semester, to ensure that</p>



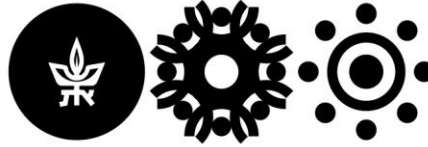
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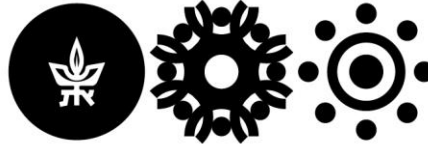
outcomes have been achieved.	this is done properly (October 2022 and February 2023).
To improve students' learning experience and to better prepare TAs for their job, the Department needs to ensure that all students recruited to teach are trained and mentored pedagogically.	Apart from courses and workshops offered by the Dean of Innovative Learning and the TAU Teaching Center, each of the teachers of the general introductory courses is responsible for training and supervising her/his own TAs. The real issue has to do with their recruitment. We will try to ensure continuity, so that there is always at least one experienced TA who can help those who do it for the first time. We will also ask from the faculty to allow Ph.D. students to work as TAs for each large course (starting from 2023), although this represents extra costs. If we could get a permanent situation where for every such course there would be one Ph.D. student who does it for a few years in a row, that would be a major advancement. Finally, we are planning to hold before the beginning of each year a meeting with all the TAs so that they can meet and help each other. We will provide them with written guidelines. See the point below.

Important

Committee recommendations	Steps toward implementation (including timetable)
Vis-à-vis adjuncts, the Department should create for them a handbook that describes departmental processes, academic responsibilities, and employment procedures.	In order to better prepare our adjuncts and TAs, we are going to draft a detailed handbook with all the relevant information regarding their employment (already in October 2023). This will include general information on the DAN Department of Communication and its vision, structure and curricula, employment conditions and university guidelines as well as more specific information on the expected role of adjuncts, the pedagogic and online tools available to them, and practical advice and tips for fulfilling this role successfully. Additionally, we will continue to conduct at the beginning of every academic year a preliminary meeting in which adjuncts could meet each other and other faculty members, ask questions and exchange ideas. We also plan to produce a short video and a presentation to be sent to all new and existing adjuncts together



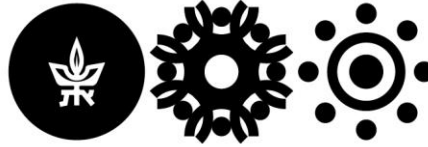
	with the handbook as part of their information pack.
Also, the Department can initiate regular meetings (maybe once or twice a semester) for adjuncts to interact with each other and senior faculty.	Meetings with adjuncts are indeed carried out regularly before the beginning of each semester. We will certainly keep on this tradition, as it helps adjuncts and faculty members to coordinate, raise and solve problems, and initiate wonderful ideas for mutual cooperations.
Regarding course coordination, faculty teaching similar concepts should liaise with one other to ensure that they approach the concepts from multiple perspectives and avoid using the same texts across courses.	We have established a review process to inspect all syllabi and will reinforce it further. First, the two heads of the practical tracks oversee and review the content of all workshops (every year between July and August). The teaching committee is also responsible for reviewing the content of all workshops as well as the elective course syllabi. To further ensure that there is no overlap among all other courses, including those of faculty members, we will create an online shared document for the year of 2023, where we will ask to register course readings and keywords per course. The Department will institute an annual review procedure in the first yearly meeting where we discuss potential similarities and overlaps between (new) courses. We will introduce a faculty role of program coordinator, who will be in charge of periodically asking the faculty members to update the list, and will serve as liaison for students expressing concerns over similar materials and redundancies.
The Department should consider lowering the enrollment in some workshops so students can have more practice and better refine their media-production skills.	This is a great challenge for the Department as the current budget from the Faculty and the University regulations do not allow flexibility. We are currently required to allocate 30 students to each workshop. We are working closely with the Faculty of Social Sciences to lower the enrollment in the workshops. We plan to start by reducing the the cap on the number of students per class during the registration stage. At the same time, we will offer more internships and practicum courses, which will allow us to open classes with a significantly lower number of students.
The Department should recognize faculty's Hebrew-language research	The topic has a long history and is fraught with difficulties. Indeed, especially when writing research on Israeli society, history, or politics the debate and research may take place in Hebrew and writing in Hebrew should be fully legitimate. There



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<p>efforts as well as English-language ones.</p>	<p>are some excellent scientific peer review journals of communication in Hebrew, such as Misgarot Meida (Media Frames) published by the Israeli Communication Association (IsCA), Keshet (the journal of the institute for the history of Hebrew and Israeli journalism), Sociologia Israelit (Israeli Sociology), or Teoria veBikoret (Theory and Critique). Such journals may not appear in international rankings, yet they matter, as they are read by colleagues and students and provide a fruitful stage for academic debate. For all those reasons, we think it is important that the Department, and the university at all levels, give full recognition to research published in Hebrew, in the adequate forums. We need to have the Rector recognize publications in these journals in the evaluations of faculty's applications for promotions, as this is a major obstacle to publishing in Hebrew. We will communicate this to the faculty in relevant meetings.</p>
<p>The Department should think about developing a broader internationalization strategy.</p>	<p>A detailed proposal for a joint MA program with LSE was drafted at the beginning of 2022. The program got the support of the School of Social and Policy Studies as well as the Vice President of Tel Aviv University, in charge of international academic collaboration, who found it very appealing and timely. Unfortunately, the Faculty did not support the idea, arguing that there are other pending international programs to promote before ours can get any form of consideration. The Department will continue its efforts in 2023 as we believe this is a great opportunity to offer something different and unique to students in Israel and abroad.</p> <p>Together with the dual master plan, we will work in two parallel directions. First, we will coordinate with the TAU international school to establish a tighter collaboration with the various programs by offering courses in English to them, particularly for the Digital Media and Communication track of the Liberal arts BA: https://liberal-arts.tau.ac.il/liberal-arts/curriculum_2021-22. We will further work towards increasing the attractiveness of the Department for international visiting scholars and graduate students in 2023 onward, with a wider offering of English-language seminars. Second, working in tandem with the School of Social and Policy Studies, we will open up joint ventures such</p>



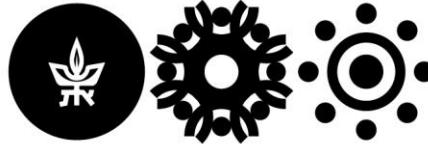
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	<p>as the methodological center, particularly with the idea of attracting international scholars and students. One such venture, the Data Hub has already a planned opening conference for July 2023. The hub will bring together scholars, students and practitioners from a range of social science disciplines to conduct workshops and roundtables surrounding the role of data and concomitant computational practices from social and ethic perspective. Looking into how mundane actions become growingly datafied, but also how such data becomes key component in policy and governance decision making, the hub will offer skills training and actionable recommendations for scholars and civil servants alike.</p>
<p>To ensure students' concerns and ideas about the program are heard, the Department should develop a formal structure for feedback. This can be in the form of a student-faculty liaison committee or regularly held meetings between students, faculty, and/or the Head of Department.</p>	<p>Following this recommendation and a meeting conducted with the student representative, the Department has initiated meetings with first and second-year students in the different programs to hear their suggestions. We will continue with the open meetings tradition. To ensure that these meetings will be fruitful, the head of the Department and the administrative team will maintain regular communication with the student representative on this topic.</p>

Desirable

Recommendation	Responsible
<p>For matters related to teaching, the Department should ensure all course outlines include the same basic information.</p>	<p>As suggested above, the teaching committee will request access to the syllabi before their publication on the course website and will offer a syllabus template to ensure that syllabi include the same basic information.</p>
<p>As finding full-time and adjunct faculty is challenging, the</p>	<p>We are gradually increasing the number of guest lectures in our courses and will even offer funds for full-time and adjunct faculty members to invite guest speakers in 2023 onwards. We</p>



<p>Department can invite diverse guest speakers in classes as a small, short-term effort.</p>	<p>also plan many exciting events next year (2023) with researchers and practitioners as well as with our alumni to expand the network of our students and expose them to cutting-edge research, practices and technologies.</p>
<p>The Department also can reconsider the shape of the program and consolidate some low-credit courses into high-credit courses. Doing so would enhance and deepen learning and enable fewer but more sophisticated assignments to be completed.</p>	<p>The Department will start working on consolidating small courses. A first stage has already been implemented. We intend to offer annual seminars of 4 credit points instead of 3 credit points on our MA program. In September 2022 we submitted a request to the Faculty of Social Science as part of a larger plan to modify our MA program. Upon approval, this plan might take place already in the academic year of 2023-4.</p>
<p>The Department should continue to consider the useful pedagogical tools and lessons learned during COVID and incorporate them into curriculum development.</p>	<p>The department of communication is leading the use and adaption of new technologies and pedagogical tools, and is currently investigating the use of VR in classes. Two introductory courses were transformed onto Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) during 2021-2. One introductory course (methodology) is now hybrid—one part is a MOOC and the other requires in-class attendance and interactions. Two more courses were designed as hybrid courses (involving synchronic face-to-face meetings on campus and a- synchronic self-learning assignments). The department is currently developing a few more MOOCs (particularly for introductory courses) and hybrid (elective) courses for 2023-4.</p>

We would like to thank again the committee for the opportunity to improve our programs. We hope to continue to listen, develop and grow, and offer even more exciting courses and cutting-edge workshops for our students in the near future.

Sincerely,

Prof. Elad Segev
Head of the DAN Department of Communication
Tel Aviv University