EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

HAIFA UNIVERSITY

COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENTS IN ISRAEL

August 2020

Section 1:   **Background and Procedures**

1. In the academic year 2018-19 the Council for Higher Education [CHE] put in place arrangements for the evaluation of study programs in the field of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences in Israel.

2. The Higher Education Institutions [HEIs] participating in the evaluation process were:
    -   Ariel University
    -   Bar-Ilan University
    -   Ben-Gurion University
    -   The Hebrew University
    -   The Open University
    -   Technion – Israel Institute of Technology
    -   Tel Aviv University
    -   Ruppin Academic Center
    -   Peres Academic Center
    -   Natanya Academic Center
    -   Tel Hai Academic Center
    -   Interdisciplinary Center of Herzelia
    -   Haifa University
    -   Institution of Management
    -   The Academic Institution of Tel Aviv Yafo

3. To undertake the evaluation, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of[1]:

-   **Prof. Elena Grigorenko**, Department of Psychology, University of Houston & Child Study Center, Yale Medical School, USA. (child development, chronic disease, epidemiology, learning disorders, public and global health) – *Committee chair.*
-   **Em. Prof. Miles Hewstone,** University of Oxford, UK. (social psychology)
-   **Prof. Deborah Stipek,** Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, USA. (developmental and educational psychology)
-   **Em. Prof. Moshe Zeidner[2],** Department of Counselling and Human Development (Educational Psychology and Human Development), Haifa University, Israel.
-   **Prof. Sigal Alon**, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, Israel. (sociology)

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

[2] Prof. Zeidner did not participate in the evaluation of the department at Haifa University due to a possible conflict of interest.

- **Prof. Eva Gilboa-Schechtman,** Department of Psychology, Bar Ilan University, Israel. (clinical psychology)
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Ms. Alex Buslovich Bilik served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

The evaluation process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (February 2018). Within this framework the evaluation Committee was required to:

- examine the self-evaluation reports submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in Psychology and Behavioral Sciences
- conduct on-site visits at 8 out of 15 institutions participating in the evaluation process, based on predefined criteria.
- 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
- submit to the CHE a general report regarding the evaluated field of study within the Israeli system of higher education

1. The evaluation Committee examined 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.

2. This report highlights the **Department of Psychology** at **Haifa University**

Section 2: Executive Summary

The Department of Psychology of Haifa University (HaU) offers degree programs ranging from BA to Ph.D. levels. The Self-Evaluation report adequately reports on noticeable achievements of its faculty, both in teaching and research. The Department strives for higher accomplishments and continues working on the enhancement of its position in the country and the world. Yet, it experiences a number of challenges (fiduciary, physical plant, and administrative) characteristic of the general position of Psychology in Israel and of this particular Department and faculty. Overall, the Committee deemed the performance of the Department as clearly meeting the expected threshold level of performance.

Section 3: **Observations**

3.1   Mission and goals

The mission of the Department of Psychology is to provide teaching and training at the highest level and to conduct cutting-edge research. The Committee finds that both the BA and MA programs are well-structured, the student body is select, the faculty's research productivity is impressive, and research projects are funded by external grants and published in leading professional outlets. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.2   Management and Administration

The Department of Psychology offers a BA program and Ph.Ds. in experimental and clinical science. At the MA level, they have clinical and experimental tracks in Social, Developmental, Cognitive and Human Factors, and Brain and Psychopathology. The Department has an Advisory Committee, nominated by the Department Head, which is consulted on the implementation, monitoring and ongoing formulation of the strategic plan and related departmental decision-making (e.g., programs, hiring decisions, space use, infrastructure, financial allocation priorities). The Committee also monitors objective indices of the Department's strengths/weaknesses nationally and internationally. Overall, the faculty are evenly distributed between males and females, but females are somewhat overrepresented at the senior lecturer level and underrepresented at the full professor level. No information on faculty ethnic backgrounds is provided. But a substantial proportion of students are Arab (47% BA; 11% MA and 8% PhD.); additionally, .5% and .6% of the students in the BA and MA programs, respectively, are Ethiopian. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.

3.3   QA & Self-Evaluation Process

A Unit for Academic Quality Evaluation was instituted in HaU under the guidance of the CHE. The present self-evaluation document was compiled by two senior level core faculty members. Additional faculty members, the administrative staff in the Department of Psychology and at the Unit for Academic Quality Evaluation, contributed to the process by supplying the requested information. The two senior faculty members reviewed and approved the final draft of the report. In addition, all BA, MA and PhD alumni of the Program within 5 years of completion were surveyed by phone. The information and insights from these conversations were integrated into the review. With respect to the teaching component of the QA, HaU appears to function within a structured and

streamlined system. Teacher evaluations are sent to instructors at the end of each semester. Assistance is provided for teachers who have consistently received low evaluation-scores. In addition to the quantitative survey data, regular meetings with students at the BA and MA levels are held for feedback and discussion. A systematic procedure for evaluation, appropriateness, and comprehensiveness of the BA and MA curricula also appears to be in place. Senior core faculty provide mentorship for young faculty. The Department provided a detailed appraisal of its responses to the original round of CHE evaluation comments at the completion of the evaluation, its 3-year implementation in 2013, and the 2018 follow-up. In general, the Department was highly responsive, especially with respect to expansion, providing a more youthful profile to the faculty, and strengthening of specific areas identified by the CHE Committee. Along with the CHE Committee's recommendations, the Department also continuously works on merging and modernizing their MA programs. Yet, there are continued struggles such as the need for more research and office space (although some has been granted since the 2008 evaluation), financial support for PhD students, and faculty promotion (specifically, timing and conditions of being promoted at each career level). In addition, as indicated by the suggestions below, although there are ongoing efforts focused on improving the Department's BA and MA programs, there is still room for further enhancements. The Department recognizes that the area of the CHE Committee's recommendations, marked by the least amount of both effort and success, is its relationships with the alumni; this activity domain requires further attention. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HaU clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.

3.4 Study program

Overall, both the BA and MA (clinical cluster: Lifespan Psychology, Child Psychology, and Neuropsychology; experimental tracks include: Social, Developmental, Cognitive and Human Factors, and Brain and Psychopathology) programs are well-structured and the curricula appropriately designed. Students are exposed to a demanding curriculum, much of it in English, and generally up-to-date. Highlights of the BA program include an enticing and stimulating intellectual history of psychology (offered as Introduction to Psychology), the Native Honors Program, and a noteworthy Path to Excellence in Psychology course (for students with Hebrew as a second language). Some courses are, however, rather dated in their approach and reading material: Theories of Personality is using a 1992 course text and would normally be presented in a modern program as Personality and Individual Differences; and Social Psychology uses a 2012 book (in English, in a field where there is constant updating and a wide choice). It is also surprising that Social Psychology – typically appreciated by students as an engaging and relevant subject, and hence a great gateway to the study of psychological science, is not taught until Yrs 2/3.

On the MA program, while generally the standard is high, some courses are rather idiosyncratic (e.g., Developmental Research Methodology and Advanced Developmental Research Methodology which do not seem to include a focus on longitudinal research) while others are in need of updating (e.g., Parenting and Attachment). The two courses in Social Psychology, however (Intergroup Relations & Arab-Israeli Conflict; Theories & Issues in Intergroup Conflict), are exemplary: up-to-date, broad, and compelling to any student of these issues in contemporary Israel. All students participate in designing and running research studies, analyzing data, and both writing up and presenting research findings. In addition, all undergraduate students participate in a 3rd year empirical seminar through which they carry out independent research. In relatively small groups (10–14), students work with a faculty member, learning how to develop an original research question, design a study to investigate it, collect and analyze data in an appropriate manner, and write up the results. There is also an 18-month researchers' honors program in which students are mentored individually by a faculty member. Both the BA and MA Courses and exams appear to meet the criterion of rigor. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3.5 Teaching and Learning

Overall, the Department appears to provide a satisfactory teaching environment. Standard student satisfaction surveys of all lecturers in every course are conducted each semester (a joint endeavor of the Academic Planning Unit and the Student Union). Lecturers receive both statistical and verbal feedback as to their students' satisfaction about the various components of the course. The Committee could not find any information on the participation rate for students (which should be targeted at least 50%, since, if skewed, these evaluations will provide no reliable basis for decisions such as how well material is being taught and which instructors require remedial courses). Currently, instructors in need are provided with additional support to address course ratings that fall below the threshold. Most syllabi are sufficiently detailed and helpful. All course materials should include clear Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) – e.g., what a student should be able to *do*, and not simply what they should *know*, after the course. Most courses include a Course Outline, rather than ILOs, but Developmental Psychology (BA: year 1) provides an example for others to follow. It is not clear whether ILOs are directly assessed in course evaluations – if not, it is a suggestion that they be added. Haifa's Unit for the Advancement of Teaching coordinates innovation in teaching, and there is evidence of a number of techniques being used to target the way Generation Y students learn (e.g., problem-based learning; the flipped classroom). From the self-evaluation, however, the Committee could not discern the extent to which such innovations, as well as online courses or course components, were being used in the program where one might expect them to be most useful, i.e., in the BA Program. In this

area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3. 6 Faculty

The Department has 28 academic members, three of whom are affiliated with the non-tenured (experts) track. The Committee in the previous review recommended increasing the number of full professors. According to the self-evaluation report, four faculty members have been promoted to the rank of full professor since then. But the list of faculty in 2017-18 includes only 1 full professor (12 associates, 12 senior lecturers and 1 lecturer). The faculty are well distributed across core areas of psychology: 8 neuro/psychobiology, 8 clinical, 5 social, 5 cognitive, and 2 developmental (including non-tenured track). HU does not provide the total number of students in the self-evaluation report. From 2015 to 2018, 6 faculty retired. They recruited 3 new faculty members and increased one faculty member from a 25% appointment to 100%. Senior faculty members from the Department are assigned as mentors to all new faculty to facilitate integration into the Department and clarify issues with regard to professional development. The Department appears to have substantial administrative and technical staff. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa University meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3.7 Research

Core faculty in the psychology department research a wide range of topics, ranging from cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology, psychopathology, psychotherapy and motivation, to cognitive social psychology. Overall, the faculty's research output is impressive in quality as well as in quantity. Faculty publish in top peer-reviewed journals in their fields (e.g., Neuroscience, NeuroImage, Cortex, Nature Communication, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Clinical Psychology Review, Emotion, Clinical Psychological Science). The research is by and large funded through external granting agencies. The faculty maintain active collaborations with researchers in the USA, Canada, Europe, China, and South America. There also appears to be considerable research collaboration among faculty members in the Department. Faculty appear to be able to engage graduate students in research. Overall, the Committee determined that Haifa University clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance, and the faculty and research are top level.

3.8 Students

The student body of the BA program is select as a result of the high entry requirements. About 42% of the applicants are admitted. The number of applicants to the BA program has declined in recent years: from 458 in 2015/16 to 382 in 2017/18. About 60% of the students attain a degree. The MA program

accepts 5% of the applicants (w/thesis). Entry requirements to the clinical track: BA Psychology, average score 85; and Mitam 100. Most of the students graduate. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Haifa University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.9 Infrastructure

According to the self-evaluation report, the Department enjoys adequate space allocation and a considerable amount of sophisticated equipment. One major concern for the Department is the lack of a dedicated fMRI system. A second problem highlighted in the report is the lack of space for graduate students and the sharing of work spaces (for running participants and other relevant activities). The research equipment used by faculty members appears to be purchased using external grant funding, but the investment by the university in equipment, including shareable equipment, is not clear. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HU meets the expected threshold level of performance.

Section 4: **Recommendations**

Essential recommendations

- By the next academic year, develop a mandatory course on scientific writing in English for MA and Ph.D. students.
- By the next academic year, course syllabi and reading materials must be reviewed to ensure that all are up-to-date.
- By the next academic year, add learning outcomes for each course, and ensure that a uniform template for syllabi is used.

Important recommendations

- The Committee recommend that the Department create an objective measure of evaluation of students' academic achievement by tracking, for example, the percentage of students taking the MITAM as well as the average scores of HaU MITAM takers.
- The Department should continue stressing the importance of laboratory space for *all* (not only neuroscience-oriented) areas of psychology.
- The University administration needs to develop a mechanism for providing at least partial support for Ph.D. students. This is essential for maintaining the competitiveness of the doctoral program and supporting the research efforts of the faculty.
- The Department should continue diversifying teaching methods with the enhancement of a distance learning component in its teaching portfolio.
- The Department should continue working on perfecting their BA (e.g., making sure that all courses are brought up to date, ensuring a wider coverage of the field in the first year) and MA (e.g., addressing the idiosyncratic nature of Developmental courses) programs.

Desirable recommendations

The Department should continue strengthening ties with their alumni.

Signed by:

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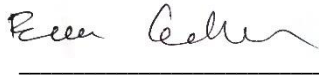Prof. Elena Grigorenko - Chair

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Prof. Miles Hewstone

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Prof. Deborah Stipek

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Prof. Sigal Alon

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Prof. Eva Shehtman Gilboa

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

February 2020

Prof. Elena Grigorenko
Department of Psychology
University of Houston & Child Study Center
Yale Medical School
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.

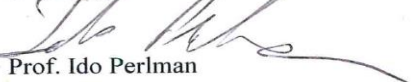I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

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 **Psychology and Behavioral Sciences** departments. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Em. Prof. Miles Hewstone, Prof. Deborah Stipek, Em. Prof. Moshe Zeidner, Prof. Sigal Alon and Prof. Eva Shectman Gilboa

Ms. Alex Buslovich-Bilik will be the coordinator of the Committee.

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. Alex Buslovich-Bilik, Committee Coordinator