



EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

TEL HAI ACADEMIC COLLEGE

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 of¹:
 - [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, Haifa University, Israel.
 - [Prof. Sigal Alon](#), Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, Israel. (sociology)

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

² Prof. Zeidner did not participate in the visit to Tel Hai Academic College due to a possible conflict of interest.

- [Prof. Eva Gilboa-Schechtman](#), Department of Psychology, Bar Ilan University, Israel. (clinical psychology)

Ms. Alex Buslovich Bilik served as the Coordinator of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

The evaluation process was conducted in accordance with 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. 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.
 2. This report highlights the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Psychology at **Tel Hai Academic College**. The Committee's visit to Tel Hai College took place on **February 24th, 2020**. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Section 2: **Executive Summary**

The Department of Psychology at Tel-Hai presented itself to the Committee with driven faculty and engaged students; the Committee was impressed by both. The focus and commitment to the region, the embeddedness in the local community, the mission to become a desirable place to come not only for local students, but for students from all over the country are inspirational. Overall, the Committee was complementary to the accomplishments of the Department, especially given that it was established fairly recently. It has particularly noted the strive to become a local

center of excellence focused on diversity. Yet, the Committee identified a number of aspects of the Department's activities that need enhancement. Specifically, there were concerns about the size and distribution of the faculty, the support to the faculty, provided by the College, and a number of other concerns. 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 at Tel-Hai is to advance the knowledge, learning and research skills necessary for the preparation of students for advanced studies, research and the labor market, and to contribute to the development of the region and Israeli society at large. The Committee was inspired to see how the program realized this mission. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel-Hai exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.2 Management and Administration

The Psychology Department is relatively new, established in 2008. The Department of Psychology is in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. The Department offers a CHE approved Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in educational psychology; they aspire to having a Master's degree in developmental psychology. The Department Chair has the responsibility of appointing and promoting the Department's lecturers and terminating faculty. New positions are mainly decided upon by the College management. No new positions in Psychology are anticipated over the next two years. The College leadership reported significant difficulties in recruiting faculty because of the location of the College; most of the faculty do not live close to the College and concentrate their teaching within 2-3 days a week. Faculty, in contrast, believed that it would not be difficult to attract junior faculty. When searching for new faculty, they typically first offer adjunct positions, and, if these adjunct hires show promise as a teachers and researchers, they are moved into a regular faculty position when one opens. This policy may make it more difficult to attract faculty, who presumably would prefer a regular position before deciding to relocate their family "up North". Thus, conducting national searches that result in a permanent, rather than adjunct position, is recommended. The Psychology Department maintains an Arab Student Coordinator, whose job is to coordinate the unique needs of the Department's Arab students (currently 22 in the BA and 9 in the MA program). Data are not provided in the self-evaluation on the cultural or ethnic backgrounds of students, but the Committee learned that the Department also enrolls Druze and Cherkassy students. It is admirable that about 30% of the students admitted by the Department have been diagnosed with learning disabilities and a special unit in the College deals

specifically with learning disabilities. The Committee determined that the Department clearly meets the acceptable threshold of performance.

3.3 QA & Self-Evaluation Process

The report focuses on the CHE 2018 process that included (1) the appointment of a coordinator; (2) data retrieval; (3) a Departmental meeting to solicit faculty participation and feedback; (4) report drafting; and (5) report approval by the administration. The CHE process was found to be both meaningful and motivating. It also identified a number of weaknesses, some specific to the College and its location (i.e., the geographic location of the College necessitates commuting for the majority of the faculty, thus some faculty only spend 2-3 days a week on campus). Other weaknesses are more general to Israeli colleges (e.g., heavy teaching load, expectations regarding engagement with research, lack of minority representation on the faculty). The College did not participate in the 2008 round of the CHE evaluation. The 2018 CHE process was new; the report did not mention any other components of self-evaluation in place. The interview revealed the presence of the following components: (1) student course evaluations; (2) informal faculty gatherings with open feedback; and (3) informal feedback from students. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel-Hai College meets the acceptable threshold level of performance with room for improvement.

3.4 Study program

Overall, the programs for both Psychology (BA) and Educational Psychology (MA) are well-structured, and the curricula appropriately designed. The Committee also found evidence of wide use of English in course readings, with one whole course delivered in English, and students keen to be pushed having the opportunity to write some assessments in English too. There are, however, some instances in the BA program where course readings fall below the expected standards. For example, the reading material is sometimes outdated (e.g., Social Psychology uses an English-language textbook that is 15 years of old). There is also a listing of Malcolm Gladwell's pop psychology book, 'Blink,' as a reference source. The course on Brain Pathologies is egregious in this respect, with a long list of books written for a nonprofessional audience. Students who come to College to study Psychology should read scholarship in psychology, not pop psychology. The Department has, in recent years, stepped up its commitment to actively involve students in research, something that has been increased by providing the course on Research Design in Yr. 2 and was evident from the Committee's visits to labs where we met undergraduate student-researchers. The Committee did, however, hear from some students that they felt the recent focus on basic lab research was at the expense of the previous regime's commitment to clinical work and field research. Surely, there is room for both. Overall, both the BA Course and the MA Course, and exams, appear to

meet the criterion of rigor. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Hai meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3.5 Teaching and Learning

Overall, the Department appears to provide a satisfactory teaching environment and is especially committed to taking on, and providing extensive support for, learning-disabled students and students suffering from PTSD. These are two categories of students who would not gain entry to further education elsewhere and are being provided with a unique opportunity here. There is also a commitment to taking on Arab students, currently 20% of the College, and they are trying a new mentoring scheme for such students. Teaching is evaluated by both students (using standard surveys, comprising conventional evaluative ratings, and some qualitative assessment) and peers (a mentor attends and gives feedback at the end of new faculty's classes) at the end of each course. Instructors in need of mentoring 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* after the course (at Tel Hai they are called 'Course Objectives'). However, many courses merely list the content of the course (see, e.g., Social Psychology and Positive Psychology), rather than what the student can expect to be able to *do* after taking the course. It is not clear whether ILOs are directly assessed in course evaluations. The mode of examination is determined by each instructor – open questions, multiple choice, or a combination; most instructors rely on MCQs. Given its location on the northern periphery of the country, yet drawing students from a wide area, one might have expected the college to avail itself more of the opportunities provided by distance learning (albeit as a complement to, not replacement for, face-to-face instruction, sought after by young Israelis who are interested in experiencing college life away from home). It is committed to the use of Moodle (supported by its Center for Excellence in Teaching) but could be more innovative in its use of hybrid teaching methods. Despite high teaching loads, faculty currently provide a learning environment described by students as 'inspiring,' in which faculty are very available and encouraging and serve as true 'educators' (the student/alumni choice of phrase) who perform their work in a caring and supportive manner. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Hai meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3.6 Faculty

To serve 150 BA/BS students, there were 3 full professors, 6 senior lecturers, 1 lecturer, and 5 adjuncts in 2018. All of the faculty, including the chair, are part time, ranging from 8% to 58%. The Department has since added a developmental psychologist (retired from another university). The faculty are well represented in some areas of psychology (3 clinical and 3 psychophysiology or biology) but only 1 in social psychology (and at only 8% time), 1 in

cognitive psychology, and, more recently, 1 in developmental psychology. Adjuncts are well integrated and involved in the Department, but they do not do administration or work in the summer. All faculty teaching in the Bachelor's program are part time (4 ≤ 25%; 6 between 25% and 58%) and most teach in other departments (e.g., Introduction to Psychology in a liberal-arts program). Only five faculty teach mostly in the Psychology Department. The faculty would prefer to spend a higher percentage of their position in Psychology. This part-time nature of faculty may undermine the coherence of the program and its ability to develop connections with the local community, although alumni reported that the faculty were very accessible. Faculty mentioned, for example, that having their teaching schedules spread across the College makes it difficult to meet with each other. Being at the College only 2-3 days a week may exacerbate these problems. Promotion policies are included in employment contracts that are signed annually or every three years and are available on the internet portal. Faculty meet annually with the Chair of the Department. There is no formal mentoring system, but a junior faculty member can request a mentor - someone within the College or at another college or university -- and the College provides a stipend to the mentor. The Department has one administrative staff member (Department Coordinator). They have no technical staff members; technical support is offered by the Department of Information Systems. The Committee determined that the College meets the acceptable threshold level of performance but with a lot of room for improvement.

3.7 Research

The culture of the Department clearly stresses research. The faculty felt well supported in research but expressed the view that the teaching requirements (24 hours for lecturer and senior lecturer, 20 hours for associate and full professors) made it difficult to find time for research. Sabbaticals are rare – perhaps one semester after 12 years. Travel grants and some seed funding for research are sometimes made available, especially to more junior faculty. The core Psychology faculty of the Department have appreciable expertise in the domains of psychobiology and neuroscience. In the last few years, the Department has recruited several passionate and energetic researchers in these areas who actively seek to pursue a high-profile research agenda. Researchers in the applied track are mostly focused on teaching, with research interests in clinical and other applied domains of psychology. According to the dean, the research domains and teaching are shifting from psycho-therapeutic and psycho-diagnostic investigations to more basic science, which decreases the possible synergy between core and adjunct faculty, and may create a disparity between the rigor of basic and more clinically oriented courses. There appeared to be some confusion in the administration regarding the faculty's eligibility to apply for research grants from the ISF. The Committee recommends that clear information regarding such eligibility be communicated to the faculty. Moreover, faculty members must be encouraged to establish collaborative national and international relations for joint research. Despite energy, commitment, and

enthusiasm, and probably due to the high teaching load of the core and the adjunct faculty, the research productivity in the department is quite modest. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that the psychology faculty of the department meets the expected threshold level of performance.

3.8 Students

The Department's entry requirements are low and some applicants are admitted below the threshold. Yet, the program is well structured, the faculty are qualified and dedicated, the infrastructure is outstanding, and the management is very supportive. These resources facilitate students' personal development, academic growth, and achievement. The students feel empowered and prepared to pursue an advanced degree/career. It is no wonder that most students graduate (79%). In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Tel Hai exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.9 Infrastructure

There are currently five experimental labs that the Committee visited; we were impressed by the state-of-the-art equipment, highly engaged undergraduate research assistants, and cutting-edge research being conducted. Overall, we received the impression that faculty members are satisfied with the space provided to them by the university to support research. However, the Department does not have sufficient office space for faculty, whose office space tightly fits a desk and a chair. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that the College clearly meets the expected threshold level of performance.

Section 4: Recommendations

Essential recommendations

- The Department needs to hire at least two faculty who can serve full time in the Department and either through replacement or new hires, make sure that they have faculty with expertise in developmental and social psychology.
- Within the next academic year, the College should provide the Department with adequate administrative and technical support, so a group of 5-6 faculty has a dedicated administrative assistance and a dedicated technician.
- By the next academic year, course syllabi and reading materials need to be reviewed to ensure that all are up-to-date.
- By the next academic year, add learning outcomes for each course, making sure that a uniform template for syllabi is used.

Important recommendations

- It is recommended that the Department identify a set of parameters against which it can monitor and measure its growth.

- The Department should continue diversifying teaching methods, with the enhancement of a distance learning component in its teaching portfolio.
- The department should encourage faculty members to establish collaborative national and international relations for joint research. The Department should engage in a formal self-evaluation process regularly, every 2-3 years, outside of the CHE process.
- The Department should sample all stakeholders (alumni, students at different levels, faculty, and staff) during the self-evaluation process.
- The Department should establish a formal mentorship system for junior faculty.

Desirable recommendations

- The Department should provide its faculty with adequate office space.

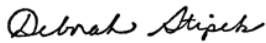
Signed by:



Prof. Elena Grigorenko - Chair



Prof. Miles Hewstone



Prof. Deborah Stipek



Prof. Sigal Alon



Prof. Eva Shehtman Gilboa

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



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.

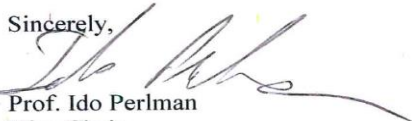
It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of **Psychology and Behavioral Sciences** departments. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Em. Prof. Miles Hewstone, Prof. Deborah Stipek, Em. Prof. Moshe Zeidner, Prof. Sigal Alon and Prof. Eva Sheckman 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

Appendix 2: Schedule of Visit

<u>Psychology and Behavioral Sciences - Schedule of site visit</u> <u>Tel Hai Academic College</u>		
Monday, February 24, 2020, (Conference room 2318, Building 2, East Campus)		
Time	Subject	Participants
09:00-09:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Yossi Mekori, President of Tel- Hai college. Prof. Doron Lavi, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.
09:30-10:15	Meeting with the Head of the Department of Psychology	Dr. Meirav Hen.
10:15-11:15	Meeting with senior academic staff * (including academic heads of programs)	Prof. Ora Aviezer Dr. Shiri Pearlman-Avni Dr. Omer Horovitz Dr. Ilana Hairston Dr. Sivan Raz
11:15-11:30	Break	
11:30-12:00	Meeting with Adjunct academic staff *	Dr. Noam Karsh Dr. Hadas Marciano Dr. Revital Tamari Dr. Nava Vald
12:00-12:45	Open slot	A short tour in the psychology laboratories + short presentations by students and faculty of the department's research.
12:45-13:30	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
13:30-14:15	Meeting with BA students** (up to 10 students)	Mr. Ori Meidan - B.A., (2nd year) Mr. Taisir Mari - B.A., (2nd year) Ms. Roza Salami - B.A., (2nd year) Ms. Adi Marinberg - B.A., (2nd year) Mr. Elad Michaelovich - B.A., (3rd year) Ms. Eden Soker - B.A., (3rd year)
14:15-15:00	Meeting with Alumni** (up to 8 Alumni)	Ms. Aviya Ben-David – B.A. , Research Assistant Psychology, Tel-Hai College.

		<p>Ms. Alex Haldi - M.A. ,Educational Psychology , Tel-Hai College (1st year)</p> <p>Ms. Stephanie Zaknoun - PhD candidate, Psychology, Haifa University.</p> <p>Ms. Mazal Kadosh- M.A, Educational Psychology, Tel-Hai College.</p> <p>Ms. Hagar Bauminger, PhD candidate, Brain & Psychopathology, Haifa University.</p> <p>Ms. Shirel Elkayam, PhD candidate, Research Psychology, Haifa University.</p> <p>Ms. Yarden Uliel, MA, Brain & Cognition, Tel-Aviv University.</p>
15:00-15:15	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
15:15-15:45	Closing meeting with heads of institution and the Head of the Department of Psychology	<p>Prof. Yossi Mekori, President, Tel- Hai college.</p> <p>Prof. Doron Lavi, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Tel- Hai college.</p> <p>Dr. Meirav Hen, Department of Psychology, Tel- Hai college.</p>