

# **REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT**

M.A. Program in Conflict Research,  
Management and Resolution

**(3.2.2005)**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>The Committee's Report</b> .....	4
- Introduction: .....	5
- Mandate of the Committee & Documentation.....	7
- Teaching.....	9
- Student Profile & Expectations.....	9
- Curriculum.....	11
- Faculty.....	12
- Student Support.....	13
- Research.....	14
- Program Governance.....	16
- Summary Evaluation & Recommendations.....	17

## Appendices

- A. Resumes of the Committee members
- B. List of people interviewed
- C. Original Request for Preparation of Background Material
- D. List of the Program Graduates & Scholarships Awarded
- E. Background Material Prepared by the Program Director
- F. Annual Reports prepared by the Swiss Center

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT**

M.A. Program in Conflict Research, Management and Resolution

### **Executive Summary**

**(3.2.2005)**

The M.A. Program in Conflict Research, Management and Resolution was established in 1998, under the auspices of the Swiss Center for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution. The Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem appointed a review committee to advise the University on ways "to improve the Program and develop it, or, if need be to change or terminate it." The members of the review committee were: Prof. Stephen Goldstein (Emeritus, Hebrew University of Jerusalem); Prof. Richard Ned Lebow (Dartmouth College); Dr. Peretz Segal (Israeli Ministry of Justice); Prof. Janice Stein (University of Toronto); and Prof. Sarah Stroumsa (Vice-Rector, Hebrew University of Jerusalem), chair of the review committee.

Conflict management and resolution is widely studied and taught in universities around the world, and is an especially important subject for Israel. The moving spirit of the Program is the Director, Professor Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, who conceived the Program, established its foundations and organized the multidisciplinary curriculum. His dedication to the Program and his support of students receive unanimous praise. The Program attracts excellent students with high-academic qualifications who are enthusiastic about their studies. The Program nevertheless needs to be made more than the operation of a single professor, no matter how dedicated. Successful programs require a group of committed faculty with common, or overlapping, research and teaching interests. In addition, we have identified a number of other areas that need further attention:

1. The Program is by its nature interdisciplinary, but courses from different disciplines are not well integrated into a coherent curriculum.
2. A clinical component, which is essential for teaching and research in this field, is currently not available in the Program.
3. Research is not closely linked to teaching in this Program, and too many students choose the non-research track.
4. The Academic Committee of the Program plays no role in establishing the academic vision of the Program and in developing its curriculum.
5. The Program has not reached out sufficiently to other faculty in the University who are critical to its functioning.
6. Budget and program activities are not reported in sufficient detail.

**Recommendations:**

To realize the full potential of this Program, we offer a series of procedural and substantive recommendations.

**Procedural Recommendations:**

- a. The University should appoint a new Academic Committee to take an active interest in further developing the Program's vision, monitor all its activities on a regular basis and oversee implementation of the committee's recommendations. This Academic Committee should be composed of senior faculty from diverse disciplines, and may include experts in the field from other institutions.
- b. The Program should provide more detailed and comprehensive reporting of its curriculum, research, activities, budget and internal governance.
- c. The Director, in collaboration with the new Academic Committee, should develop a comprehensive five year plan that spells out a well-articulated vision for the Program and a set of related goals. The plan should develop a research focus and specify the relationship between research and teaching, and suggest ways of attracting additional faculty to the Program.

**Substantive Recommendations:**

- a. The Program should increase the number of core faculty active in the Program.
- b. The Director, in consultation with the new Academic Committee, should develop a coherent, interdisciplinary curriculum that bridges disciplinary approaches to conflict management and resolution.
- c. The Program, in consultation with the Swiss Center, should develop a clinical program, tied closely to research and teaching.
- d. The Program should make strategic use of existing funds to promote research by faculty and students in the Program.

**Follow-up:**

The University has made a commitment to develop an academic program of the highest standards in the field of conflict management and resolution. Consistent with that commitment, toward the end of the 2007/08 academic year, the University should appoint a committee to evaluate the progress that has been made in satisfying these recommendations.

If acceptable progress is made toward addressing the current weaknesses of the Program, the University should consider making additional resources available. This might consist of faculty appointments that the Program could fill jointly with departments or faculties. If progress is not adequate, the University should consider alternative ways to promote excellence in this field.

## **THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The academic study of conflict management and resolution is in its early stages as a field of inquiry. It draws on disciplines within the social sciences, humanities, and law, and incorporates a broad range of theoretical approaches. It has generated a related set of research questions that cross disciplines. Universities in many countries have developed both academic and training programs in conflict management and resolution. The academic programs consist of an integrated set of courses from several disciplines, and multidisciplinary courses specific to the field, that lead to master and doctoral degrees. They also include related research programs that support and enrich the teaching.

Academic programs differ significantly in their approach, course offerings, research foci and in the nature of their multidisciplinary collaboration. Many prominent programs are adjunct to the Faculty of Law (e.g., Harvard, Columbia, Missouri and Heidelberg), while other excellent programs (e.g., Stanford) are located in the social sciences. In all these programs, the principal researchers have backgrounds in either social science or the law. Many of these programs have active publication programs, and scholars at all of them publish in a wide range of other peer-reviewed publications.

A survey of the very best academic programs suggests that their primary need is a core of faculty drawn from several disciplines who are committed to teaching and research in the field of conflict management and resolution. Two other conditions are also essential: Faculty and graduate students must be in an intellectually rigorous and demanding environment, where new research questions push the research and teaching agenda forward. The best graduate programs also develop clinical programs in which their students participate and learn. The clinical experience enriches the research base, generates new data, builds a capacity



for students to engage in theoretical analysis, and is the platform for innovation and experimentation.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem was the first academic institution in Israel to establish a graduate program in Conflict Management and Resolution. It needs to measure itself against the very best programs in universities world-wide.

## **MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE & DOCUMENTATION:**

The M.A. Program in Conflict Research, Management and Resolution was established in 1998, under the auspices of the Swiss Center for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution.. Consistent with a general university policy of reviewing new academic programs a few years after their establishment, the Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem appointed a review committee to advise the University on ways "to improve the Program and develop it, or, if need be, to change or terminate it."

The review committee convened for four days (31.1.2005-3.2.2005). It met with the Program Director, Prof. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, members of the Program's Academic Committee, the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, faculty members who teach in the Program or are connected to it, the Rector, and the President. The committee met separately with the Program's students and graduates. It was also presented with the summary of interviews with students who had left the Program, and with faculty members who were unable to appear before the committee (see Appendix B for a list of people interviewed by the committee).

In preparation for the committee's work, the Program director was asked to provide a detailed list of documents and information the committee would need to make its report (see Appendix C [letter sent to the director] & E [background material prepared by the director]). This request was partially met. The committee received incomplete information about budget, curricula, research and other activities. It received no detailed vision statement, and no data regarding graduates and their careers. To some extent, this level of documentation reflects the norm at the Hebrew University (e.g., regarding syllabi and alumni); in other cases, however, fuller information should have been made available. Upon request, the Director provided additional information about budget and students.

The specific mandate of the committee, to review the study program, was complicated by the fact that this is a nested program. The Program is part of the Swiss Center for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution, and its budget depends largely on the Center. The relationships between the purpose of the center and study program, between research and teaching, are not clear

## **TEACHING:**

The teaching program is at the heart of our mandate and of the Center. The students are the most successful and impressive part of the Program. The Program awards M.A. degrees in Conflict Management and Resolution.

### Student Profile & Expectations

Approximately twenty students are admitted each year. The students are selected from a number of different departments and faculties, on the basis of their undergraduate grades. Their undergraduate average tends to be from 88 upwards (compared to the department of International Relations, for example, where the admission grade for M.A. is 80). This means that they were among the top students of their departments and indeed were entitled to continue on to a direct track towards a doctorate in their departments. The students' excellence and their unusually high motivation were also attested to by all the faculty that were interviewed. Indeed, the faculty pointed to the students' excellence as a major incentive to teach in the Program. The committee also met with a number of current students and graduates and was very favorably impressed with the students

There are two tracks within the Program: a research track, which requires writing a M.A. thesis, and a non-research track, which has no thesis but additional course requirements. Despite the high quality of the students, relatively few are in the research track. The Program awards M.A. degrees in both the research and non-research tracks. Since its inception, forty students have graduated from the Program. Of these forty, two have written a Masters thesis and three have continued on in the direct track for a Ph.D. According to the material presented to the Committee, six students are currently at the last stages of writing their theses, and six others have begun working on theirs (see Appendix D for list of Program graduates). The

students with whom we spoke expressed the belief that more of them will pursue research degrees.

Given the quality of the students, the low number of those who actually get a research degree is disappointing. This may be attributed to any of the following reasons:

- Many students enter the Program with the expectation of obtaining a terminal professional degree that will equip them to work in the field of Conflict Management and Resolution.
- The Director indicated that because of the difficulties of securing positions in academia, he is reluctant to encourage students to continue on to a Ph.D. and if they are not doing so, he sees no reason for them to write a thesis.
- Many students work while they study and therefore are reluctant to commit the extra time to research.
- Due to the small number of faculty involved in the teaching program, there is a serious problem of a lack of supervisors.

While we did receive some critical written comments from two students who had dropped out of the Program, both present and former students with whom we spoke were overwhelmingly positive in their appreciation of the Program. They had chosen the Program because they were interested in conflict management and resolution and were pleased that they were learning that field. They all praised the extraordinary dedication of the Director to the Program in general, and his accommodation to the needs of the students in particular. They noted the esprit de corps resulting from the small number of students, which they had not been able to enjoy in their undergraduate experiences in larger departments. Also, for the first time they could take a large variety of courses and get a broader education than in their discipline-bound undergraduate degrees. This last point reflects primarily on the nature of the undergraduate programs of the Hebrew University.

While they were very enthusiastic about the multidisciplinary nature of the program, the students did voice concern about the lack of synthesis or integration of the different disciplines into a coherent whole. They also were concerned about the lack of a structured clinical program. These last two reservations were also expressed by the students who had dropped out of the Program.

### Curriculum

The Program consists of four core courses involving international conflicts and inter-group conflicts, from the perspective of International Relations, Sociology, Psychology and Communications. In addition, all students are required to choose a training workshop (out of a list of three) and to participate in an interdisciplinary seminar. Several other courses are taught within the Program, from which the students have to choose a specific number. Finally, there are elective courses which consist primarily of cross-listed courses from other Departments and Faculties. There appears to be no coherent rationale for the choice of courses included in the Program or in the cross-listed elective courses. Many courses, judging from their titles, do not appear to have any significant connection to the aims of the Program. At the same time (and although we have not carried out a systematic examination of the catalogues of all the university faculties), it seems clear to us that there are many other courses given in the University which should be cross-listed in the curriculum. For example, this year there are five courses in the Law Faculty which, judging by their titles and descriptions, are clearly suitable for the Program, only one of which is cross-listed.

Until this year, the Program did not include a research methodology course. The few students who were doing a research degree were sent to research methodology courses in different departments in accordance with the topic of their thesis. Those who were not doing a

research degree had no such courses at all. We understand that as of this year a mandatory research methodology course designed for the Program will be taught in the Program.

The students expressed their feeling that the curriculum lacks an organized and integrated clinical component. The Director, on the other hand, opposes a clinical program, since the aim of the Program is not to train mediators. The review committee sides with the students in this matter. By a clinical program we mean supervised internships or close observation of existing conflict resolution operations – what social scientists call "participant observation". This is distinct from class work and simulation.

The Program also lacks a course or courses which seek to integrate the knowledge of the various disciplines involved in the Program. The Program is essentially multidisciplinary, in the sense that it is an aggregate of disciplines, but it is not interdisciplinary, which requires an attempt to integrate the components of the various disciplines into a coherent approach to Conflict Management and Resolution.

### Faculty

The Program has not recruited adequate faculty from the Hebrew University to teach and become more involved in the Program, and in particular to supervise theses. Apart from the Director, there are currently only three faculty members of the Hebrew University who teach courses in the Program. Over half of the courses in the Program are taught by adjunct Professors.

The absence of faculty involved in the Program is the Program's greatest problem. This problem may in part be attributable to the Director's management style. There are however, also institutional impediments to recruiting faculty, foremost among which is the obligation of faculty members to teach in their own unit. Those faculty members who do teach in the Program indicated that they too faced these constraints, and that they made special

efforts to overcome them because of their attraction to teach this group of highly motivated students.

#### Student Support

The Program is in a position to offer scholarships to students. Wise use of financial aid can attract high quality students and encourage a larger percentage of them to pursue research degrees.

Given the high level of funding, it strikes us as anomalous that so few students have pursued research degrees. In the last year, there has been a change in policy and an attempt is now made to use funds to encourage students to pursue research degrees. To date, we have insufficient data to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy.



## **RESEARCH:**

An active research program is an essential component of an excellent teaching program within an academic environment. Such an integrated program would produce better graduate students. It is the essential forum where the integration of knowledge takes place across disciplines. Without research, no experimentation, no discourse across disciplines, and no new theory can be developed. An active and productive research program is a powerful magnet to recruit and retain good faculty who find research opportunities that they would not otherwise find.

The research profile of the Swiss Center (to the extent that we could judge it) is not strong. The Director has organized conferences, edited a book, and a second edited volume is now in press. However, there is no ongoing research program, nor is there a plan for one.

A small percentage of students proceed to a research degree. It is certainly true that many are working part-time, but there is not an active research agenda within the Centre nor is there strong encouragement and support for graduate students to do a research degree. Nor is research closely integrated with teaching. Some students commented that they were attracted to the program because of the opportunity to do research. The introduction of a required methodology course will significantly improve the research skills of students. An important constraint is the heavy load of supervision already assumed by the Director and the absence of a significant number of full-time faculty who could supervise student research. Some of the faculty who teach within the Program owe their primary loyalty to their department where they do their principal supervisions.

The Center has organized conferences and workshops - five in the last academic year - and some of these conferences will result in publications. Nevertheless, we do not have the sense that there is a shared research agenda among the faculty, nor any faculty collaboration.

Some faculty who teach in the Program acknowledged that their principal research interests are in their department rather than within the Program. Available Center funding has not been used as seed money to encourage faculty research. The Program should use seed money to encourage collaborative faculty research in the area of conflict management and resolution. The Center should also organize a research seminar where faculty and graduate students share their research.

## PROGRAM GOVERNANCE:

The Academic Committee plays no role in governing the Program. Some members were not aware of their membership in the Committee, or of the membership of others. The committee meets once or twice a year, and was only given the task of awarding scholarships. It plays no role in developing and reviewing curricula.

Program reporting is currently inadequate. There must be a distinction between reports prepared for purposes of public relations and detailed academic reports prepared for University authorities, including the Academic Committee. An Academic Committee should monitor the Program closely, take an active interest in further developing the Program's vision, and review all its activities. It should receive yearly information about student admission (grades and areas of specialization), internal and external funding (including attempts to raise external funds), performance (e.g., how many complete the Program, how many write dissertations) and dissertation topics and supervisors.

We dont want this to sound as if we are recommending double booking

The budget report we received was inadequate, in part because the Program is nested in a Center. The budget should be comprehensive, closely track projected and actual expenses in the Program and the Swiss Center, and include information about the now sizeable budget surplus. The Director complained that he does not receive timely information about the yearly pay out of the endowment. Arrangements should be made to make this information available to assist budgetary planning.

One reason why the role of the Director is unclear is that he heads both the Swiss Center and the Program. We are not clear about what the Center does and what overlap it has with the Program. This institutional entanglement has to be clarified.

The Program has excellent physical facilities and a full-time secretary. These are more than adequate for the current and projected levels of teaching and research.

## **SUMMARY EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The committee is in agreement that a program in Conflict Management and Resolution is a significant area of academic inquiry and deserves to be taught at the Hebrew University. The existing Program has several strong points: the endowment, its facilities and its students. In the list of recommendations to follow, the committee makes clear what the Program must do to improve its performance. We divide our recommendations into procedural and substantive:

### **Procedural Recommendations:**

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