

THE PEP PROGRAM

Philosophy, Economics, Political Science

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

Report of the Review Committee

26-28 October 2004

Presented to Prof. Haim D. Rabinowitch, Rector

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The integrative program on Philosophy, Economics and Political Science (PEP) was established in 1998. Following the decision of the Rector and the Standing Committee of the Hebrew University, a Review Committee was called to review the program and assess its success. The members of the Review Committee were: Prof. Russell Hardin (NYU, Department of Politics); Prof. Shlomo Avineri (the Hebrew University, Political Science); Prof. Menahem Yaari (the Hebrew University, Economics); Prof. Sarah Stroumsa, the Pro-Rector (Chair). Prof. Michael Waltzer of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, was unable to attend. The Committee convened for three intensive days (26-28 Oct.), read and discussed material prepared by the program directors and other faculty involved and interviewed the program director, the program's academic committee, the deans of the two faculties and the chairmen of the relevant departments. The Committee also met separately with a group of third year students and a group of program graduates.

The Committee members have been very favorably impressed with the program: The Program attracts bright students to the Hebrew University, and offers them a unique, integrative curriculum. It cultivates their talents and fosters their ability to think critically and independently, providing them with the necessary substantive tools. While some students undoubtedly would have achieved high records in the separate departments, the program is geared to direct the students and give them close guidance, so as to ensure such achievements. The selective character of the program creates an *esprit de corps*, which in turn translates into added intellectual stimuli. The program has been blessed with a fine director who admirably fulfils his roles in administration, teaching and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with students. The students we met were very enthusiastic. The faculty, both those involved directly with the program and those further away from it (Deans and heads of departments), generally regard it as very successful academically and a major asset to the Hebrew University. The students' grades are generally high, and many are recognized institutionally for their excellence, making the Dean's and Rector's lists. Many of the program's graduates continue their studies. This program is emblematic of the Hebrew University's aspiration to encourage excellence and to foster elite programs. It may well be a successful item on the University's list of programs being proposed to donors.

Although the Committee was asked to focus mainly on the academic level of the program, budgetary issues could not be avoided. The program, which fulfills the University's aspirations, suffers from not having its own designated faculty and it seems ill-served by the present internal allocation system. To various degrees, the two deans (of the Social Sciences and the Humanities) and the heads of the three departments all evaluated the program highly. This success, however, is precarious in so far as the program is dependent on the continuous good will of the departments and the ongoing struggle of the head of the program to secure teachers.

Recommendations:

Our first and foremost recommendation is that the Program be continued. The Committee is unanimous in its appreciation of the achievements of the program as highly successful and the University should uphold it as a model for excellence. In order to ensure the continuous successful existence of the program, it should receive solid institutional backing:

1. 3 half positions through joint appointments should be added, one being that of the director.
2. The selection of teachers in the program should be made in consultation with the respective departments.
3. Secretarial services should be independent from the good will of other units.
4. Adequate office space should be designated.
5. The combined and integrated nature of the program and the high quality of its students calls for differential criteria for financial support and program-specific scholarships.
6. Finally, the committee suggests that the program consider raising the overall course load to at least 130 credit points (at no extra cost to the student), opening the way to additional program-specific courses.

THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Introduction:

The integrative Program on Philosophy, Economics and Political Science (PEP) was established in 1998. Following the decision of the Rector and the Standing Committee of the Hebrew University, a Review Committee was called to review the Program and assess its success. The members of the Review Committee were: Prof. Russell Hardin (NYU, Department of Politics); Prof. Shlomo Avineri (the Hebrew University, Political Science); Prof. Menahem Yaari (the Hebrew University, Economics); Prof. Sarah Stroumsa, the Pro-Rector (Chair). Prof. Michael Walzer of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, was unable to attend. The Committee convened for three intensive days (26-28 Oct.), during which it read and discussed material prepared by the Program's Director and other faculty involved. We interviewed the Program Director, members of the Program's Academic Committee, the Deans of the two faculties, and the Chairmen of the relevant Departments (see Appendix c, list of people interviewed). The Committee also met separately with a group of third year students and a group of Program graduates.

Evaluation:

The original mission-statement presented at the inception of the Program had set the goals of establishing a selective program for excellent students; imparting a basic competence in all three disciplines, as well as a wide intellectual base; and providing an integrative (not merely combined) viewpoint (see Appendix b, Director's Report). The mission-statement has also expressed the hope that such a program will attract students who otherwise may not have enrolled at the Hebrew University.

Evaluating the Program against this original statement, we found that it has admirably achieved the goals that had been set for it. The Program fulfills a unique role in the University. Beyond the compartmentalized way in which students are introduced to the different disciplines in their respective departments, the Program offers them an overall view of their subject-matter, endowing them with a well-rounded, multidisciplinary education.

The two main similar programs in the world are the very well established Oxford University PPE Program and the similar Program at Yale University, which is

newer and which is apparently modeled on the Oxford Program. Both are highly successful and both do very well at placing their students in graduate social sciences departments and, especially in the case of Yale, in law schools. There does not appear to be any sentiment in favor of converting these programs into Ph.D. programs. The Oxford Program has generally been of greatest interest to foreign students. There have been other programs in the United States, but none as noteworthy as the one at Yale. There are also many interdisciplinary undergraduate programs in other general areas. Some of these, such as many programs in International Relations, are narrower in focus. Others, such as many policy programs, are as broad as PEP.

Curriculum:

We found that the curriculum is well-suited to the goals of the Program and is implemented with great success. It combines the study of politics and economics, emphasizing the conceptual and substantive links between them. Philosophy serves to highlight the normative implications of economic and political behavior. It gives the students both the tools and substance to address multifaceted problems on a theoretical, as well as a practical basis.

The Program, however, may lack a certain dimension of addressing contemporary issues outside of Israel on a comparative basis. In addition, only a limited number (about 25%) of the required courses (and none of the electives) are Program-specific. It is in such courses that the integrative purpose of the Program is best fulfilled. These include the Integrative Introduction and a course on Game-Theory, in the first year; Philosophy Reading Class and Political Science Reading Class in the second year; a Seminar-Paper Workshop and a course on Political Economy in the third year. It is the Committee's view that consideration should be given to increasing this proportion. This may also address a point raised by some students, that some of the courses in the Departments are too general and introductory for their level. Furthermore, it might be advisable to allow more flexibility in the balance of choice in the elective courses.

Students:

The Program attracts bright students to the Hebrew University, and offers them a unique, integrative curriculum. The cut-off entrance grade is relatively high (20.85 in 2004), although not the highest in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Committee is of the impression that about half of the students interviewed would not have enrolled in the Hebrew University were it not for this special program. It cultivates their talents and fosters their ability to think critically and independently, providing them with a wider perspective. While some students undoubtedly would have achieved high records in the separate Departments, the Program is geared to direct the students and give them close guidance, ensuring higher achievements. The intimate, selective character of the Program as compared to the respective Departments, which take in hundreds of students every year, promotes informal discourse and creates an *esprit de corps*, which in turn translates into added intellectual stimuli.

The students' grades are generally high, and teachers report that the Program's students are easily recognized and raise the level of performance of the other students in their classes. Many of the students in the Program are commended institutionally (appearing on the Dean's or Rector's list: see list in Appendix e) for their excellence. The students we met expressed great enthusiasm about the Program.

We were unable to meet with students who dropped out of the Program. A random poll conducted by the Director of the Program, however, did not reveal any inherent, common reason for their decision to leave it.

We do not have full data about the career choices of the students once they graduate from the Program. Of a sample ten graduates interviewed by the Committee, seven have continued academic studies at the Hebrew University (out of whom three continued in Economics; one in Contemporary Judaism; two in the Program on Sociology, Philosophy and History of the Sciences; and one in Political Science). We found that Program's graduates are preferred when the Departments look for teaching assistants. At the moment, a graduate program in PEP at the Hebrew University does not seem to be feasible, since we lack the appropriate academic staff for such a

Program. However, some students have expressed their wish to continue to such studies abroad.

While at the beginning of the Program women made up about half of the students, in the last two years women are underrepresented. While this cannot yet be described as a typical pattern, the fluctuation of the student's profile needs to be followed and studied. (A parallel fluctuation seems to be detected in similar Departments, e.g. Economics and Computer Science, see attached tables, Appendix f).

Faculty and Administration:

In general, the students seem very satisfied with the faculty, both academically and in terms of their dedication to the students. They specifically commended the Director of the Program and the head of the academic steering committee, emphasizing their open-door policy. Indeed, the Committee finds that the Program has been blessed with a fine Director, who admirably fulfills his roles in administration, teaching and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with students. The students underlined the specific contribution of the special integrative course. Some of the reading courses and the seminars were mentioned as particularly helpful, especially the 2-day retreat to discuss students' papers, held at the end of the third year.

There was criticism specifically of one of the general courses in Political Science, which the students felt was too general. Students expressed a need for more advanced English language courses, which would provide valuable assistance in writing papers.

The secretary of the Program was unanimously praised (and achieved a rating of 100! in the students' feedback). The shortage of office-space, however, complicated the functioning of the secretary and the Program in general.

The students expressed a general feeling of being "step-children" of the three Departments, not really belonging to any of them. They also expressed unhappiness with the inability to get enough slots in Departmental seminars due to the existing quota system, which allocates a limited number of slots to external students (i.e., from

outside the Department proper). This complaint is indicative of the Program's complex relations with the relevant Departments (which is typical, perhaps, of interdisciplinary programs). To various degrees, the two Deans (of the Social Sciences and the Humanities) and the heads of the three Departments, all evaluated the Program highly. The ties of the Program with the Faculty of Social Sciences, however, are somewhat tighter than those with the Faculty of Humanities, a fact that is reflected both in the Departments' involvement in the Program and their appreciation of it. The Department of Economics, for example, regards the students as providing a good feeder for Economics. Graduates of the Program are considered to be good candidates for the MA Program in Economics (with the necessary make-up courses). Since the Department of Economics has moved to a more quantitative orientation, the Program provides an answer for students with a different interest in Economics.

Despite the fact that this is obviously a high quality group of students, it is underrepresented in the allocation of University scholarships due to the way that scholarships are allocated. The high work load of the students and the multidisciplinary orientation of the Program are often reflected in grades that, although high, do not necessarily accurately reflect the students' excellence, and cannot compete with the level expected in the separate disciplines.

Budget:

Although the Committee was asked to focus mainly on the academic level of the Program, budgetary issues could not be avoided. The Program, which fulfills the University's aspirations, suffers from not having its own designated faculty and it seems ill-served by the present internal allocation system. The small classes, which are one of the attractions of the Program and definitely contribute to its success, also create an inherent budget deficit. While attempts are made to slightly increase the number of students admitted to the Program, the increase cannot be counted upon to achieve a balanced budget. To various degrees, the two Deans (of the Social Sciences and the Humanities) and the heads of the three Departments, all evaluated the Program highly, yet existing budgetary structures do not translate this high evaluation into financial benefits for the Program. This success, however, is precarious insofar as the Program is dependent on the continuous good will of the Departments and the ongoing struggle of the Director of the Program to secure teachers.

Recommendations:

Our first and major recommendation is that the Program be continued. The Committee is unanimous in its appreciation of the achievements of the Program as highly successful, on a par with similar prestigious programs abroad. The Program is emblematic of the Hebrew University's aspiration to encourage excellence and to foster elite programs. In order to be able to carry out its mission and continue to serve the University as a model for excellence, it will need to receive the necessary institutional and budgetary support from the University, which at present it does not enjoy. Specifically, we would recommend the following:

1. Three (3) half positions through joint appointments should be added, one being that of the Director.
2. The selection of teachers in the Program should be made in consultation with the respective departments.
3. Secretarial services should be independent from the good will of other units.
4. Adequate office space should be designated.
5. The combined and integrated nature of the Program and the high quality of its students calls for differential criteria for financial support and Program-specific scholarships.
6. Finally, the Committee suggests that the Program consider raising the overall course load to at least 130 credit points (at no extra cost to the student), opening the way to additional Program-specific courses.

Prof. Sarah Stroumsa, Pro-Rector, The Hebrew University, (Chair) _____

Prof. Russell Hardin, Department of Politics, NYU _____

Prof. Shlomo Avineri, Political Science, The Hebrew University _____

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APPENDICES