![Council for Higher Education logo]

EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

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 Institution
   - 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,** Department of Counselling and Human Development, Haifa University, Israel.
- **Prof. Sigal Alon**, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University, Israel. (sociology)
- **Prof. Eva Gilboa-Shectman,** Department of Psychology, Bar Ilan University, Israel (clinical psychology)

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

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 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]

2. This report highlights the **Department of Psychology** at **The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ)** The Committee's visit to **the HUJ** took place on **February 2nd, 2020**. The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Section 2:   Executive Summary

Hebrew University is one of the premier institutions of higher education in Israel. Its Department of Psychology is one of the premier departments of psychology in the country and within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Department and its faculty are aware of its achievements and reputation but continue to work tirelessly to make it stronger. Both the Institution and the Department have a robust process of self-reflection and goal-setting; they strive for excellence but set reasonable, achievable goals. Their overall needs are reflective of the general position of psychology in Israel; their struggles are mostly shared with those of other major universities. Yet, there are some specific challenges. The key needs identified by the Committee were

(1) support for and recruitment of Ph.D. students; (2) support for innovative teaching (e.g., credit for teaching hours and incentives for innovation); and (3) easier communication and collaboration with the HUJ "second" campus. Overall, the Committee deemed the performance of the Department as clearly meeting the expected threshold level of performance.

Observations

3.1   Mission and goals

The mission of all levels of the program (BA, MA, Ph.D.) is to provide a broad perspective on psychology with emphases on research experience, critical thinking, and communication skills. The program achieves these goals. Yet, there is a tension between the neuroscience focus of some of the faculty (for whom considerable resources are required), the clinical psychology track, which most students are attracted to, and the social and developmental psychology areas, which are relatively neglected. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Hebrew University meets the acceptable threshold level of performance.

3.2   Management and Administration

The previous CHE Committee had recommended that the Psychology Department move from the Humanities and Social Sciences campus to the Physical Science campus. An effort was made to follow this recommendation, but the plan was thwarted by practical problems. The President and Provost believe that the move would be preferable, but it is not practically possible. The Department is moving toward Neuroscience, as are many psychology departments in the US and Europe, and is complemented by a separate Department of Cognitive Science, located in the School of Humanities, which provides high-achieving students a truly interdisciplinary program. A number of the Cognitive Science appointments are joint with the Psychology Department. Some faculty and students must go back and forth between the two campuses to access the particular facilities, equipment, and collaborators they need, and this is challenging. The representation of social and developmental psychology is weak relative to the cognitive sciences. The Department receives a budget from the University and the Dean has a fair amount of discretion over operational funds, for example to hire adjuncts, teaching assistants (TAs), and other support personnel. A priority for discretionary funds is to support initiatives that will ultimately increase the budget – e.g., seed grants to faculty, teaching reductions, and TAs. Three members of the faculty in Psychology have been awarded ERC (European Research Council) grants in the last three years. The Israeli government matches these grants with funds to the University, which brings additional funds to the Department. The Department has a strategic committee that meets regularly to plan. There was also a plan for an all-faculty departmental retreat

to develop a vision for future years. The strategic committee will put the retreat discussion into a coherent plan. If there are budgetary implications, the plan will go to the Dean. The Department has a commitment from the President to increase the faculty by two to reach 30 faculty members by 2022. The recruitment packages vary depending on the research area. For example, neuroscience is more substantial (again, this reflects the global, rather than the HUJ-specific situation). Senior faculty (full professors) are disproportionately male (28 to 9), but the associate professors are more balanced (12 to 9) Additionally, there are more female than male senior lecturers, indicating that the gender imbalance at the senior level could be addressed over time. No faculty are Arab, Haredi, or Ethiopian (17% of undergraduates and 8% of graduate students are Arab.) In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Hebrew University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.3 QA & Self-Evaluation Process

Hebrew University has an internal quality assessment mechanism. The formal "charge" of carrying it out lies with the Office of Assessment & Evaluation; it initiates external and supports internal (self) evaluation exercises. There is a built-in response mechanism that is evoked by a received report, which is overseen by the University's Academic Policy Committee. The committee works with all stakeholders on generating responses and implementing action points. In addition, the Department itself initiates multiple forms of self-assessment. Specifically, they engage periodically in strategic planning by means of core faculty retreats. To solicit input from students, the Department invites student representatives at all levels (BA, MA, and Ph.D.) to systematically survey their student bodies and communicate the feedback to the Department. In addition, heads of MA programs have regular meetings with students and   workshops are available for Ph.D. students. The Department paid close attention to the recommendations derived from the 2008 evaluation. There are, however, still remaining points of growth that were suggested but not followed up on (e.g., the work with the alumni) or fully implemented (e.g., the construction of a balanced faculty, equally strong in all of its areas of research and practice). Moreover, there are recommendations from the previous CHE Committee (2008) that have been continuously worked on but still remain central to the Department's efforts (e.g., BA, MA, and Ph.D. programs, their content, student support, and their interface with research). There are also ongoing efforts to integrate with the Safra campus. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that the University clearly exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.4   Study program

The Department has responded positively to the recommendations of the previous CHE Report. Overall, the program is well-structured and the curriculum is well-designed and up to date, reflecting a very high standard at this institution. The Department places high demands on its students (as would be expected of an elite institution), and this is reflected in a wide range of high-level readings in English for all courses. Indeed, an institution of this renown might be expected to reach for an even more ambitious goal, namely giving students the option to submit some written assignment work in English and insisting on this for some upper-level courses. The BA Course and its exams generally meet the criterion of rigor. Overall, the Department's courses and approach are highly rigorous, and the Committee was especially impressed in three respects: (1) The first-year course on "getting to know science," taught by 6-8 faculty, appears unique in the way that it introduces psychological science through faculty members' research. Students trace back current research through history to its roots to see how psychology does not develop in a simple, linear fashion. (2) Almost all courses (all core courses) are taught by core faculty, rather than adjuncts. (3) BA students have many opportunities to get involved in research, and most BA students participate in research in a faculty member's lab. The Committee was made aware in discussions with faculty that there was a common tension between the research focus of faculty and the more applied interests of students. Faculty stated that they gave very explicit messages to students about the focus on science and sought to convince students that even though most graduates in clinical psychology pursue clinical work, strong research skills would contribute to their effectiveness. Overall, faculty are trying to reduce the dichotomy between research and clinical work, and through its teaching the Department wants students to learn how science can be harnessed to address community and applied issues. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HUJ exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.5   Teaching and Learning

Overall, the Department provides a positive teaching environment. Syllabi are generally impressively detailed, up-to-date, place high demands on students in terms of what they must read, and almost all of the materials are in English (an exception being the rather dated 2012 textbook being used for Social Psychology). The Learning Outcomes (LOs) are clearly stated in the course materials and, in many cases are explicated, for example by telling students what, at the end of the course, they should be able to do. For an exemplar, see Dr Tali Kleiman's course on Social Psychology. Instructors provide feedback not only via grades but also typically in comments on students' writing. Teaching is evaluated by means of standard surveys which notably evaluate the course and the instructor separately and assess LOs. There is potential, on at least some courses, to exploit the opportunities provided by hybrid learning (combining face-to-face instruction with distance learning),

although there is discrepancy between the views of the faculty and administration in this respect. The University administration expressed the view that the psychology faculty are a bit old-fashioned in the kind of teaching practices they have adopted; the faculty expressed to the Committee a great deal of interest in experimenting with technology-based or hybrid courses. The faculty explained, however, that this would require additional funds, which appear not to be forthcoming. A rapprochement may be achieved via the insight that creating online courses requires an investment but would reduce costs downstream. Faculty also mentioned that the way teaching loads are calculated creates a disincentive to provide online or hybrid courses. The Committee was impressed by the staff, who were clearly highly committed to the program and to providing its students with a broad and deep research-led teaching program. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HUJ exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3. 6 **Faculty**

The faculty of the Psychology Department cover a broad set of research topics, although they lean heavily toward cognitive psychology. The faculty are highly productive, successful in obtaining outside research grants, and collaborate with faculty across the world. The previous CHE Committee recommended an addition of four faculty in clinical psychology. The Department was not successful in achieving this goal because they had difficulty finding applicants who are both good clinicians and strong researchers. They did recently hire a political psychologist and two computational psychologists. The Department is currently searching for a clinical psychologist, and they are also interested in hiring someone in (human) psychobiology. Plans for future areas for hires will come out of the strategic plan. Although they have neuroscience at two campuses and bring located in Jerusalem reduces the overall attractiveness, they are competitive with other universities in attracting faculty.. The mentoring of junior faculty is substantial. Mentors are assigned to each new faculty member. They meet with the person several times, annually, and write a report that is submitted to the Chair. The Chair also meets individually with every pre-tenure faculty member every year, and junior faculty are protected from committee assignments and administrative roles.   One pressing area of need shared by the faculty to the Committee was for administrators and technical support. They reported a decline in both in the last few years, and, because of the heavy use of technology in their research, more support is needed. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Hebrew University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.7   Research

Core faculty in the Psychology Department research a wide range of topics in modern psychology such as cognitive neuroscience, neuropsychology, clinical psychology, and cognitive social psychology. Overall, the faculty research is highly productive, visible, and first-rate. The faculty publish in top peer-reviewed journals

in the field, and the research is, by and large, funded through external granting agencies. There also appears to be considerable research collaboration among faculty members in the Department and with those in other departments at Hebrew University, including cognitive science and neurobiology. Productivity is very high overall and, because the Department places strong emphasis on evidence-based clinical training, research is central to the clinical program as well. The ability of faculty to engage graduate students in the research enterprise, and to excite them about it, is also very high indeed. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HUJ exceeds the expected threshold level of performance, and the faculty and research are top level.

3.8   Students

The student body for the BA, MA, and the Ph.D. is very select as a result of high entry requirements and a low admission rate (about half of the BA applicants are admitted). On average, BA applicants' Matriculation score is 110 and their Psychometric score is 685. The MA program admits about a third of applicants. The Ph.D. is also stable, admitting about 10 students annually. The number of applicants to all programs (BA, MA, and Ph.D.), as well as admission rates, are stable over time, which reflect a solid equilibrium and the maturity of the programs. Undergraduates have an association that meets regularly with the Department's leadership. Directors of all programs also meet regularly with students to get feedback. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that Hebrew University exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

3.9   Research Infrastructure

The Department of Psychology has about two dozen state-of-the-art labs, and an entire floor has recently been constructed to accommodate the growing needs of the faculty and students for their research. The Department is regarded by the administration as the top unit in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the administration appears to be attentive to the needs of the faculty. Also, faculty have succeeded in obtaining significant grants to fund both research and equipment. In this area of evaluation, the Committee determined that HUJ exceeds the expected threshold level of performance.

Section 4: **Recommendations**

Essential recommendations:
- Develop a strategic plan that clearly addresses (1) the orientation of the Department and the balance between its various areas: the neuroscience focus of some of the faculty (for whom considerable resources are required), the clinical psychology track, which most students are attracted to, and the social and developmental psychology areas, which are relatively neglected; (2) the collaborative and sharing relationship with the "second" campus; and (3) the alignment of the Department's profile with student interests.

- The Committee recommends that the planned hires are implemented in the areas that still need to be strengthened (e.g., social, clinical, and developmental psychology, along the lines of the previous CHE recommendations) so that the Department reflects the field of Psychology as a diverse and vibrant field that cannot simply be equated with neuroscience.

- 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.
- By the next academic year, develop a mandatory course on scientific writing in English for MA and PhD students.

Important recommendations
- Within two years, support faculty in the development and implementation of at least two courses that meet the standards of modern teaching utilizing digital technologies, and other progressive pedagogical elements, and more generally encourage innovation in teaching.

- Ensure that the Department's faculty has adequate administrative (e.g., secretarial) and physical plant (e.g., engineering) support.

- Develop courses utilizing hybrid and distance learning.

- Ensure that teaching loads are calculated accordingly for online or hybrid courses to incentivize faculty to create such courses.
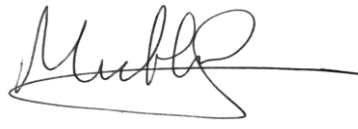
Desired recommendations
- Arrange a stable, reliable, and free transportation line (e.g., a dedicated bus service on a schedule) between the two campuses.

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

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Prof. Moshe Zeidner

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

Appendix 2: Schedule of Visit

Psychology and Behavioral Sciences - Schedule of site visit at the Hebrew University **Sunday, February 2 ,2020**			
Time	Meeting	Participants	Location
09:30-10:30	Opening session with the heads of the institution	**Prof.** Asher Cohen - **President** **Prof.** Barak Medina – **Rector** **Prof.** Berta Levavi-Sivan - **Head of the Office of Academic Assessment & Evaluation**	President's Office
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the Head of the Social Sciences Faculty	**Prof.** Tamir Sheafer - **Dean**	3720 social sciences (next to the dean's office)
11:15-12:15	Meeting with representatives of the Psychology Department (Head, and heads of programs)	**Prof.** Maya Tamir – **chair** **Prof.** Jonathan Huppert – **Former chair** **Prof.** Inbal Arnon – **Head, BA Program** **Prof.** Hillel Aviezer – **Head, neuropsychology track** Ruth Mayo – **Head, Research MA track** **Prof.** Ran Hassin – **head, Ph.D committee** **Prof.** Iftah Yovel – **Head, Clinical track** **Prof.** Orya Tishby – **Former Head, Clinical Track** **Prof.** Leon Deouell	3720 social sciences (next to the dean's office)