The Department of Political Science
(School of Government and Society)

Self-Evaluation Report

September 2022
Executive Summary

Description of MTA Department of Political Science

Since the establishment of the School of Government and Society, it became an academic home for the political science study program and, subsequently, the Department of Political Science. The Department of Political Science started operating as a part of the dual BA program (with Sociology) in the current academic year (October 2021) and is an integral part of the School of Government and Society. The self-evaluation process enabled us to examine ourselves and define our strengths and weaknesses and the challenges we would like to address in the coming years.

The findings in this report relate to the self-evaluation process conducted in the 2021/2022 academic year. The report is the outcome of a productive process of internal and joint efforts to review the curriculum. All faculty members shared their comments, and data was collected from all administrative and academic units of the Academic college of Tel Aviv-Yaffo (MTA) to complete the process fully.

A. A summary of the main strengths and weaknesses/challenges that were identified during the self-evaluation process.

Strengths

- The internship program, already highly appreciated in the previous quality assessment process, remains a primary strength of the program, attracting new candidates.
- Students in the program have numerous opportunities to join experiential courses that combine practice in the community, supervision, and academic learning. These opportunities strengthen the School’s mission to achieve academic excellence and adapt to the needs of the labor market and are highly rated by our graduates.
- Faculty members’ commitment was found to strengthen the curriculum and to help establish a cohesive dual BA program in Political Science and Sociology. Faculty members are willing to adapt to necessary changes in the curriculum and respond to
the School’s various educational needs. They are also actively involved in different initiatives to attract more applicants.

• Despite a hefty teaching load, all faculty members are engaged in meaningful research, professional committees, and writing policy briefs in different fields of political interest.

• Additional involvement (non-academic) in the community surrounding the College is warmly welcomed.

• Short-term needs of the program have led to the recruitment of adjunct lecturers, who enable a complete and varied curriculum.

• The department’s open-door policy is inherent in the School’s approach. While offering a good and friendly atmosphere, it is also a teaching method and part of the School’s philosophy.

Weaknesses

Notwithstanding the School’s high achievements, our self-evaluation process revealed several weaknesses and challenges that need addressing:

• The program urgently needs to increase the number of students.

• Student diversity needs addressing, as the number of Arab students in the School remains low. More data collection is required to enhance diversity and enables future decision-making.

• There is a need for more innovative teaching methods.

• Evaluation of students’ performance is based on a range of methods. This diversification was implemented in order to enable an inclusive assessment of students’ achievements, but it needs continuous monitoring and further development.

• Adjunct lecturers’ recruitment for part time jobs is challenging the ability to form a fixed and cohesive team of political scientists.
B. A short description of the actions that the institution, the parent unit, and the department will take to improve the weaknesses and tackle the challenges that were found.

The actions that the institution, the School of Government and Society and the department will take to improve the weaknesses and tackle the challenges are as follows:

- There is ongoing work to tackle the School’s primary challenge of small numbers of students by identifying explanatory factors to this trend.
- In the long term, we hope to enlarge the subfields of political science (and faculty members) and add more courses on political philosophy, the Middle East, and security opportunities, as well as social perspective of climate change crisis. New courses and other extra-curricular activities - will be added to the current program to improve the department and the School in order to comply with the College commitment to Yaffo.
- Pedagogical development is an ongoing need. The MTA Learning Center leads all pedagogical activities. The School and the department will work closely to deal with this issue.

Indeed, the School (our parent unit) will address two specific issues in the coming year as part of a peer-learning group:

1. In the field of teaching and learning, we will analyze and discuss methodological opportunities of simulations.
2. In the field of evaluation, we will discuss the optional use of multiple-choice exams (as an additional evaluation method).

Peer learning on these matters will help support the mutual relationship between methods of teaching and methods of evaluating students' achievements.

- Data collection, alums surveys, and an alums organization will be integral to any plans.
C. A summary of how the study program has achieved its mission, goals, and learning outcomes. Do the results comply with its mission statement?

The School aspires to provide the highest quality academic education and training and to enable students to fully develop their skills, while maintaining the relevance of the studies to various practices in the field and contributing to the community in general and the area of Yaffo in particular. The dual BA program in Political Science and Sociology meets these objectives very well. The learning outcomes of our previous program were proven through our alums’ capacity to find their place in the new labor market.

It should be noted that we would be able to assess our current program outcomes more accurately when the first cohort of students of the dual BA program has finished their studies.

For more details, please contact- nurithas@mta.ac.il