



Report of the State Comptroller of Israel |  
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The Higher Education System

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# **The Quality of Teaching in Institutions of Higher Education**





# The Quality of Teaching in Institutions of Higher Education

## Background

The system of higher education engages in two primary functions: academic teaching and academic research. The resources allocated to this system are divided between investment in high-quality teaching, which equips students with the tools and skills that they require, and the need to promote and ensure high-quality research<sup>1</sup>.

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) serves as the regulatory and supervisory body for the activities of higher education institutions. The Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC), a subcommittee of the CHE, allocates the state budget to the system of higher education. The main portion of the annual budget of the system for higher education – the "direct participation" by the Planning and Budgeting Committee in academic institutions funded by the state (about 70% of the budget) – is allocated according to a budgeting model determined by the Committee. The direct participation includes two principal components: the research component, allocated exclusively to universities, and the teaching component, disbursed to both universities and academic colleges. In addition to the direct participation, the PBC's budget includes contributions toward the institutions' pension expenses; together, these fixed elements account for approximately 76% of the total budget. The remainder of the budget (approximately 24% of the entire higher education budget), is allocated by the Planning and Budgeting Committee in accordance with the CHE-PBC's evolving priorities, as delineated in their multi-annual work plans, termed the Flexible Planning and Budgeting Committee Budget.

This report examines the quality of academic instruction within institutions financed by the state via the Planning and Budgeting Committee (the Institutions)<sup>2</sup>. The Institutions comprise eight universities, characterized as research and teaching institutions that confer academic degrees across diverse fields of study, and twenty academic colleges (Colleges), whose primary function is academic instruction.

<sup>1</sup> Alongside research and teaching, another mission of the system of higher education concerns social engagement and contribution to the community.

<sup>2</sup> The report focuses on undergraduate studies and does not deal with private institutions that are not funded by the state and academic colleges of education, unless otherwise stated.



According to the 2014 report of the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee<sup>3</sup>, "quality teaching" encompasses several dimensions in higher education institutions<sup>4</sup>. From the perspective of lecturers, it involves the utilization of advanced teaching methods and tools tailored to specific fields of study, the lecturers' accessibility, and maintaining the relevance of instructional content. From the standpoint of higher education institutions, "quality teaching" refers to the existence of a structured system for training and guidance in pedagogy, initiatives aimed at enhancing lecturers' instructional practices, and the collection of data to evaluate the quality of teaching in the institution, which serves as a foundation for establishing institutional goals and objectives. In the context of state regulation, "quality teaching" pertains to the establishment of objectives for pedagogical improvement, the collection of data to assess the quality of teaching within the institutions, the monitoring and supervision of institutional activities in this domain, and the implementation of a budgetary framework based on uniform indicators.

In recent decades, the system of higher education in Israel has experienced significant transformations, including an increase in student enrollment, the establishment of colleges, a greater emphasis on knowledge areas pertinent to the evolving labor market, and an assertion of the value derived from the studies. In an era marked by the abundance, accessibility and frequent updating of information, particularly following the advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence technology, which is able to summarize, present, analyze and evaluate data, the traditional emphasis on knowledge transmission, memorization, and retrieval has diminished. Instead, there is a growing focus on fostering independent learning capabilities and cultivating "soft" skills, including critical thinking, information management, problem-solving, interpersonal communication, written and oral expression, decision-making, and teamwork skills – collectively referred to as 21st-century skills. Additionally, the prevalence of processes and tasks that have become based on technology, the analysis of data and communication in the digital world, necessitates the development of technological, quantitative, and digital literacy. These processes and shifts require organizational priorities and resources to be directed towards academic instruction, alongside continuous investment in the development and implementation of new teaching concepts and the adoption of dynamic, flexible, and relevant pedagogical approaches employing a diverse array of instructional methods.

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<sup>3</sup> See the report of the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee, CHE-PBC (November 2014), pp. 11, 13. The CHE appointed the Committee in 2013 to investigate the mechanisms that should be adopted by the institutions and the CHE to assess and enhance the quality of teaching, as well as to recommend methodologies for budget allocation to institutions based, among other criteria, on the quality of teaching, with the aim of incentivizing investment in this domain (the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee).

<sup>4</sup> Higher education institutions engage three categories of academic staff (lecturers), with the nature of their appointments determining their terms of employment. Senior faculty, encompassing the ranks of lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, and full professor, possess academic standing within the institution and are recognized as tenured faculty members within their respective departments. Visiting faculty: lecturers, usually holding doctoral degrees, who do not belong to the institution's tenured teaching staff, or are faculty members at other academic institutions, or professionals whose primary occupation lies outside of academia. They are contracted on a short-term basis to teach individual courses. Junior faculty members who hold bachelor's and master's degrees and fulfill roles as teaching assistants or tutors, often concurrently with their pursuit of advanced degrees.



## Key Figures

Approx.  
**188,000**  
undergraduate  
students and  
approx.  
**33,000**  
lecturers

in the 28 institutions  
budgeted by the  
Planning and  
Budgeting Committee  
in 2022

Approx.  
NIS **5** billion

The amount  
allocated by the  
Planning and  
Budgeting  
Committee for the  
Institutions in 2021  
for the "teaching  
component" –  
approximately 40%  
of the system of  
higher education's  
budget that year;  
this amount does  
not reflect key  
components of  
quality teaching,  
unlike the research  
component, which is  
calculated based on  
a university's  
research outputs  
and their quality  
according to  
objective indicators

Only **0.5%**  
of the Flexible  
Planning and  
Budgeting  
Committee  
Budget in  
2017–2018

The percentage of the  
budget allocated by the  
Planning and Budgeting  
Committee to the  
Institutions as part of  
calls for proposal for the  
promotion of quality  
teaching, out of the  
Flexible Planning and  
Budgeting Committee  
Budget at its disposal  
(only NIS 107 million  
out of approximately  
NIS 23 billion,  
cumulatively, from  
2016–2017 to 2023–  
2024). In addition, 34%  
of the budget allocated  
to the Institutions was  
not utilized by them

About 53%  
of presidents  
and about  
**69%** of  
college  
professors

who participated in  
a survey sent by the  
Office of the State  
Comptroller to the  
Institutions' presidents and  
lecturers, responded  
that in the decision-  
making process for  
promoting senior  
faculty at their  
institutions,  
significantly greater  
weight was given to  
the candidate's  
qualities in the field  
of research over the  
quality of teaching,  
even though the  
main role of colleges  
is academic  
teaching (compared  
to approximately  
83% of presidents  
and 91% of  
lecturers at  
universities)



About  
**41%** of  
lecturers  
(1,275 out of  
3,147)

who participated in a survey sent to them by the Office of the State Comptroller responded that they had not participated in training in the field of teaching, provided via the faculties, in the two years preceding the questionnaire, and about a third of them had not participated in such training from the Center for the Advancement of Teaching

About  
**30%** of  
lecturers  
(932 out of  
3,147)

responded in a survey sent to them by the Office of the State Comptroller that they agreed with the statement "the institution incentivizes and rewards actions to promote the quality of teaching" to a small extent or not at all

Only **3** times


The Institutions reported to the Council for Higher Education on their compliance with threshold requirements regarding the quality of teaching defined by the CHE in 2015. As of 2020, the CHE-PBC stopped requiring institutions to report on the implementation of the model

**0**  
Resolutions  
of the  
Council for  
Higher  
Education  
Plenary from  
2020 to  
August 2023

on the need to improve and update teaching and learning in the system of higher education



## Audit Actions

 From July 2022 to October 2023, the Office of the State Comptroller carried out an examination of various facets concerning the quality of teaching in higher education institutions, and actions for supplementing the examination were conducted at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025. The audit was executed within the Council for Higher Education-the Planning and Budgeting Committee (CHE-PBC), encompassing the eight budgeted universities<sup>5</sup> and all 20 budgeted colleges<sup>6</sup>. Within the CHE-PBC several elements were examined, including the budgeting model utilized for state budget allocations to the Institutions, and the use of calls for proposal, designed to incentivize the Institutions to invest in the enhancement of teaching quality. Furthermore, the audit assessed the model formulated by the CHE for the advancement of teaching quality, focusing on its components, implementation within the Institutions, and resultant impact on the advancement of the teaching quality, as well as the CHE's oversight of the quality of teaching within these institutions. At the Institutions, the audit examined the enhancement of teaching quality through various organizational levels – management, faculties or departments, and the Centers for the Advancement of Teaching, a dedicated entity for the advancement of teaching operating in each institution (the Centers for the Advancement of Teaching or the Centers).

Methodologically, the audit team gathered and reviewed pertinent documents, and met with officials from the CHE-PBC, as well as with personnel from the Institutions. Additionally, it established four focus groups with students and lecturers at two institutions, and in July 2023 dispatched surveys to the presidents of the Institutions (the Presidents' Survey), heads of the Centers within the Institutions (the Centers' Survey), and lecturers at the Institutions – senior faculty, junior faculty, and visiting faculty (the Lecturers' Survey). The audit team also convened meetings with the Student Union and the Forum for the Promotion of Teaching and Learning in Israel.

5 The eight budgeted universities: Ariel, Ben-Gurion of the Negev, Bar-Ilan, Haifa, Tel Aviv, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Open University, and the Technion. The Weizmann Institute (which does not grant undergraduate degrees) and the private Reichman University (formerly the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya) were not included in the examination.

6 The 20 budgeted colleges: Tel-Hai Academic College, Ruppin Academic Center, Sapir Academic College, Tel Aviv-Yafo Academic College, Sami Shimon SCE Academic College of Engineering, Holon Institute of Technology, Hadassah Academic College Jerusalem, the Max Stern Emek Jezreel Academic College, Ashkelon Academic College, Lev Academic Center, Afeka – Tel Aviv Academic College of Engineering, Ort Braude Academic College of Engineering, Shenkar – Engineering. Design. Art, Zefat Academic College, Achva Academic College, Western Galilee Academic College, Bezalel – Jerusalem Academy of Art and Design, Kinneret Academic College in the Jordan Valley, Azrieli Academic College of Engineering Jerusalem, Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. No private colleges and academic colleges of education were examined.



## Key Findings



### **Promoting the Quality of Teaching Through the Teaching Component of the Planning and Budgeting Committee's Budgeting Model**

- The budgeting model established by the Planning and Budgeting Committee delineates the allocation of the higher education budget across the various institutions. This model serves as the principal instrument for the Committee to influence the budgetary priorities of the Institutions. Most of the annual budget allocated to the Institutions by the Planning and Budgeting Committee (approximately 70%) is derived from direct participation under the budgeting model, which encompasses two primary components: the research component and the teaching component. The research component is determined based on a university's research output and assessed quality of research through objective indicators<sup>7</sup>, while the teaching component is calculated for each institution based on the enrollment figures, the rate of timely degree completion, and the student-to-senior faculty ratio. In addition to direct participation, the budget also accounts for the Institutions' pension obligations; these two fixed elements (direct participation and pension expenditures) comprise approximately 76% of the overall budget. The remaining budget (roughly 24% of the higher education budget), is allocated by the PBC according to the evolving priorities of the CHE-PBC, as specified in their multi-annual work plans – the Flexible Planning and Budgeting Committee Budget.
- The teaching component constitutes approximately 40% of the higher education budget. For instance, in the 2021-2022 academic year, the Planning and Budgeting Committee appropriated NIS 5 billion to the teaching component within universities and colleges, out of the system of higher education's budget totaling NIS 12.5 billion. Research indicates an inverse correlation between class size and levels of student satisfaction and achievement, inter alia, because smaller classes facilitate more active learning, interaction with instructors and peers, and a supportive learning environment. In higher education settings, the student-to-faculty ratio is commonly employed as a proxy for class size. However, the definition provided by the Planning and Budgeting Committee excludes junior faculty and visiting faculty, who represent approximately 41% of all lecturers in universities and about 54% in colleges. Consequently, this index does not necessarily reflect class size.

<sup>7</sup> Winning of grants from competitive research funds and other sources, and scientific publications – which attest to the research quality attributed to the Institution's lecturers by external professionals.





- The audit revealed that, unlike the calculation of the research component within the budgeting model – which is based on the research outputs and quality of research according to objective indicators – the teaching component is not assessed according to the quality of teaching delivered by the Institution's lecturers or the resources invested in enhancing the quality of teaching at the Institution. In fact, there exists no correlation between the quality of teaching at an institution and its financing by the Planning and Budgeting Committee, apart from the utilization of the student-to-faculty ratio index, which also prompts inquiries regarding its fidelity as a reflection of teaching quality, a concern previously echoed by the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee, established by the Council for Higher Education in 2013 and chaired by Prof. Elisha Babad (the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee).
- Furthermore, the audit found that from 2014 until the audit end date, the Planning and Budgeting Committee failed to examine the incorporation of teaching quality into the budgeting process for the teaching component. In doing so, the PBC did not leverage a significant budgeting mechanism available to influence the Institutions' priorities and focus of attention toward enhancing the quality of teaching. It is pertinent to note that the Planning and Budgeting Committee developed a distinctive budgeting model for the Open University, which incorporates financial incentives aimed at the development and updating of courses and the promotion of advanced learning technologies.

**👉 Promoting the Quality of Teaching Through Calls for Proposals** – In addition to the budget allocated to the Institutions by the Planning and Budgeting Committee within the aforementioned budgeting model, the PBC also allocated funds from its flexible budget specifically aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching through the publication of calls for proposals<sup>8</sup>. The audit found that this budget was negligible in comparison to the total Flexible Planning and Budgeting Committee Budget – approximately 0.5%, amounting to only NIS 107 million (of which approximately NIS 71 million were transferred in practice to institutions) – out of an approximate cumulative total of NIS 23 billion, from 2016 to 2024. The allocation of a minimal budget fails to reward excellence and innovation in teaching over time and does not incentivize institutions to prioritize the quality of teaching in their activities. Furthermore, the calls for proposals mechanism does not establish a systematic and structured policy for promoting the quality of teaching due to the inherent uncertainty and lack of budgetary continuity associated with this approach. Additionally, the audit revealed that approximately 34% of the budget allocated by the PBC to the Institutions through the calls for proposals mechanism during the years 2016–2024 was not utilized. It is noteworthy that subsequent to the completion of the audit, in April 2024, the Council for Higher Education issued a call for proposals

8 Call for Proposals can be competitive – the PBC selects winners from among the submitted proposals according to the decision of a judging committee; or non-competitive – any interested institution who meets the general criteria participates. Institutions that meet the threshold requirements and are willing to invest resources in the matter may choose to participate in the call for proposals, but are not obligated to do so.



for the "Academy 360" program, which aims to encourage budgeted institutions to develop strategies for updating undergraduate curricula in order to preserve the relevance of academic education.



**Implementation of the Council for Higher Education-Planning and Budgeting Committee Model for Promoting Quality of Teaching**

– Following the recommendations made by the Teaching Quality Assessment Committee, the CHE-PBC developed the quality of teaching model in November 2015, subsequently updating it in 2017. This model encompasses a set of threshold criteria for the implementation of teaching quality initiatives, compliance with which confers the right to PBC funding (the Threshold Criteria). The Threshold Criteria are categorized into four groups: the establishment of a Center for the Advancement of Teaching designed to coordinate the topic of quality of teaching within the institution; the distribution of a student questionnaire that serves as an anonymous satisfaction survey regarding courses and instructors; the undertaking of institution-wide initiatives aimed at enhancing quality of teaching, such as professional development opportunities for lecturers in the field of teaching; and the adoption of measures to elevate the quality of teaching at the department or faculty level, including the development of mechanisms for the periodic revision of curricula and syllabi. Furthermore, the model incorporates a mechanism for calls for proposals to promote budgeting for quality of teaching within designated projects.

The audit revealed that the CHE-PBC had failed to translate the quality of teaching model into a long-term action plan delineating objectives and performance indicators for implementation by the Institutions according to established timelines. This oversight resulted in a lack of incentives for the enhancement and promotion of quality of teaching beyond mere compliance with the Threshold Criteria. Additionally, since the introduction of the quality of teaching model, the CHE-PBC has solicited reports from the Institutions regarding its implementation on only three occasions – in 2017 (prior to the model update), 2018, and 2020; these reports were not utilized to reassess the mode and its impact on the advancement of quality of teaching. As of 2020, the CHE-PBC ceased to mandate reporting by the Institutions on the execution of the model, resulting in a lack of current information regarding its implementation, effectiveness, and relevance to the promotion of the quality of teaching.



**Implementation of the Key Threshold Criteria of the Quality of Teaching Model by the Institutions**

– It is evident that certain institutions have either not implemented essential components of the quality of teaching model or have executed them only in a partial manner. The following examples illustrate this finding:

- **The Operation of Centers for the Advancement of Teaching** – As mentioned, a prerequisite for an institution of higher education to receive funding from the Planning and Budgeting Committee, in accordance with the quality of teaching model, is the establishment of a Center for the Advancement of Teaching. The



objectives of the Center are to coordinate teaching quality, equip lecturers with the requisite knowledge, skills, viewpoints, and values necessary for enhancing teaching quality, and raise lecturers' awareness of the importance of incorporating innovative teaching methodologies.

The audit found that such centers were operational in all the budgeted institutions. Nevertheless, since the Council for Higher Education had not delineated the characteristics of these centers (beyond the requirement to staff several positions) and because the Planning and Budgeting Committee had not allocated specific funding for the positions essential for the Center's operation or for the infrastructures required for its activity, the extent and quality of the Center's activities varied according to the administration's discretion at each institution, leading to differences among the Institutions that impacted their capacity to effectively respond to lecturers' needs. Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller involving the heads of the Centers for the Advancement of Teaching revealed that the Threshold Criteria concerning the requisite positions in the Centers were not fulfilled – none of the Centers had a student representative; half of the Centers (13 out of 26) lacked a staff member responsible for digital learning; approximately half of the Centers (54%, or 14 out of 26) did not have a techno-pedagogue; and the majority of the Centers (85%, or 22 out of 26) did not have a member of staff in charge of student questionnaires. In this context, the heads of the Centers for the Advancement of Teaching reported, in the aforementioned survey, that their primary challenge was the scarcity of resources for achieving the Center's objectives (approximately 67% of respondents), and about 52% responded that the most significant challenge was the lack of personnel possessing pedagogical expertise. It was also found that a majority of the heads of the Centers (approximately 77%) believed that the computer systems utilized by the Center supported its requirements only at a medium level or lower. Additionally, nearly half of the Centers (46%) did not routinely disseminate information regarding their activities to lecturers, and in more than half of the Centers (58%), the Center's website did not constitute an up-to-date and comprehensive source of information. All these findings underscore the need to enhance the Centers' capability to promote teaching and achieve their objectives, the necessity for increased support and enhancement from the Institution's administration to ensure the Centers' efficacy, and the requirement to improve the Centers' "public relations" concerning their relevance to lecturers' work.

- Conducting Professional Training for Lecturers in the Field of Teaching –**  
 As per the Institutions' policy, lecturers in Israel are not mandated to undertake regular and comprehensive training in teaching and pedagogy as a prerequisite for their employment. Their training is contingent upon the resources made available by the Institutions and the specific requirements imposed by them regarding participation in professional training in the field. As said, the quality of teaching model has established Threshold Criteria for pedagogical training applicable to all



lecturers in an institution, with additional provisions for two particular populations: new lecturers and those who have received low scores on the student questionnaire. The Threshold Criteria stipulate that new lecturers complete a minimum of 20 hours of training during their first year of employment, applicable to each new faculty member, inclusive of visiting faculty and junior faculty. Furthermore, the Institutions are obliged to ensure that all lecturers engage in at least eight hours of training on the topic of quality of teaching, once every three years. For lecturers persistently receiving low scores in the student questionnaire, the Threshold Criteria obligate the Institution to provide pedagogical training for them, including personal meetings, guidance, mentoring, dedicated workshops, class observations, and peer observations, etc. Moreover, the head of the respective academic unit (e.g. dean, head of school) is required to conduct an individual feedback meeting with these lecturers at least once a year.

The audit revealed that the professional development of lecturers in the field of academic teaching at the Institutions failed to meet the Threshold Criteria. The Centers' Survey data revealed that approximately one-quarter of Institutions lacked training programs for new lecturers, and among those that provided such training, only four reported compliance with the Threshold Criteria regarding the scope of the training. About 41% of lecturers responded in the Lecturers' Survey that they had not participated in any teaching-related training offered by their faculties between 2021 and 2023, and around one-third had not attended such training organized by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching. Concerning lecturers who consistently received low scores in the student questionnaire, approximately 80% of Center heads reported in the survey that at most half of this group had participated in professional or pedagogical training during 2022–2023. Under these conditions, the pedagogical knowledge of lecturers, as well as their exposure to advanced teaching methodologies and innovative tools, is insufficient, resulting in suboptimal quality of academic instruction.

- **Tools for Assessing the Quality of Lecturers' Teaching** – Assessing the quality of lecturers' teaching and taking measures to improve it, necessitates the utilization of reliable instruments that provide a comprehensive overview of their instructional practices. A threshold criterion in the quality of teaching model provides that all educational institutions should administer a student questionnaire – an anonymous satisfaction survey regarding the courses and lecturers. The Teaching Quality Assessment Committee observed in 2014 that utilizing student questionnaires as a tool – a singular tool – for assessing lecturers' teaching was problematic for a number of reasons: (a) The questionnaire gauges satisfaction but does not necessarily reflect the various components of teaching quality and the overall educational course activity; (b) It does not facilitate formative assessment, which would enable lecturers to learn and improve; (c) Lecturers mistrust student evaluations; (d) Even when student questionnaires reveal aspects of quality of



teaching at the individual level, their validity for assessing quality of teaching at the institutional or supra-institutional level remains questionable.

The survey conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller among the Institution presidents disclosed that all the Institutions utilized the student questionnaire as the predominant tool for assessing quality of teaching compared to other evaluation methods<sup>9</sup>. However, the Institution presidents, heads of Centers, and lecturers responded in the surveys that the student questionnaire was the least effective tool in measuring the quality of teaching – approximately 43% of presidents, 33% of lecturers, and 19% of heads of Centers pointed out that the tool measures quality of teaching to a significant or very significant extent. The prevailing opinion among the majority of presidents is that an evaluation by a pedagogical expert constitutes the most appropriate method for assessing the quality of teaching, with 83% asserting that this approach effectively measures quality of teaching to a significant or very significant extent; however, only one president out of 23 (4%) reported its application in most courses. Concerns regarding the effectiveness of the student questionnaire as an instrument for assessing quality of teaching were echoed in discussions held by the audit team with student representatives at the various institutions. At the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, student representatives pointed out (July 2022) that there was a prevalent sentiment among students that the institution did not leverage the results from student questionnaires to enhance quality of teaching, consequently resulting in low participation rates; students at Ruppin Academic College (November 2022) expressed the opinion that many students refrained from completing the questionnaire in the belief that it lacked influence, and contended that it was not an effective means of evaluating lecturers. The aforementioned underscores that the quality of teaching assessment tools employed by the Institutions fail to yield reliable and high-quality feedback regarding the quality of their teaching. Such feedback could inform the necessary actions for enhancing quality of teaching at both the individual and systemic levels. As long as such assessment tools are perceived as unreliable, garnering student cooperation for questionnaire participation becomes challenging, and lecturers face difficulties in deriving beneficial insights from the results concerning the quality of their teaching.


- **The Weight Assigned to the Quality of Lecturers' Teaching in Decisions Pertaining to Promotions** – As a rule, a recognized academic institution possesses the authority to establish the criteria for appointments, promotions, and the conferral of academic ranks to its lecturers. Nonetheless, the awarding of the title of professor, the highest academic rank, lies within the jurisdiction of the

9 The assessment of a lecturer by peers, a supervisor, or a pedagogical expert who observes the class; the evaluation of student knowledge or skills at the conclusion of the course as an indicator of the lecturer's effectiveness in imparting the requisite material; the dissemination of a survey to alumni; and a questionnaire formulated by the lecturer, specifically designed for his or her course, as opposed to a standardized questionnaire applicable to all courses within the institution.



Council for Higher Education, unless the candidate for promotion is employed by institutions that satisfy the qualifications mandated by the CHE for appointment as a professor (including the number of professors within the institution and in the specific field of study). In light of the requirements determined by the Council for Higher Education, universities are in practice empowered to confer professorship titles across all disciplines, while in the colleges, the conferment of the rank of professor typically necessitates a decision by the Council for Higher Education. The teaching quality model lays down that the quality of instruction provided by candidates for promotion must be taken into account in the decision-making process regarding their advancement.

Based on the responses of presidents and lecturers to the Presidents' Survey and the Lecturers' Survey, the audit found that greater weight was given to the research qualifications of the candidate for promotion than to their teaching competencies (approximately 53% of 17 presidents and 69% of 534 lecturers who responded to the questionnaire). This was so despite the primary mandate of colleges being academic teaching. Even in cases where the Council for Higher Education retains the authority to adjudicate the promotion of lecturers to the rank of professor, similar trends are observed. An analysis of 20 promotion files reviewed by the CHE revealed a predominant focus on the candidates' research activities; in nine cases, the teaching component was not discussed at all (45%). Even in cases where the information regarding candidates' evaluations from student questionnaires was incomplete or indicative of subpar teaching quality, the promotion was ultimately sanctioned. When the promotion of lecturers – a pivotal milestone in an academic career – is predominantly or wholly contingent upon achievements in research, it is likely to limit lecturers' willingness to allocate their time and energy to teaching, rather than to research. This is liable to compromise the quality of the teaching offered to students.

 **Reward and Incentive Mechanisms for Lecturers Under Their Terms of Employment at the Institutions** – Institutions may offer compensation to lecturers to motivate improvements in the quality of teaching, in the form of financial compensation for outstanding effort<sup>10</sup>, and in colleges compensation may be in the form of reduced teaching hours to give the lecturers more time for improving the quality of their teaching.

The audit disclosed a lack of effective utilization of available reward mechanisms by the Institutions, either because the rewards were bestowed to the majority of faculty, so that they failed to provide an incentive for outstanding effort (in approximately 87% of colleges and in all universities half of the lecturers, or more, received financial reward), or because the rewards could be received for excellence in research or other non-teaching related assignments at the Institution (nearly two-thirds of college presidents

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<sup>10</sup> In colleges, the financial reward is called an "excellence award" and in universities, a "criteria grant".



failed to acknowledge that quality of teaching was the primary criterion for awarding financial compensation). Moreover, the data revealed that colleges did not fully exploit the potential for reducing teaching hours so as to give lecturers more time to concentrate on their teaching (about one-third of college presidents reported complete non-utilization of this option). With regard to junior faculty and visiting faculty, no reward mechanisms had been established at all. These findings disclose a lack of sufficient incentives for lecturers to direct their time and energy towards enhancing the quality of teaching in preference to their other responsibilities.

**📌 The Academic Teaching of Doctoral Students** – Institutions of higher education overseas, employing doctoral students as faculty members, encourage them to engage in academic teaching training leading to certification. Notable institutions in the United States, including Stanford University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the University of California at Berkeley, alongside the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, implement such practices. Through these initiatives, these institutions equip their graduates, who are poised to become future educators, with the essential knowledge and skills for effective teaching, while encouraging them to teach at the institution during their doctoral studies.

The audit found that in Israeli universities, while a proportion of doctoral students are employed as teaching faculty (up to 50% in the 2023–2024 academic year), five out of eight universities (approximately 60%) did not offer these students specialized training in academic teaching.

**📌 Assessing the Quality of Teaching in Study Programs at the Institutions** – Ensuring an appropriate and high-quality academic level is one of the most significant challenges for the Institutions' management and for the Council for Higher Education, which serves as the regulatory body for higher education. In this context, the CHE periodically evaluates the quality of existing study programs, including the quality of instruction, through international quality assessment committees appointed for this purpose by the CHE. It was found that despite repeated recommendations from these international committees to examine and update pedagogical methods, a matter identified as a pervasive issue across institutions and academic disciplines, the Council for Higher Education had not made determinations concerning the essential necessity for systemic improvements and updates in teaching and learning, from 2020 to September 1, 2023. Furthermore, the CHE had not mapped out the challenges prevalent within the teaching domain, whether system-wide, institution-specific, or pertaining to particular fields of study. It had also failed to investigate the underlying causes of the difficulties highlighted by the international committees in the field of teaching and had not deliberated on potential strategies to enhance the quality of teaching and eliminate obstacles in this area.

**📌 The Absence of an Integrating Authority Within the Council for Higher Education Dedicated to the Topic of Quality of Teaching** – As a rule, the appointment of an officer responsible for advancing a specific area within the regulatory





framework enables the regular assessment of the current state and needs of that area, the identification of barriers, and the drawing of lessons at the systemic level. The same applies to the enhancement of the quality of academic teaching. Thus, for instance, in England, the regulatory body for higher education is divided into two distinct entities: one focusing on academic research and the other tasked with learning and teaching<sup>11</sup>. It was found that the Council for Higher Education had not designated an officer in charge of overseeing quality of teaching on a comprehensive level; an officer who would monitor the situation and needs within the domain, identify barriers, draw lessons and manage the required processes and actions, including the allocation of budgets commensurate with the significance of the matter from a long-term strategic viewpoint, while considering labor market dynamics and technological advancements. Consequently, there is a lack of systematic and holistic treatment of the teaching domain within the system of higher education.



**The Programs of the Council for Higher Education for Fostering Innovation in Pedagogy and Incorporating 21st-century Skills in Teaching** – Commendation is due with regard to the creation of the Digital Learning Forum, which functions as a platform for idea generation, peer learning, and problem-solving. The establishment and enhancement of infrastructures aimed at the promotion and strategic development of digital learning within institutions of higher education have facilitated the integration of remote learning during periods of crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic and the Swords of Iron War.





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11 As part of its responsibilities, this entity performs quality assessments of institutions based on criteria related to teaching and learning; it follows the compliance of academic institutions in England with threshold criteria pertaining to teaching and learning; and publicizes rankings of institutions based on teaching excellence, which enables prospective students, employers, and other stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding educational institutions.





## Key Recommendations

-  It is recommended that the Planning and Budgeting Committee reexamine the calculation of the teaching component within the budgeting model, so that it accurately reflects the quality of teaching at all levels within the Institutions and the investments made by them in enhancing the quality of teaching, based on objective indicators. This examination should also involve an assessment of the integration of elements from the Open University's unique budgeting model, which includes incentives for course development and update, and encourages the integration of advanced learning technologies.
-  It is recommended that the CHE-PBC evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the calls for proposals system aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching, particularly in light of the marginal budget allocated to this area in comparison to the Flexible Planning and Budgeting Committee Budget, and more broadly, among other things, the degree to which such a system incentivizes the Institutions to achieve excellence and innovation in teaching that leads to improvements in academic instruction and aligns with learner needs. It is recommended that the CHE-PBC explore strategies to actualize the budget designated within the framework of calls for proposals that are not currently being disbursed to the Institutions.
-  It is recommended that the Council for Higher Education examine the relevance of the components of the quality of teaching model established in 2017, aimed at promoting and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. This examination should particularly focus on the Threshold Criteria pertaining to Centers for the Advancement of Teaching, the training of lecturers in pedagogy, the emphasis on quality of teaching criteria in the promotion of lecturers, and the utilization of effective and reliable tools for gauging the teaching quality of lecturers. Additionally, it is recommended that the CHE revise the Threshold Criteria in accordance with the findings of this examination to incentivize the Institutions to enhance the quality of teaching. It is further recommended that the CHE establish objectives and a reporting, monitoring, and control protocol concerning compliance within the Institutions, as well as derive systemic insights regarding needs and barriers.
-  It is advised that the presidents of the Institutions take measures to implement the Threshold Criteria delineated in the quality of teaching model. This includes an assessment of the infrastructure, resources, and staffing positions allocated to Centers for the Advancement of Teaching, to ensure that they are adequately equipped to fulfill their functions in accordance with the needs of the lecturers at the Institution, and that their activities will be embedded in all faculties and among all lecturers. Furthermore, it is recommended that these Centers map out the existing training framework at the Institution, its appropriateness for identified needs and the reasons for the partial participation of lecturers in pedagogical training. Based on the findings from this mapping, the Institutions should dedicate efforts and resources to enhance lecturers' motivation to



engage in such training – offering rewards for participation, allowing lecturers to have a role in shaping training content to enhance its relevance, etc. – this, inter alia, by enlisting faculty deans and department heads in the promotion of lecturer teaching quality. Moreover, it is advisable that the Institutions' presidents, in collaboration with the Centers, adopt a diverse array of effective and reliable assessment tools to evaluate the quality of teaching by their lecturers, thereby creating a complete picture of teaching competencies at both individual and institutional levels. This would facilitate constructive assessment and foster trust among relevant stakeholders, thereby enhancing collaboration. It is also recommended that when considering the promotion of candidates within the institution, excellence in teaching should be examined, alongside research proficiency, and clear criteria for assessing the quality of teaching in this context should be defined.



It is recommended that the Institutions incentivize lecturers to make an outstanding and substantial investment in teaching. This should be done to ensure that academic programs provide added value to students, including the acquisition of competencies necessary for integration into the 21st-century job market. This necessity is underscored by the survey findings, which show that inadequate remuneration presents a significant barrier to enhancing the teaching quality of lecturers. Effective measures to promote investment in quality of teaching involve rewarding and recognizing such investments in teaching, while decreasing teaching hours to give lecturers more time to concentrate their efforts in this area.



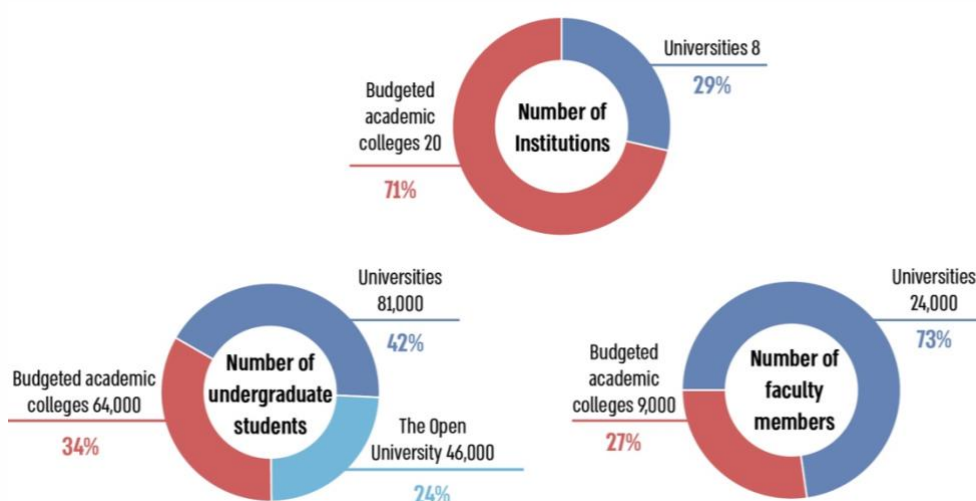
It is advisable for universities to offer specialized training in academic teaching for doctoral candidates to enhance their knowledge and skills in the field, as is practiced at leading international institutions. Such training should be structured through inter-institutional collaboration to ensure recognition by all institutions within Israel. Moreover, it is recommended that the Institutions consider the incorporation of specialized training in academic teaching as a condition for the attainment of a doctoral degree.



It is recommended that the Council for Higher Education direct organizational attention to the issue of quality of teaching and, akin to practices in England – consolidate this matter within a designated organizational entity. It is advised that such an entity assume responsibility for the integration of the teaching field, the formulation of action plans that specify tasks and systemic actions to advance predetermined goals, the establishment of contemporary indicators for evaluating the enhancement of teaching quality in the Institutions, and the collection of data from the Institutions regarding the difficulties and barriers they encounter in promoting the quality of teaching. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Council for Higher Education and the Planning and Budgeting Committee develop tools for supporting those Institutions facing difficulties in this regard.



## Number of Institutions of Higher Education, Students and Faculty Members, by Type of Institution, 2022–2023



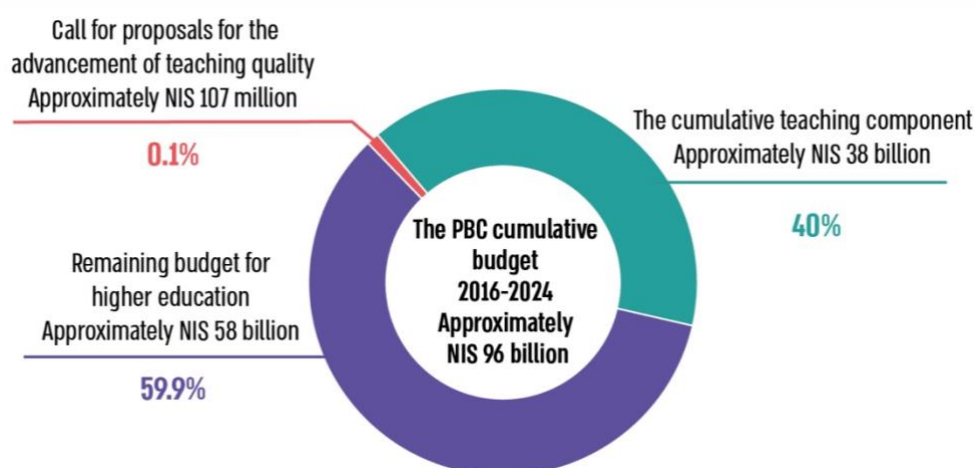
According to data from the Council for Higher Education and the Central Bureau of Statistics, processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.

\* Institutions chart: Universities includes the Open University and does not include the Weizmann Institute.

Students chart: The Open University is presented separately since not all those registered for studies are studying for an academic degree, so the student numbers are not comparable to their numbers at other institutions.



**The Percentage of the Budget Allocated to Promoting Teaching Quality within the Framework of Calls for Proposals, and to the Teaching Component, in the Years 2016–2024 out of the Total Budget for Said Years**



According to data from the Planning and Budgeting Committee, processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.



## Lecturers' Views Emerging from the Survey Conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller, Reflecting the Gaps Concerning Quality of Teaching



"Given the current teaching load at universities, the expectation to meet article quotas and research grants, and participate in various civic activities at the institution, it is not possible to devote adequate time to refreshing course content... Only reducing the teaching load will allow more time to be given to this, combined with a mechanism for a teaching mentor for struggling lecturers, and giving greater weight to teaching in promotions".

"Training must be created on a scale that will allow the implementation of new tools. This is a dramatic change that requires a process over time. An hour and a half of training here and an hour and a half there cannot bring about a widespread transformation".

"There is an objective difficulty in implementing innovative tools. It is not possible to make do with an hour and a half of training, but rather with a prolonged process of a training course with a team that assists in directly implementing the tools".

"We are assessed only by the number of articles we publish, and therefore... there is no chance that the quality of teaching will increase".

"There is no practical promotion process for those who teach but do not write articles. Academic promotion is determined solely by articles".

"Institutions have a built-in preference for employing research personnel who are not experts in teaching over employing experts in teaching who are not researchers".



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## Summary

High-quality and relevant academic instruction is critical for equipping future generations with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary for integration into the 21st-century labor market. The audit revealed that across all levels of the system of higher education – the Council for Higher Education-the Planning and Budgeting Committee, the Institutions' management and faculty, at universities and colleges – insufficient structured and systematic organizational attention, time, and resources are being allocated, to promote and enhance the quality of teaching. Consequently, the teaching and learning processes remain suboptimal.

The audit revealed that the budgeting model employed by the Planning and Budgeting Committee, which encompasses both teaching and research components, and according to which approximately 70% of the total budget is allocated to the Institutions, does not link the quality of teaching to the Institution's budgeting – with the exception of the use of the student-to-faculty ratio index, whose effectiveness in accurately representing the quality of teaching remains questionable – unlike the research component in the model, which correlates research quality with funding allocation. Additionally, the budget dedicated to quality of teaching from 2016 to 2024 through the calls for proposals method was negligible in comparison to the Flexible Planning and Budgeting Committee Budget in the same years (0.5%, approximately NIS 107 million out of a cumulative total of approximately NIS 23 billion, from 2016 to 2024), failing to facilitate the implementation of policy or to highlight the significance of the quality of teaching in a comprehensive manner.

It was further found that essential components of the Threshold Criteria that were established by the Council for Higher Education as prerequisites for granting a budget within its quality of teaching model, (such as requirements for training lecturers in the pedagogical field, criteria for promoting lecturers, and the updating of curricula and syllabi), were not implemented by certain institutions or were implemented only in part. The Council for Higher Education failed to monitor adherence to the Threshold Criteria and did not possess an updated overview of the Institutions' activities in this regard. Even during critical junctures where the Council for Higher Education could have exerted influence over the institutions' practices (such as promoting lecturers to the rank of professor under its authority and evaluating quality through international committees) it did not utilize its involvement in processes to establish standards for advancing the quality of teaching.

In light of these observations, both the Council for Higher Education and the Institutions must change their approaches. They are required to direct the attention of the system of higher education towards academic teaching and to embrace opportunities for innovation in teaching, rather than view the enhancement of the quality of teaching as subordinate to the advancement of academic research. This realignment is particularly significant given the evolving roles of the system of higher education – from a model primarily focused on the



transmission of knowledge to students, to one that also aims to equip students with relevant skills and empower them for succeeding in an increasingly technology-driven world.

It is recommended that the aforementioned change in outlook be reflected at the level of the CHE-PBC, through the allocation of budgets designated to promote the matter, and in practice this change should manifest in the interfaces of the Council for Higher Education with the Institutions, including the appointment of an integrating factor for the matter within the Council, the establishment of updated and relevant standards in the field of quality of teaching, and the monitoring of their implementation. At the level of the Institutions, the change should be reflected in investments in Centers for the Advancement of Teaching; actions taken to provide a supportive environment in teaching for lecturers; the development of tailored and continuous professional development processes; the effective reward of lecturers for the investment required in altering their familiar teaching methods and updating curricula to ensure relevance to learners' needs; and placing excellence in teaching as a central component in considerations for promotion, alongside research, particularly in the colleges. It is also recommended that the Institutions' presidents collaborate with these Centers to adopt various effective and reliable tools for assessing the quality of teaching among lecturers, thereby creating a comprehensive overview of lecturers' teaching skills and enhancing the trust and cooperation of all relevant parties.

