



Advice by the Advisory Committee on Third Party Collaborations

Case identifier	2025-E001
Date	19/02/2025
Contact person	Secretary to the Committee

I. Overview of the advice request

a. Project description

The collaboration between UvA and Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI) dates back to 1986, when a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Student Exchange Agreement were first signed. Ever since, the MoU has been (automatically) extended for 5-year periods. The formal duration of the Student Exchange Agreement, which was signed in August 2019, ended in August 2024. In line with the standard UvA policy for student exchange, the outbound student exchange was put on hold as of 7 October 2023, due to the start of the conflict in Israel and Gaza and the negative travel advice imposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands (colour code “red”). Following internal consultations as well as consultations with the partner university, inbound student exchanges have been continued. Given that inbound students had already been nominated for a semester abroad at the UvA prior to the intense discussions within the UvA academic community on collaboration with partners from Israel, both universities decided to maintain the duration of the agreement for the Fall semester of the academic year 2024-2025, to provide a legal ground for this exchange to be executed. Meanwhile, HUJI has been informed that the UvA Executive Board is awaiting the outcome of the internal consultation process, including the advice from the Advisory Committee before any decisions on a possible extension can be made and communicated.

b. Type of request

- Existing collaboration - Changes in geopolitical situation
- Existing collaboration - Changes in partner profile
- Existing collaboration - Other

c. Reason for reassessment

Due to the emergence of the armed conflict in Gaza and campus protests leading to requests from various members from within the UvA academic community for reassessment of existing collaboration with partners based in Israel, the Executive Board decided to submit a request for advice to the Committee on (temporary) (dis)continuation of the aforementioned Student Exchange Agreement (see section I. a.). The United Nations, amongst others, documented gross and systematic violations of human rights in the [6 monthly update reports](#) on the human rights situation in Gaza and this was re-stated by the International Court of Justice in its document *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem: Conclusions of the Public Hearing* dated 19 July 2024. There are indications that the HUJI may be implicated in this situation (see under IV). Israel was labelled as a high-risk area by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as of 7 October 2023, when a negative travel advice was issued for outbound travel to Israel. There are indications that (organizational units of) HUJI may have close ties through research and training programmes with the Israeli defence Industry and Israeli army.



II. Process

a. UvA policy framework

In accordance with the UvA internal policy and guidelines stipulated by the Policy Framework for Collaboration with Third Parties and draft Assessment Guidelines, the Executive Board undertook an internal reflection and reassessment on the existing collaboration in the context of the student exchange agreement. The outcome of the internal reflection resulted in the submission of a request for advice to the UvA Advisory Committee for Collaboration with Third Parties. The Committee received the advice request and undertook the assessment on the basis of the draft assessment guidelines. The committee will inform the Executive Board of the outcome of its advice.

b. Grant type and legal framework

A Memorandum of Understanding including a Student Exchange Agreement at university-wide level, signed by the Presidents of both universities. In line with the UvA overall policy for maintaining and executing exchange agreements catering for student exchanges of several UvA faculties, the mandate for signing the MoU and Student Exchange Agreement lies with the Executive Board. The Committee will submit its final advice to the Executive Board. The Executive Board will take a final decision on (dis)continuation the Student Exchange Agreement.

To date, the UvA adheres to the national policy regarding bilateral relations with the State of Israel, stipulated in recent Letters of the government to Parliament (including the [*Kabinetsreactie AIV briefadvies 'Naar een nieuwe koers in het Israelisch-Palestijnse conflict'*](#) dated 9 December 2024 and [*Kamerbrief naar aanleiding van verzoeken vanuit de Tweede Kamer over het Genocideverdrag en appreciatie rapporten NGO's*](#) dated 21 January 2025). In addition, the UvA standing policy on student exchanges stipulates that no outbound exchange can take place to countries for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues a negative travel advice (colour code “orange” or “red”). Since 7 October 2023, this is effective for outbound exchange to HUJI.

d. Assessment process by the Committee

The Committee reviewed extensive background materials that are available in the public sphere. Some references are included via weblinks in the relevant sections of this advice and the Committee is willing to provide the Executive Board with background information if requested.

The Committee conducted interviews with two experts by experience on study abroad or staff visits to Israel during its meeting on 25 November 2024.



III. Reassessment

a. Key considerations

The Committee acknowledges the value of student exchanges. Such programmes provide a valuable experience for students. Student exchanges help students broaden their horizons, gain intercultural competence, enhance their interest in global issues, and thus prepare them in the best possible way for a successful career in a dynamic, changing global society and labour market. There are, however, a number of aspects of the student exchange programme with HUJI that warrant further scrutiny, such as indications of collaboration between HUJI and the Israeli defence industry, as elaborated upon in section III. c.

b. Developments in the geopolitical context in which (a) collaboration partner(s) operates

Since 7 October 2023, there is an escalating armed conflict, with gross and systematic violations of human rights by the state of Israel (documented by the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, see references under section I. c.).

While there are no sanctions issued by the Dutch government, the European Commission or other international bodies, several organisations, including, among others, the United Nations and International Court of Justice expressed serious concerns about the human rights violations occurring in Israel since the start of the armed conflict in October 2023.

c. Changes in the profile/status of (a) collaboration partner(s)

The Committee has no indications that the university distances itself from the abovementioned gross and systematic human rights violations.

The Committee has indications that (organizational units of) HUJI may have close ties through research and training programmes including Talpiot, Havatzalot, and Tzameret with the Israeli Defence Industry and Israeli army, which is involved in the abovementioned gross and systematic human rights violations:

- The [Talpiot programme](#) is a Bachelor programme of military-academic excellence for training security-technological leadership for the research and development and weapons systems of the Security System.
- [Havatzalot](#) is a three-year double Bachelor degree programme, offered by HUJI in collaboration with the Israeli Military Defence Division.
- The Tzameret track is a military medicine track. The selective track has been offered since 2010 and has 70 participants per class. In addition to medical studies, students participate in courses in military medicine such as aviation medicine, marine medicine, military psychiatry, and more. At the end of the program, the students receive a medical degree from the Hebrew University. During the program, they also complete basic training, a paramedics course, and an officers' course. The medical officer's course is completed with an internship. Further information is detailed [here](#).

The Committee has various indications (for example the case of prof. ██████████, who resigned, following internal discussions regarding support for a petition calling for a cease-fire in Gaza) that, under the current circumstances, the academic freedom and the freedom of expression of academic staff and students at HUJI cannot be guaranteed for all members of the academic community.



IV. Conclusion and advice

a. Considerations by the Committee

Given the institutional nature of the Memorandum of Understanding and Student Exchange Agreement involving participation of students from several faculties, elaborated upon in sections I. a. and II. b., the Committee assessed the student exchange agreement between the UvA and HUJI at the institutional level. The Committee acknowledges the value of student exchanges. That said, the Committee believes that entering or renewing a university-wide collaboration with HUJI would constitute an unwarranted stamp of approval of an institution that is implicated in gross and systematic violation of human rights in the region. The Committee noted that HUJI offers a number of research and training programmes (Talpiot, Havatzalot, and Tzameret), which involve collaboration with the Israeli Defence Industry and the Israeli army, the latter has been accused of involvement in gross and systematic human rights violations. The Committee has indications that, under the current circumstances, there may be limitations to academic freedom at HUJI, which may have a negative impact on the freedom of the UvA exchange student to ask critical questions and otherwise exercise their freedom of expression. Finally, the Committee is concerned about the safety of students traveling to Israel to participate in the exchange programme.

b. Advice

Based on the information available to the Committee at the time of discussion and upon deliberation on the aforementioned considerations, the Committee, in consensus, has come to the following conclusion:

- The Committee does not have objections against the continuation of the collaboration.
- The Committee does not have objections against the continuation of the collaboration; however, it advises the mitigation strategies under section IV. c.
- The Committee advises negatively about the continuation of the collaboration. If the mitigations strategies under section IV. c. are implemented, the Committee is willing to reconsider.
- The Committee advises negatively about the continuation of the collaboration.

c. Mitigation strategies

Upon a request of a relevant UvA stakeholder, the Committee may reconsider its advice in the future, providing that the situation regarding the abovementioned objections to entering or renewing a student exchange programme with HUJI has significantly changed.