

Evaluation Executive Summary
Amman, Jordan Study Center
October 23-26, 2016

I. Evaluation Team members

Woody Pelton, Dean of Global Education, Elon University, ACB member and team leader
Sarah Spencer, Director of Study Abroad, University of St. Thomas, ACB member
Dr. Catherine Bronson, Assistant Professor of Arabic and Islam, University of Notre Dame

II. Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met

The Evaluation Team met with the entire on-site staff, all of the language faculty, roughly half of the students in various settings, a homestay host, a mental health counselor, a contracted guide who offers many of the excursions and retreats, and a few of the faculty for elective courses.

III. Prior Evaluations

The first review was in 2003, with only 5 students enrolled. An Interim evaluation took place in 2007, led by Dr. Kathleen McDermott. Dr. McDermott's conclusions in 2007 were very positive and reflected the program as it had just left Amideast and with language delivered by the University of Jordan.

IV. Program Background/History

CIEE opened in Amman in 2001, just days before 9/11, initially operating through Amideast, then headed by Janine El Tal, CIEE's current RDO for the region. Its focus was Arabic language and it collaborated with the University of Jordan.

Allison Hodgkins started as the first full-time CIEE Resident Director in fall 2006, with CIEE operating without Amideast, which is now a competitor. In Spring 2008 an Advanced Arabic Language Program was initiated, headed by Dr. Najeh Abu Orabi, who continues to be the program leader. In Spring 2012, CIEE went into an agreement with the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy to offer a program in Diplomacy and Policy Studies. In Summer 2014, CIEE introduced the 4-week short term course modules, and Amman was one of the first centers to adopt it with two 4-week sessions on Middle East Studies (MES) as the theme.

In 2012, Dr. Hodgkins left CIEE to join the faculty of the American University in Cairo, replaced Dr. Elena Corbett. In 2013, the University of Jordan, CIEE partner for 12 years, began making unrealistic demands on the program, without fulfilling their own commitments. As a result, it was decided to move the program to the Princess Sumaya University of Technology, a private, non-profit university specialized in IT and Engineering. At the time of this site evaluation CIEE was renegotiating an agreement with PSUT, so we did not observe the PSUT involvement. .

The program experienced substantial growth over the years, but decline in the last three years from 345, to 304, to 211. See the table below. This has an obvious impact on the staff and operation and will be watched closely. It is assumed the decline is based primarily on the news coming out of the region, in particular ISIS and Syria, leading students and parents to be concerned about the safety of the location.

V. Focus of Evaluation

The focus of the evaluation was on the structure of the programs offered in Amman, the physical space, and the relationships with host institutions. The Fall 2016 semester was a transition semester, as described by Resident Director Dr. Elena Corbett. CIEE was in negotiations with Princess Samaya University of Technology (PSUT), had recently changed its relationship with Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy, and was in the process of locating new office/center space. CIEE had renegotiated with PSUT within 2 weeks of the evaluation and it appears new physical space may be located and a move take place prior to Spring semester.

VI. Key Discussions/Findings

The Evaluation Team found that the Amman Study Center had a very strong program, excellent student support, strong academics, a devoted and professional staff.

VII. Priority Recommendations

1. We recommend that CIEE consider reorganizing the programs in Amman to maintain “as is” the Advanced Arabic Language program and then create tracks instead of separate programs: Diplomacy and Public Studies (DPS) and Middle East Studies (MES), dropping Language and Culture. It would be a good idea to reach out to Georgetown and GWU in advance of such a change to make sure it would not change their view of the program, though it should provide their students with more flexibility. We believe this structure better aligns the summer and semester programs, creates efficiencies, provides flexibility for students, allows more electives, eliminates a perceived hierarchy of programs and better describes what is currently in place. It also provides flexibility to add additional tracks based on direct-enroll courses at PSUT, particularly in Business and/or Engineering/Technology based on their ABET and (pending) AACSB accreditations.

ACTION: As indicated by the ACB team, there is very little difference between LC and DPS in course requirements, and as such we propose to merge the two programs fully and consider them as one under the title of Middle East Studies Program. All program components will remain the same (course offerings, co-curricular activities, internships, etc) but they will be open to all students. The option of direct enroll into PSUT courses would still be made available, and the activities organized with the JID will be open for all students. As such we will have a unified minimum requirement of a 2.5 gpa, one OPDO and one pre-departure handbook and on-site handbook. To ensure that this is in line with what our constituents will accept, we will ask IR to contact 2-3 major sending schools (Georgetown, GWU, etc.) and talk to them about merging both programs.

2. We recommend that CIEE, through the RDO and local staff, closely and continuously assess the value and contribution of PSUT and JID in achieving the learning objectives of the program. We believe that the current staff with different facilities could support an excellent “island” program if the local partners do not provide effective support.

ACTION: CIEE Amman has recently re-evaluated their relationship with both partner institutions (JID and PSUT) and entered into new agreements. JID will coordinate with CIEE by organizing a series of expert lectures on current topics of policy or diplomatic importance, arrange for a series of site visits to government or related ministries, institutions, or agencies, offer professional development opportunities (i.e. debate training, protocol and etiquette training, etc.), engage their students (diplomats in training) in cultural activities with CIEE students and offer a simulation exercise such as a Model Arab League.

PSUT will continue to offer the option of direct enroll courses to a selection of CIEE students interested in courses in Business and IT, and facilitate the engagement of their student union with CIEE students around a series of cultural and sports activities.

The Center Director and the RDO will continue to monitor the relationship with the two host institutions to ensure that their input brings value to the CIEE programs. We will assess the situation on an annual basis and submit recommendations to changes if it is deemed necessary. It should be noted that in the fall of 2016 and now the spring of 2017, JID has not been fully committed to the agreement that was signed in the spring of 2016. The likelihood of CIEE ending its relationship with JID due to lack of contractual commitment is high.

3. We recommend that the Amman staff offers a single OPDO for all students coming each term, combining the various programs, and consider creating a single 32-page handbook for the Study Center, rather than 3 different (but overlapping) handbooks.

ACTION: CIEE will introduce the highly interactive new pre-departure orientation on Canvas, Know Before You Go to the Amman center in 2018/2019. As for the pre-departure handbooks the Center Director has already combined them into one document that has been implemented in the spring of 2017.

4. We recommend that CIEE Amman work with Portland, the School of Record, and perhaps with some AC members to establish additional professional development opportunities for the Arabic Language faculty, most of whom are full-time with CIEE. This could possibly include an opportunity to teach for a short time on an AC member campus. We also recommend that CIEE looks for a way to provide access for faculty to library resources, such as the J-STOR. The question was also raised about access by CIEE faculty to an IRB process so they could engage in research. We wonder if some of these efforts might be possible through our new School of Record or other AC member institutions.

ACTION: We continue to afford professional development training for the Arabic language professors on an annual basis. We have also introduced professional development workshops between the Arabic language faculty in rabat and Amman. If the resources are made available, Amman will be able to host a workshop for the two sets of faculty. CIEE Amman, with the support of the RDO and Portland will seek ways to have access to electronic libraries to enhance the research and resource arm of the academic program.

VIII. Action Plan/Program Update: See notes above for corresponding action plans.