Teaching

Distance learning, which makes it possible for students to study anywhere, at any time, is a unique characteristic of the Open University. The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, Prof. Sonia Roccas, deals with university-wide and inter-departmental issues related to studies at the Open University. Teaching at the OUI is constantly being improved and upgraded with the help of state-of-the-art technologies. Specific technologies are selected for each course according to its particular features and requirements. This year the selection of courses for Bachelor's and Master's degrees has increased and the University as a whole took steps toward becoming more accessible to special groups. "Bridges" to other higher education institutions were also expanded.

During the past year 5,822 study groups were opened in 759 courses. Study groups took place in 63 study centers throughout the country, from Majdal Shams in the north to Eilat in the south, and included five places of employment and three prisons.

Programs of Study Approved by the Council for Higher Education

- Program of study in Arts toward a single and dual-disciplinary BA
- Program of study in Literature toward a dual-disciplinary BA
- Program of study in Education (Learning Disabilities) toward a dual-disciplinary BA
- Program of study in Political Science & International Relations toward a dual-disciplinary BA
- Final approval for BA in Economics
- Final approval for BA in Economics with a division of studies
- Final approval for program of study in Cognitive Science toward a dual-disciplinary BSc

Programs of Study Offered for the First Time This Year

- BA in History: Emphasis on History of the Jewish People
- BA in Humanities: Emphasis on Film Studies
- BA in Political Science and International Relations
- BSc in Life Sciences: Emphasis on Cellular and Molecular Biology
- BA in Management and Film Studies
- Division of studies in Computer Science – Systems & Applications

Courses Taught for the First Time This Year

Dept. of Sociology, Political Science and Communication

Public Policy in an Era of Globalization

Workshop: Issues in Public Administration in Israel

Class, Gender and Ethnicity in Education: A Sociological Perspective

Media Discourse

Rivals or Allies? Democracy and Mass Media

Democracies and Dictatorships: Comparative Politics (revised)

Introduction to Public Administration (revised)

Social Movements and Political Protest (revised)

Israeli Democracy: Selected Issues (revised) (MA)

Democracy and Democratization (revised) (MA)

Dept. of Literature, Language and the Arts

Gender and Feminism in Modern Theater

Romantic Comedy: History, Ideology and Gender

Israeli Cinema at the Turn of the Millennium

History of the Cinema I: 1895-1939 (revised)

History of the Cinema II: 1940-1980 (revised)

Dept. of Management and Economics

Business Ethics (revised)

Business Ethics for MBA Students (revised) (MBA)

Dept. of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

Early Modern Europe: 1350-1600

Seminar for Outstanding Students in Philosophy

The Jews of Russia in the 20th Century

Secularization in Modern Jewish Culture

Youth, Education, and Politics in the Middle East (revised)

Graduate Degree Program in Cultural Studies

Thesis Seminar for Academic Writing in Cultural Studies

Science and Culture

Dept. of Natural Sciences

Instrumental Chemical Analysis

Secrets of the Universe (revised)

The Mediterranean Coast of Israel: Geological and Environmental Aspects

Genetics (revised)

Dept. of Education and Psychology

Emotional Intelligence

Brain and Cognition

Philosophy of Education

Leadership and its Applications in Education (revised)

Learning Disabilities (revised)

Giftedness and Special Talents (revised)

Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance (revised)

Introduction to Educational Measurement (MA)

Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science

Introduction to Artificial Intelligence

Programming Languages

History of Mathematics: From Ancient Greece to Euler's Time

Workshop: Object-Oriented Programming (revised)

Introduction to Computer Networks (revised)

Computer-Aided Verification of Hardware and Software (MSc) (revised)

New Bridges to Other Universities

These transfer channels enable students to take advantage of the Open University's flexibility. Students may begin their BA studies at the OUI and then, having passed a cluster of courses with the required grade, choose whether to complete their degree at the OUI or transfer to another university.

This year, the following bridges to other universities were added:

- Bar-Ilan University – School of Education
- Bar- Ilan University – Dept. of Chemistry
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Dept. of Communication and Journalism
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Dept. of Psychology
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem– Physics Studies
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Dept. of Geography
- University of Haifa – School of Social Work
- Tel Aviv University – Dept. of Geography and Human Environment

Training

Training for Academic Faculty Members

The Training Department this year continued training new tutors and course coordinators, while also offering workshops for veteran tutors and course coordinators. Under the new employment contract with tutors, participation in the workshops is not separately recompensed as in the past, but forms an integral part of their work. This year, workshops for tutors were scheduled during breaks between semesters and were also offered in Haifa for tutors in the North. The workshops focused on enhancing tutoring skills. Observations of tutoring sessions, implemented and increased this year at the request of tutors and/or course coordinators, were also expanded to remote transmission and VC lessons. Personal counseling for course coordinators also increased. The Training Department is adding to the number of workshops for seminar papers, particularly in Social Sciences courses, and is providing training for the personnel who run the workshops.

Training for New Senior Faculty

An orientation day was organized for new senior faculty members. A workshop directed by experts from the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation addressed the topic of writing and checking exams and a tour was conducted on an examination day.

Training in technology-based learning

This year, in conjunction with course coordinators and *Shoham*, short training films were prepared in order to improve students' learning skills and study strategies. The training concentrated on organizing information and materials for exercises and exams. Production was also completed on training films for writing seminar papers in advanced academic courses.

New in the Library

The services offered by the OUI library were also expanded this year, especially online services available to faculty and students, both in Israel and abroad.

Electronic Resources

- **Databases:** Two Law-related databases have been added, as well as one containing psychology examinations.
- **E-books:** The number of e-book collections available in Hebrew and English continues to grow. Included are the *Kotar* library, with electronic reference books in Hebrew, which now numbers 1,381 titles (an increase of 20%), and the *Otzar Hachochma* collection of Judaic titles, which grew to 56,236 scanned books (an increase of 11%). The number of English e-books from various collections reached 614 this year, in addition to 41,700 book chapters and encyclopedic entries.
- **Journals:** The library now subscribes to a record number of 41,475 e-journals.
- **Multimedia:** During the past year 316 lectures delivered at OUI seminars were cataloged and made available on YouTube. These lectures are accessible to all academic libraries in Israel and around the world.

Special Services for Students Writing Seminar Papers

- **"Home delivery":** in the past year 2,203 scanned articles (not available in the library) were emailed to students writing seminar papers. A further 687 books from the OUI library were delivered by conventional mail.
- **Assistance at the Ramat Aviv campus:** during the past year 1,308 students received help in tracing articles and books, with the assistance of the librarian at the Ramat Aviv Campus library.

Expanding the Accessibility of Studies to Arabic-Speaking Students

One of the goals of the past year was to increase the accessibility of higher education to students from the Arab sector. The Open University expanded the academic assistance offered, in order to provide these students with a "soft landing" as they begin their academic studies. The assistance includes Arabic-language tutorial sessions, the option to submit assignments and exams in Arabic, and recordings of tutorial sessions in Arabic on course websites.

- As part of the Soft Landing program, nine courses featuring recordings of tutorial sessions in Arabic were offered. In addition, three new courses were added to a list which now numbers 22 courses, from which students may choose six to study with Arabic-language support. At designated Arabic-sector study centers, study groups for these courses are presented in Arabic, and an extra hour has been added to every course session. Native Arabic-speakers studying at the OUI are now entitled to extended time when taking final exams. The entitlement was increased from the five courses initially offered, to six.
- Academic counseling in the Arab sector was increased. Additional Arabic-speaking counselors were hired, both for the designated Arab sector study centers and for other study centers around the country attended by Arabic-speaking students.
- Guidance and orientation sessions for new students took place at the start of the semester at most of the study centers in the Arab sector. Presentations and sessions were conducted simultaneously in Arabic and Hebrew.
- Two new study centers were opened in the Arab sector: Beit Berl Community College (a branch of Beer Sheva Arabic College) and a study center for East Jerusalem residents, under the sponsorship of the Mali Campus at Musrara School, bringing the total number of study centers in the Arab sector to 13.
- Two new workshops were introduced last year for teaching "Hebrew as a Second Language," in order to provide instruction to Arabic-speaking students needing more fundamental skills than that those previously offered. An OUI grant enabled students in eight groups to participate in an advanced-level "Hebrew as a Second Language" course.
- "Project 100" is a special structured study program which the OUI is preparing to offer to 100 students. The syllabus will be spread over four semesters, including specific courses required for the "Bridges" program. At the end of the period, and depending on individual achievement, students will have the option of transferring to another university or continuing their studies at the Open University.

E-Learning Technologies

Transferring to the new OPAL learning environment

The pilot stage of the transfer from the old OPUS environment to OPAL has been completed. The OPAL system is the Open University's version of the worldwide e-learning environment known as Moodle. Over the past year the development team has continued to improve the system and adapt it to specific OUI requirements, making it accessible and compatible with laptops, Tablets and smartphones. The new developments have attracted interest among Moodle users in Israel and abroad.

Live distance-tutoring sessions

During the past year there has been a marked increase in the number of courses offering regular or intensive tutorials via live video sessions, using three different systems: the *Ofek* system; video-conferencing (VC); and the *Elluminate* virtual classrooms software. Lessons are presented via synchronous distance sessions and are recorded for asynchronous viewing on the course website.

In 2012, students were offered 315 courses or study groups in this format, including recordings of nine tutorials in Arabic.

Mobile e-book pilot (*Sadan*)

The *Sadan* pilot was expanded this year in several ways – in the number of courses, number of students, technology and types of devices and modes of distribution (there was a move away from loaned devices to students to delivering content directly to students' own devices).

The project was accompanied throughout by evaluation surveys. Notable findings for *Sadan 3* were that 36% (of 89 respondents) studied primarily or solely by means of mobile e-books on their Tablet.

Sixty-five percent of students reported a good/excellent learning experience on a Tablet, as compared to 37% for electronic readers, as in *Sadan 1*.

Improvement of Online Services to Support Teaching

Automation of application for studies: A computerized system has been developed for applying for certificate studies, teaching certificates, continuing studies and graduate studies. The system enables students to receive services and manage information pertaining to application status, programs of study, courses, tuition, and personal information.

Scanning of student files: Students' files can now be scanned to allow information on prior studies and programs of study to be transferred to the digital archives.

Computerized appeals process: The exam appeals system has been computerized in order to streamline the process, as well as saving resources, time, and energy.

New Study Centers and Institutions

Activities began in several new study centers and institutions this year: Musrara (for students from the Arab sector) under the sponsorship of the Mali Campus, Rosh Ha'Ayin College, Mercaz Pisgah in Yarka and Beit Berl College.