

# Graduates

In 2012-2013, the Open University conferred Bachelor's degrees on 3,231 students, and awarded Master's degrees to 603 students. Of the students who completed certificate studies, 181 were awarded teaching certificates. Of the undergraduates, 17% indicated that they did not have a matriculation certificate when they began studying.

***"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."***

**Kamal Agbaria, representing BA graduates at the Spring 2013 graduation ceremony**



...I stand before you today, excited by this occasion and by the whole learning process of achieving a BA degree. It had high and low points; there were moments of pleasure, and times of great effort; long nights spent studying in order to complete yet another assignment, and begging the tutor to defer the submission date.

For most of us, learning has been a formative and powerful experience, on both the personal and the academic levels. An enormous amount of self-discipline was required throughout; we absorbed extensive knowledge, insights and understandings, and acquired theoretical and practical tools that will serve us in the future as well.

In recent times, the term "the middle class" has been widely used, and it is this segment of the population which

is partly represented here today. It is thanks to the Open University that we have been able to combine work shifts with assignments, and therefore, been able to study and earn a living simultaneously. The urge to move ahead in our lives; to be in perpetual motion, never ceases. I would like to thank the Open University for making that possible.

It is no secret that I belong to the largest minority group in this country – and no, I don't mean women; I am referring to Arabs; those I met in the course of my studies, and many others, who come from large towns and obscure villages. Even Fairuz is "here" this evening in our honor! We are a minority that wants to integrate, to be influential, to be real partners in all aspects of this country's life. To achieve this we must acquire an education in all possible areas. I thank the Open University again for opening its heart and its doors to a growing number of Arab students.

On a personal note, I would like to add that I do not have a high school diploma because some of my teachers had no faith in me. It was only due to my father's persistence that I survived high school. But I stand here today as an OUI graduate and I am already looking into the possibility of studying towards a masters degree. Thanks for this are due again to the Open University. It may waive the usual acceptance criteria, but it does not compromise on the quality of its study programs.

This framework, this "home," offers accessible studies to all of us – for students of all colors and creeds, who come from the center of the country and from the periphery; men and women, Arabs and Jews – students who are persistent, who want more, who believe, and above all, for whom a dream can come true...

Finally, I would like to express my thanks, on my own behalf and on behalf of all of us, to all the tutors and study coordinators who were there for us, with advice, and more advice, and with encouragement. There were many times when you showed us the way, and it is thanks to you that we had a "softer landing."

Once again, a big "thank you" to the Open University for the vision and its realization, to our families, who supported us and offered help in difficult times, and to anybody else I may have overlooked.

I will end by quoting the person I admire the most, apart from my own father, namely, Nelson Mandela, who said: "The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

***"The sky's the limit, and whatever field I go into, I will be able to fulfill my potential if I just set my mind to it."***



**Dana Davidson, representing MA graduates at the Spring 2013 graduation ceremony**

Good evening everyone,

I was born in Raanana 27 years ago.

The fact that I am standing here before you all today is not something I take for granted. In school [...] I was diagnosed with a learning disability – specifically ADD – and an IQ bordering on gifted[...] But, despite the best efforts of both the education system and my parents, I was unable to follow the regular system like everyone else; I had problems doing homework assignments, paying attention in lessons, and bringing the right materials to school. [...] I had a perpetual feeling that the education system was conspiring against me and didn't understand that "I wanted to, but just couldn't."

After I finished my military service and spent a whole summer with other young people and with Jewish children in Berkeley, California, I realized that I had the skills and desire to play an active role in maximizing the learning capabilities of Israel's elementary school children. I felt that in doing so, I might be able to spare other children the kind of frustration and suffering that I had experienced myself.

When I returned home to Israel, I knew that I would need university studies in order to acquire a higher education and achieve my goal. I took the psychometric exam and found I was unable to keep to the allocated time limits, and despite all my hard work and long months of preparation at home, my grade was below the acceptance criteria of universities and colleges. Still, I refused to give up and decided that I was not willing to compromise on the level of studies, so I applied for a BA course at the Open University. That decision transformed my life.

Towards the end of my studies I was accepted into a course for outstanding students in Psychology, taught by Dr. Ravid Doron. The course included demanding material and required a huge investment of time in the critical reading of professional literature and the understanding of research methodologies [...] Thanks to a new-found confidence in my own abilities, acquired while studying at the Open University, I now feel that "the sky's the limit" and whatever field I go into I will be able to fulfill my potential, if I just set my mind to it.

After four years, I completed my BA *summa cum laude*. With my degree, I went on to study for a preschool teaching qualification, and this year I completed an internship in kindergarten teaching.

I owe my success to the Open University, which offered me the possibility of acquiring an education. Were it not for that opportunity, I don't know where I would be today. There is no other institute of higher education that would have accepted me on the basis of my original grades and testing results.

I now live with my husband in the village of Nili and am studying for an MA in Learning Disabilities at Tel Aviv University. I hope to become a qualified learning disabilities diagnostician, as well as a kindergarten teacher. My goal is to prevent children with ADHD from falling behind in the education system; to teach them the coping tools and strategies necessary to enable them to stay in the mainstream education system; and to provide them with a full understanding of their problems and the study methods adapted to their needs and abilities.