

# Research

Open University faculty members are involved in three primary academic areas: course development, teaching, and research. At the OUI, research represents a wide range of disciplines, including social sciences, humanities, natural and life sciences, exact sciences and engineering.

The dean of research has overall responsibility for the OUI Research Authority (RA), the research institutes, and oversees adherence to research ethics. The dean of research also serves as chairman of the board of OpMop Ltd., the OUI's technology transfer subsidiary. The late Prof. Miriam Souroujon served as dean of research until her recent death in April 2014. The position is currently held by Prof. Manor Mendel.

## The Research Authority

The RA encourages research by helping OUI faculty members locate external sources of funding for projects, and by referring proposals to the relevant sources. The RA also promotes research with direct support from an internal fund providing fellowships and grants to research students, and by covering travel costs to facilitate the presentation of research findings at overseas scientific conferences.

The RA is responsible for the financial and administrative monitoring of research proposals which have received funding, as well as for managing researchers' budgets. It also sponsors workshops which help applicants in submitting grant proposals to external sources. The Authority provides physical resources such as lab facilities and computers, recruits research students and assistants, and encourages collaboration between OUI researchers and colleagues in other academic institutions. Annual events showcase the latest OUI research.

The Research Authority Steering Committee is made up of four senior faculty members from different disciplines, appointed by the OUI president. The committee, chaired by the dean of research, is responsible for determining criteria for the evaluation of applications to the internal fund, as well as for allocation of funds.

## New at the Research Authority

- Individual and group meetings were held during the year between researchers and directors of the different Israel-Europe R&D Directorate (ISERD) tracks, with the aim of encouraging researchers to submit applications to the EU's Horizon 2020 Framework Program for Research and Innovation for 2014-2020. ISERD is the official body responsible for bringing Israel into the European Research Area (ERA).
- The RA, the International Academic Ventures Unit Administration, and the Globalization Coordinator hosted representatives from the CHE and the Erasmus+ program (an EU program in education, training, youth and sport) for 2014-2020.
- To increase participation by OUI researchers in the European Horizon 2020 R&D program, the RA recruited an EU Research Program Coordinator.
- In light of the increase in the number of applications for internal RA funding, the fund's budget was increased by 25% so as to enable researchers to carry out their projects.
- The computer unit upgraded and updated computer tools for initiating internal research scholarships (supplementary scholarships for recipients of external research funding) and submitting applications to the Ethics Committee.
- This year, the needs of faculty members requiring a central computer infrastructure were pooled. The introduction of a high-performance computing program was a joint effort by the RA and the computer unit, together with relevant researchers. The program, to be carried out in stages over the coming budget year, includes the upgrading of a computer sciences laboratory.
- During the past year, arrangements were finalized to hire research assistants with research fellowships via the *Hilan* human resources management and payroll system.

- Further to a decision taken by OUI management and approved by the Senate to consolidate the status of "research institutes under establishment," the Research Institutes Procedure was updated to determine the criteria for establishment, operation, and continued activity of the institutes.
- In April 2014 an ethics seminar was held for all members of the Ethics Committee.

## Research Centers

A research center serves as a scientific, institutional, and practical framework for research, which allows interdisciplinary and reciprocal cooperation. The centers help researchers generate new scientific knowledge, participate in the mutual exchange of ideas, and foster cooperation with other researchers and experts in Israel and abroad. The Open University has three research centers:

### Research Institute for Policy, Political Economy and Society

Headed by Dr. Varda Wasserman, this interdisciplinary center aims to advance the study of theoretical, empirical and applied subjects pertaining to issues associated with the interrelationships between policy formation and implementation, and social, political, and economic processes and mechanisms. The Institute encourages studies focusing both on Israel and other cases, comparative studies, and studies exploring the global and international dimensions of policy formation and implementation. In order to provide a vital research environment for scholars from different disciplines, the Institute organizes international and local seminars and conferences, publishes a series of working papers, and offers research assistance to its members.

For the second half of 2014, the Institute's newly appointed management will focus on the formation and analysis of policy scenarios within the specialist disciplines of its members. Based on knowledge acquired during 2011-2013 on policy scenarios in the interrelationship between army and society, the Institute will undertake an in-depth examination of the unique methodology that creates a joint platform for all Institute members from all disciplines. As part of the new theoretical framework, and with the goal of proposing different policy scenarios to help analyze policy alternatives for various current issues, four research groups have been set up to study army and security, gender, sustainability, and education policy. The groups comprise researchers from the Open University and other universities. Since they are based on theoretical knowledge and an analogous comparative analysis, the various policy scenarios call for the recognition of core issues and players in the area under investigation, and identification of their response to policies introduced by the government (or any other state entity). Accordingly, these scenarios will help with decision-making processes, both for formal decision-makers, and for non-institutional players seeking to influence the decision-making process.

### During the past year the Institute sponsored the following events:

#### Research workshops:

- How to Avoid White Elephants – the Voluntary Supply and Operation of Public Products
- Blurring of the Concepts of Bereavement, Heroism and Sacrifice

#### Seminars and workshops:

- Analyzing Policy Scenarios
- The Scenario of Implications of Implementing Compulsory Civilian Service
- Political Culture – the Case of Capital and Government
- **International seminar:** The Democratization of Risk Management
- **Israeli-Cypriot workshop:** The Challenge of Educational Policy during Long-term Conflicts: a Comparative Examination of the Israel and Cyprus cases.

In addition, the Institute published an anthology of scientific articles on compulsory civilian service, received a grant for the study of corporate responsibility, and conducted a study on voluntary dynamic supply of a public product with establishment and maintenance costs.

## Research Center for Innovation in Learning Technologies

This research center, headed by Dr. Nitza Geri, explores the integration of innovative technologies into teaching and learning processes. The Center encourages studies by OUI faculty members aimed at improving the understanding of teaching and learning processes in a technology-rich environment, and the integration of new technologies into the teaching of courses in the academic world in general, and the OUI in particular. The Center was established in 2010 to replace the Chais Center for the Integration of Technology in Education, which had been active at the OUI since 2004. Fifty faculty members from different departments are currently carrying out research at the Center, in addition to a part-time research fellow. The Center operates in close cooperation with the Shoham Center for Technology in Distance Education, and focuses on forging close professional ties among members of the Israeli research community. To this end, regular academic events are held, including research seminars, symposia, and conferences.

Two seminars were held for the general public during the 2013-2014 academic year: Learning and Innovations in Technology from the Language Viewpoint; and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses): Enthusiasm versus Reality. Members of the Research Center, visiting researchers from Israel and the USA, and post-graduate students under the tutelage of Center members presented their studies at an additional seven seminar sessions.

Selected studies conducted with the support of the Center are listed below:

- **Dr. Ina Blau and Prof. Yoram Eshet:** Digital Academic Dishonesty
- **Dr. Gal Ben-Yehuda and Prof. Yoram Eshet:** Can 'active reading' Improve the Comprehension of Digital Texts?
- **Dr. Nitza Geri, Dr. Ruti Gafni, and Amir Winer:** The U-curve of e-learning: Course Website and Online Video use in Blended and Distance Learning
- **Dr. Vered Silber-Varod and Dr. Nitza Geri:** Evaluating Hebrew Automatic Speech Recognition Engines for Video and Audio Content Search
- **Dr. Yoram Kalman:** Online Chronemics Convey Social Information

## Chais Conference 2014

The 2014 Chais Conference was the ninth in a series of annual research conferences on learning technologies organized by the Center for Innovation in Learning Technologies. The conference provides a forum for prominent researchers and development professionals in the field of innovative learning technologies in Israel, and offers a platform to present their studies and advancements in the field. The conference contributes to shaping Israel's learning technology research community and establishing the Open University as a leader in implementing the latest technologies.

The two-day conference was attended by seven hundred people representing the majority of academic institutions, as well as a variety of organizations and companies. At the conference, 36 articles and 41 posters were presented, and guest lectures by Prof. Thomas C. Reeves of the University of Georgia and Prof. Eszter Hargittai of Northwestern University were featured. Selected articles from the conference are published annually in a special edition of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects*. This year's publications included those listed above.

## The Center for the Study of Relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims

The Center is headed by Prof. Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman and numbers over forty members, most affiliated with the Open University, and some representing other academic institutions. The Center promotes interfaith dialogue between the three monotheistic religions on various subjects and different historical periods. Research also contributes to the Center's public role, enhances religious understanding and interaction and presents research findings to the public. This approach attracts the interest of many scholars, some of whom have joined the Center's research team to participate in initiatives promoting the study of interfaith relationships.

## Research groups sponsored by the Center

- Judeo-Christian Relations in the first Centuries of the Christian Era  
Three sessions were held during the past year:  
**Dr. Rivka Nir**, the Open University: John the Baptist in the Fourth Gospel: Ideal Witness to Jesus, God and Man  
**Dr. Yael Wilfand**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: A New Reading of the Boats depicted in the Madaba Map: Iconography and Theology  
**Prof. Daniel Schwartz**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Judaism and the People of Israel in the Time of Paul of Tarsus
- Drawing Boundaries – Defining Identity in a Multi-Faith and Multicultural Environment  
Field work was conducted, including observations, interviews, visits to archives and monthly meetings to discuss and analyze findings. Five meetings were held with experts in different subjects:  
**Karma Ben Johanan**, Tel Aviv University: Orthodox Jewish Streams and their Attitude to Christianity  
**Uriel Feinerman**, Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi: Methodology of Tour Guiding  
**Dr. Assaf Selzer**, University of Haifa: The Study Tour  
**Dr. Kobi Cohen-Hattab**, Bar-Ilan University: Tourism and Identity  
**Ms. Hana Bendcowsky**, Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations: The Issue of Training Tour Guides in Christianity

## Divan workshops – Presenting and discussing research, and meeting with veteran researchers

- **Dr. Yigal Bin-Nun**, Ecole pratique des hautes études, Sorbonne, Paris: Ideological Streams in Jewish Intelligentsia in Independent Morocco
- **Dr. Ephraim Shoham-Steiner**, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev: Criminal Collaborations between Jews and Christians in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century
- **Dr. Ehud Krinis**, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev: Galut and Ghayba: The Exile of Israel and the Occultation of the Shi'i Imām – Judah Halevi and the Early Imāmi Shi'i Writers and Ibn Babūyā
- **Dr. Pawel Maciejko**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Converts to Judaism in 18<sup>th</sup> Century European Nobility
- **Prof. Haggai Erlich**, Tel Aviv University: No man Steps Twice into the Same River – Egypt, Ethiopia and the Nile Dams
- **Prof. Rami Ginat**, Bar-Ilan University: Egyptian Communism: Jews and their Compatriots in Quest of Revolution

## International conferences

- The 3rd Annual Conference of JCM Center, OUI, Raanana:  
The Family: Cultural Dynamics and Dialogues between Jews, Christians and Muslims

## Selected studies conducted with the support of the Center:

- **Dr. Ofri Ilani**, Humboldt University, Berlin: Pietism and Philo-Semitism in Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- **Ms. Karma Ben Johanan**, Tel Aviv University: Dialogue and Judeo-Christian Debate in America: Reflections on Contemporary Catholic Theology and Orthodox Jewish Thought

## Collaborative Agreements

The Open University does not possess infrastructure for experimental research, therefore collaboration with outside academic institutions is necessary in order to enable OUI faculty members to conduct research. Several years ago, the OUI and Tel Aviv University signed a joint agreement allowing OUI faculty members from various scientific and experimental fields to conduct ongoing research using the infrastructure available at Tel Aviv University. In addition, a contract with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has been extended, which enables Dr. Yair Ben Chaim, of the OUI Dept. of Natural Sciences, to conduct research in the Department of Neurobiology at the Institute of Life Sciences at the Hebrew University. An agreement, due to be signed soon, will allow Dr. Ofer Reany, of the Department of Natural Sciences, to conduct research at the Technion.

## Research Code of Ethics

Some research conducted at the Open University involves human subjects. The Institutional Ethics Committee, composed of senior academic faculty members representing several disciplines, ensures that all research projects undertaken by the OUI observe the code of ethics determined by the State and the criteria imposed by the university itself. The issues addressed by the committee include protection of confidentiality and respect for research subjects (approval of questionnaires, surveys, use of data, etc.) and preventing conflict of interest. The committee also works in conjunction with the OUI's computer unit to define the use and accessibility of institutional databases for research purposes.

In addition to the general OUI Ethics Committee, the education and psychology department also has its own specific ethics committee. In the past year three more secondary ethics committees were established in the management and economics department, the mathematics and computer science department, and the sociology, political science and communications department. As a result of the increased functions of the various ethics committees, the computer unit is upgrading the system for processing online submission, administration, and applications.

## Research Authority Events

### Horizon 2020 EU Research and Innovation Program

Last February, the OUI hosted the Israeli launch of Horizon 2020 as part of the EU's research and innovation program for 2014-2020. The program has a budget of €77m. for the seven-year period to finance R&D activities in industry, the academic arena, research institutes and public and private organizations. Israel is participating in the program with a view to opening the door to Israeli involvement in strategic integration in research frameworks, development and marketing in Europe, and greater industrial participation in global activities.

The launch was organized by ISERD, an inter-ministerial body responsible for Israel's inclusion in ERA. ISERD was established by the Israeli government through the Office of the Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Economy. Other ISERD participants are the Ministry of Science, Technology and Space, the Planning and Budgeting Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance.

The launch was attended by senior members of the European Commission in Brussels, headed by the President of the EU Research Council; representatives of the EU delegation in Israel, headed by the Ambassador; the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Economy; the President of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities; the Director General of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Space; and many other dignitaries. Over six hundred guests included faculty members from several universities, administrative representatives of various government ministries, embassy representatives, captains of industry, and consultant companies. The event garnered extensive television, radio and press coverage.

### Scientists' Night

This event has been held annually since 2007 in Israel and Europe under the auspices of the EU Ministry of Science and Technology. This year's theme was "Sea and Water Sciences." The event was open to the general public and was attended by students, faculty members, and OUI employees and their families. All enjoyed lectures, exhibits of sea products, workshops, scientific water experiments, quizzes, and more. Many children's activities were organized in the university's gardens. All activities were accessible to people with disabilities, with the assistance of Beit Issie Shapiro, a Raanana-based NPO dedicated to changing the lives of people with disabilities.

## Individual Research Grants Awarded by External Funds

In the past year, 27 grants were awarded for external research grants.

### Grants from the Israel Science Foundation

- **Dr. Esther Eisenmann**, Dept. of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies, "Gersonides' Supercommentary on Averroes' Epitome of the Physics: An Annotated Critical Edition with an Introduction"
- **Prof. Jonathan Granot**, Dept. of Natural Sciences (with Prof. Yuri Yovarsky, Ben Gurion University of the Negev) "Magnetized Relativistic Outflows in Astrophysical Sources"
- **Prof. Nurit Gertz**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts, "Times, Spaces and Ethics: The Kibbutz in Cinematic and Literary Works"
- **Dr. Ronit Weisman**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, "Regulation of the TORC2-Gad8 Pathway by Glucose, Salt Stress and Additional Environmental Signals"
- **Dr. Varda Wasserman**, Dept. of Management and Economics (with Dalit Borochowitz, Yezreel Valley College), "Intersectionality, Narratives of Success and Patterns of Integration: The Case of Ethiopian Women Immigrants in the Israeli Work Force"
- **Dr. Eran Chajut**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, "General Changes in Attitudes: To Every Approach and Avoid Action There is Always a Reaction"
- **Prof. Yoav Yair**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, "Ground-Based and Airborne Measurements of Atmospheric Electrical Parameters in Fair Weather, and their Relation to Solar Activity"
- **Prof. David Lorenz**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, "Language-Oriented Modularity for Aspect-Oriented Programming"
- **Dr. Oren Soffer**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, "The Spiral of Silence in the Talkback Era: Re-evaluation of Theory in the Context of Israeli Online Discourse"
- **Dr. Gitit Kave**, Dept. Of Education and Psychology, (with Dr. Yuval Palgi, University of Haifa, Dr. Amit Shrira, Bar-Ilan University, and Prof. Dov Shmotkin, Tel Aviv University), "Subjective age and subjective closeness to death: Can self-evaluation predict functional decline, what moderates this prediction, and what factors affect the evaluation?"
- **Prof. Sonia Roccas**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, (with Prof. Lila Sagiv, The Hebrew University), "The Mechanisms that Link Values to Behavior: The Role of Attention and Interpretation"
- **Dr. Iris Shagrir**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, "The Urban Development of Frankish Jerusalem"
- **Prof. Shlomo Shoval**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, (with Dr. Ayelet Gilboa, University of Haifa), "Early Iron Age Cypro-Phoenician Interactions: A Study of the Tel Dor Cypro-Geometric Ceramic Imports"

### Grants from other external funds

- **Prof. Aviad Bar-Haim**, Dept. of Management and Economics, and **Dr. Orr Karassin**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, received a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for research on "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Israeli Industrial Sector – Investigating Multivariate Effects."
- **Dr. Tal Hassner, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science**, (with Prof. Lior Wolf, Tel Aviv University), received a grant from the Ministry of Defense for research on "Utilizing Big Data in Face Recognition through Deep Learning."
- **Dr. Varda Wasserman**, Dept. of Management and Economics, (with Dr. Dalit Borochowitz, Yezreel Valley College), received a grant from The Institute for Immigration and Social Integration for research on "Narratives of Success: The case of Ethiopian Women Immigrants."
- **Dr. Inbal Tuvi-Arad**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, received a grant from the European Union for research on "Temperature and Substitution Effects on the Mechanism of Sigmatropic Shift Reactions."
- **Prof. Mustafa Khabha**, Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, received a grant from the Academy of the Arabic Language for research on "The Palestinian names of places and their connection with space."

- **Prof. Miriam Sourojon**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, received a research grant from AFM – Association Francaise Contre les Myopathies, for research on "T-cell Involvement and Development of New Immunotherapies for MuSK Myasthenia Gravis in a Mouse Model."
- **Prof. Yoram Eshet and Dr. Ina Blau**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, received a research grant from the Ministry of Education for research on "Cheating through digital technologies from the perspective of Israeli students, teachers and parents – patterns and coping strategies."
- **Dr. Esther Klein-Wohl**, and **Dr. Ingrid Barth**, Dept. of English, received a grant from the European Union's TEMPUS Program for research on "English as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Technology and Research."
- **Dr. Ofer Reany**, Dept. of Natural Sciences (with Dr. Doron Pappo, Ben-Gurion University, and Prof. Ehud Keinan, the Technion) received a grant from the Ministry of Science for their research on "Multifarenes: New Functional Cavities for Selective Sensing and Catalysis."
- **Dr. Noam Shental**, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, (with Prof. Zvi Bentwich and Dr. Shiri Meshner from the Dead-Sea and Arava Science Center) for research on "Skin Microbiome and HLA as Basis for Personalized Medicine in Psoriasis and Atopic Dermatitis."

Two of the studies awarded grants from external funds are briefly described below:

#### **Dr. Iris Shagrir: The Urban Development of Frankish Jerusalem**

The project aims at reconstructing and analyzing chronologically and spatially the development of medieval Jerusalem, 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The project is based on an analysis of the entire corpus of legal, historical, descriptive and religious documents pertaining to sites and events in Jerusalem of the crusader period. The plan is to juxtapose textual and archaeological data, derived from excavations conducted over recent decades.

To date, no integrative study of medieval Jerusalem exists. The combination of documentary and archaeological data is expected to enable a comprehensive spatial-temporal reconstruction and analysis of the plan, topography, property-holding and urban development of Jerusalem over this period. The study will assimilate up-to-date insights from the expanding interdisciplinary field of Digital Humanities, in order to create an integrative record of spatially positioned archaeological and topographical data captured on a Geographical Information System (GIS), with carefully categorized text-based historical analysis. The project promises to yield results that will greatly augment our understanding of the history of the Holy City, and generate new questions and further research.

#### **Dr. Ofer Reany: Multifarenes: New Functional Cavities for Selective Sensing and Catalysis**

This research is based on development of a new type of cavities (container shaped molecules), which we named multifarenes (comes from multifarious; molecules that have many facets). Conceptually, the multifarenes are different in many respects from known host systems. First, while the known cavities are cyclic oligomers of a single subunit, the multifarenes are made of alternating building blocks. Second, the previously studied cavities are usually constructed in one step followed by separation protocols whereas the multifarenes are conveniently assembled in a modular way by several synthetic approaches that are general and scalable. Third, the multifarenes can be easily modified for specific tasks and strong binding to specific guests by fine-tuning of the cavity size and functional groups. Fourth, the ability to attach several multifarenes to a central hub can create polyvalent binders with very high binding constants.

In this study we shall use multifarenes as ligands for organometallic catalysis and for monitoring environmental PAHs (polyaromatic hydrocarbons) leading to interesting applications in the chemical and petrochemical industries.

#### **Planning and Budgeting Committee grants for outstanding postdoctoral students**

- **Dr. Ronit Weisman**, Dept. of Natural Sciences, was granted a scholarship for a third year of study for a student from India.

- **Dr. Gal Ben-Yehudah**, Dept. of Education and Psychology, was granted a scholarship for a student from India.
- **Dr. Ofer Reany**, Dept. of Natural and Life Sciences, was granted a scholarship for a third year of study for a student from India, and a scholarship for an additional student.

## Research Grants and Scholarships from the Internal Fund

The Open University places funds at the disposal of researchers to leverage their research projects so they can be submitted to external funds. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 94 applications were submitted to the RA for funding from the internal fund, of which the Steering Committee approved 88 (93.6%).

## Honors and Awards

- **Prof. Benyamin Neuberger**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was awarded the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Israel Political Science Association.
- **Prof. Yagil Levy**, Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication, was appointed Chairperson of the European Research Group on Military and Society (ERGOMAS).

## The Open University of Israel Press

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year, the OUI launched the Open University of Israel Press, which publishes original research and textbooks in all disciplines. The new press operates separately from the long-established publishing house, which produces OUI course books and other study materials and has long enjoyed an excellent reputation.

The new OUI press is headed by Prof. Aviva Halamish, alongside OUI professors Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, Amir Horowitz, Yoav Yair and Motti Regev, and Prof. Tamar El Or of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Prof. Mahmoud Ganaïm of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Katrin Kogman-Appel of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli of the University of Haifa. Manuscripts submitted to the press undergo a thorough academic review and those approved for publication will appear both in print and digitally. To date, approximately one hundred manuscripts have been submitted for approval and thirty are in various stages of publication.

Under an agreement with the Henrietta Szold Institute in Jerusalem, the journal *Trends* will be jointly published and edited by the Open University's Prof. Yagil Levy, together with Prof. Yoram Bilu of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (on behalf of the Szold Institute). Changes pertaining to publication of the journal *Zmanim* have been introduced in cooperation with Tel Aviv University and the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History.

In the summer of 2013-2014 the OUI announced the Goldberg Family Foundation Award for outstanding manuscripts. NIS 50,000 will be awarded for a manuscript by a previously published author, and an award of NIS 25,000 will be given to an author of a first manuscript. The publication costs of the winning manuscripts will be fully covered by the Open University.



# In Memoriam: Prof. Miriam (Miri) Souroujon



Prof. Miriam Souroujon completed her PhD at the Weizmann Institute, followed by a post-doctoral fellowship at Tufts University in Boston, MA. She joined the Open University in 1987 as a senior lecturer in the Department of Natural Sciences and over the years was repeatedly promoted, attaining an associate professorship in 1993 and becoming a full professor in 2001.

Throughout her 27 years at the OUI, Miri served in key administrative and academic positions: Dean of Academic Studies; Executive Committee member; OUI Council member; Chairperson of the Recruitment of Outstanding Researchers Committee; Appointments and Promotion Committee member; Dean of Research, and more.

In addition to her many roles at the University, Miri was actively engaged in two separate fields of research:

At the Weizmann Institute, in a productive and long-lasting collaboration with Prof. Sara Fuchs, she studied myasthenia gravis, an auto-immune disease causing muscle weakness. In auto-immune diseases, immune system cells lose their immuno-tolerance and attack the body's own cells and tissues. Miri Souroujon's research into myasthenia gravis focused primarily on developing new management and treatment methods, since most existing treatments have severe side effects.

In another area of research, Miri collaborated with Prof. Drorit Neumann of Tel Aviv University. One of their joint subjects was the study of amyloid protein, which is linked to Alzheimer's disease. In one article published by Souroujon and Neumann early in their research, they examined the effects of the over-expression of amyloid precursor protein, which often occurs in Alzheimer's. An additional research subject for Professors Souroujon and Neumann was the biology of the receptor erythropoietin, a hormone manufactured in the kidney. Erythropoietin has important biological functions and an artificial version of the hormone has been applied in the treatment of various forms of anemia.

Prof. Souroujon was supported in her research by long-term funding from prestigious sources, such as the European Union, research foundations dedicated to specific diseases (such as myasthenia gravis), the Ministry of Health – Research Fund of the Office of the Chief Scientist, and others. Her extensive research projects, which also fostered many post-graduate students, generated dozens of articles and book chapters, as well as several patents.

At the OUI, Miri Souroujon headed many courses in life sciences, including immunology, virology, and genetics. In her own department and throughout the university, Miri was a prominent figure who was held in high regard.

Looking beyond her many impressive professional achievements, however, it was Miri's exceptional personality that stood out. Her relationships with everyone around her were characterized by mutual respect and meaningful connections that managed to combine shared fields of fruitful scientific interest with genuine friendship. At the same time, she always had the courage of her convictions and stood by her opinions. She knew how to stand her ground, which was always based on a firm foundation, and offered constructive solutions.

Miri had an inquiring and meticulous scientific mind, coupled with an original and creative view of her subject. She paid close attention to the smallest details, while at the same time exhibiting a broad understanding of conditions and processes. Her innate dignity left its mark on all her personal relationships.

The Open University community was greatly privileged to count Miri Souroujon among our number. We mourn her passing and she will be greatly missed.