

Graduates

In 2013-2014, the Open University conferred bachelor's degrees on 3,260 students, of whom 15 completed a disciplinary study program following a degree. Master's degrees were awarded to 669 students. Of the students who completed certificate studies, 111 were awarded teaching diplomas (compared to 181 in 2013). Seventeen percent of the graduates did not have a high school matriculation certificate when they began studying.

Michael Michelshvili, representing BA graduates at the Spring 2014 graduation ceremony:



...As a boy, I always had an inquiring mind, always sought to know more; to learn. I participated in enrichment programs from a very early age. Yet, nothing prepared me for the academic experience of attending university. My first course, The World of Chemistry, showed me that a whole new world was just waiting for me. Studying while still in high school offered me many opportunities that I would not have had without a degree. I had the privilege of representing the State of Israel three times in succession at the International Chemistry Olympiad, and twice I won a bronze medal. I had a glimpse into the world of research in the Weizmann Institute's Tutor Colleagues program, which allows selected young people to take part in projects directed by one of the institute's academic researchers. One year later, I was lucky enough to return as an Outstanding Chemistry Student in the Young Weizmann Researchers project.

Beyond the purely academic aspects, my university studies also introduced me to the *Perach* Tutoring and Mentoring Project. Being part of *Perach* afforded me great satisfaction and helped me understand that being a student carries with it an obligation to my immediate environment.

Today I am serving in the IDF as an officer in an engineering position in the Air Force. I am in an academic program designed to enable people who have earned a BA while still in high school to complete their military service in a position connected to their field of study. My personal story is both representative and exceptional.

Open University students are unusual creatures because we study at an institution which accepts anyone aspiring to higher education, and offers equal educational opportunities for all. Students are required to prove their worth during the course of their studies, rather than as a precondition. All of my friends sitting here now in the audience have, without doubt, proven themselves.

However, I must add, that completing degree studies is another matter altogether; it takes much more than a technical ability to solve equations or study chapters from textbooks. Open University study demands self-discipline and perseverance. There is no framework dictating the course of our studies; we must be masters of our own fate. Nothing happens through inertia. If you don't do it yourself, it simply won't happen. I believe that I speak for all of us when I say that the most important thing we learned here was *how* to study...

Permit me to end with a reference to my own field of chemistry. It is a science which many people perceive as simply dealing with materials: take ingredient A and ingredient B, mix together and hey presto – a product! And that is true. But what is often forgotten is that the essence of chemistry – and what I mostly focused on in my studies – is the process. Our studies at the Open University give us most pride, not in the actual diploma hanging in the office (or consigned to the attic!), but in the long and enriching journey that began when we first set foot in a study center or clicked on an online course.

My friends, we must not think that today, because we are graduating, the journey is over, and we can now "rest on our laurels." The diploma is not the product; it is only the first of many more stages in a much bigger process.

I congratulate all graduates and wish you all great success in the future.

Michal Ben David, representing MA graduates at the Spring 2014 graduation ceremony:



Standing before you this evening, I am very excited at the honor and would like to tell you about my history at the Open University... I began studying in 2004, as a way to fill some free time during my regular army service... With help from my family, I enrolled in two courses and soon realized that the OUI study format was the one most suited to me and my lifestyle. I enrolled in the industrial engineering and management track, which had just been opened, and found myself on an intensive five-year journey towards a much-desired degree. I combined this with an army career in command positions.

It was very appealing to me to be able to combine studies with a complex working life. The flexible framework allowed me to be in control of the pace and format of my studies. The convenience of being able to pick up my studies

at any hour of the day or night and in any location was a major contributor to my success. Wherever I went, my studies went with me. Even in the guard booth at a village in the Jordan Valley, I made good use of the quiet to review for a mathematics exam. With every course, I tried to integrate some of what I learned into my army service, which was my training ground almost up to the end of my studies. After completing my degree *magna cum laude*, I quickly enrolled for an MBA.

The Open University was the most natural choice for me. During my studies I gave birth to my two children, and the job of mother was added to my other career as an engineer. The second time around, studying was more complicated. My study hours were less regular and I was never able to study alone. At first my baby daughter was in my arms, and was soon followed by her brother, who was already following *Ofek* tutorials in the womb. Flexibility and advanced technology made it possible for me to achieve considerable success, as well as great enjoyment and satisfaction in my studies. As a result, I was able to upgrade and expand my abilities, both personally and professionally.

The most important skills I acquired at the OUI are actually not related to academics. I learned self-discipline, personal responsibility for the study process, and effective time management. I also developed an understanding that I am in control and can choose my own path, and by the same token I am equally responsible for the outcome. All these, and more, contributed to making me the person I am today.

I studied for the MBA together with my sister, Oshrit Elimelech, and today we come forward together to receive our diplomas. This is a source of great pride for my parents who, as far back as I can remember, always told us: "If you want to succeed in life, study!" Even during childhood we were taught to aspire to academic studies, despite the fact that neither of my parents ever had that privilege. But today they have four children with six degrees between them – and who knows what else is to come? Eventually, my husband also joined the ranks and is currently working towards a BA in accounting, also courtesy of the Open University.

Halfway through my graduate studies I was offered the chance to teach the Industrial Engineering and Management course, which was very exciting for me. I was greatly motivated by an ability to identify with the students, and by my admiration of the academic staff. I am both proud and happy to be a part of the OUI faculty.

...I would like to congratulate all of you with a well-deserved pat on the back. You made a wise decision in choosing to study and it has paid off. From this point on, you can make your dreams come true. Finally, I owe a huge "thank you" to my very supportive family: to my husband and my children, and most of all, to my parents, Yaffa and Yoav Rokach, who steered me towards success.

I thank you all.