# Teaching

Distance learning, which makes it possible for students to study in any location and at any time, is a unique characteristic of the Open University. The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, headed by Prof. Bat-Zion Eraqi-Klorman, deals with university-wide and interdepartmental issues related to the OUI. Teaching at the OUI is continuously progressing and growing in sophistication, drawing on a wide range of technologies. Individually-adapted technological "tool boxes" allow solutions suited to the specific character of each course.

During the past year, 5,923 study groups were opened for 700 courses. Study groups met at 51 study centers around the country.

## New Study Programs

- Judaic Studies towards a dual-disciplinary BA
- Specialization tracks for undergraduate degrees in Industrial Engineering and Management:
  - Operations and Production
  - Information Systems

## New Courses

### Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies

The Ottoman Empire: History and Selected Topics
Gender and Sexuality in Rabbinic Culture
Women in Jewish Society in Pre-State Israel, 1882-1948
The Roots of European Fascism: Changing Approaches
Jews in an Era of Transition (revision)

### Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts

The Languages of Art: Aesthetic and Cultural Aspects
Bialik's Long Poems
Introduction to Art in Islamic Countries
Introduction to Film Theory
Basic Editing Workshop
Basic Directing Workshop
Literature and Ethics - Readings in Twentieth Century
   Hebrew Prose

### Dept. of Education and Psychology

Organizational Diagnosis: Theory and Practice (MA)
Psychological Aspects of Communication in Cyberspace (MA)
Selected Issues in Social Psychology III (MA)
Selected Issues in Social Psychology IV (MA)
Thesis Seminar II (MA)
Promoting Social Change From a
   Psychological Perspective (MA)
Group Processes (MA)

### Dept. of Management and Economics

Technology and Innovation Management
Leadership in Organizations (revision, MA)
Management of Information Systems and E-Business (revision, MA)
Advertising: Theory and Practice (revision, MA)

### Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication

Middle Eastern Societies from a Comparative Perspective – Egypt, Israel,
   Syria and Lebanon
Christian Democracy: Parties, Ideologues, Constituency and Religion in
   Europe (MA)
Democracy and National Security (revision, MA)

### Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science

Supplements in Integral Calculus
Infinitesimal Calculus I
Infinitesimal Calculus II
Seminar: Artificial Intelligence
Seminar: Topics in Computer Science Education

### Dept. of Natural and Life Sciences

Advanced Organic Chemistry
Physics Lab C
The World of Electricity and Electronics I
The World of Electricity and Electronics II
Solid State Physics
Introduction to Life Sciences (revision)
General Biology I: Cells, Genetics, Evolution and Diversity (revision)

## Transfer Tracks

Transfer tracks to other universities make it possible for students to benefit from the OUI's flexible undergraduate admissions policy, which has no psychometric entrance exam or high school matriculation requirement. Through the transfer tracks program, students who successfully complete a cluster of OUI courses have the option of transferring to specific programs in other universities.

The following transfer opportunities were added this year:
- Tel Aviv University – School of Chemistry
- University of Haifa – Mathematics Department
- Bar-Ilan University – Physics Department
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Life Sciences Department

## New in the Library

The number of students visiting the library increased by 31% compared to the previous year, In addition to extended hours of operation this year and increased physical accessibility, the library focused on projects promoting its online accessibility:

- The construction of the bibliography instruction website has been completed. The site includes 13 instructional film clips designed to familiarize students with the library and its information search tools and to prepare students for the bibliography exam, which is a prerequisite for registration for advanced courses.
- All books included in the databases have been catalogued to improve accessibility to the library's electronic collection.
- In cooperation with the Computer Authority, the process of producing student reader cards for other university libraries and for processing fines for late returns has been computerized, using the online *Sheilta* system.
- The conversion of the library's video collection to digital format has begun.
- The library continues to offer additional support services for distance learning, including sending books via the postal service, emailing scanned articles, and providing research support by telephone or Internet using the National Consultation Center and other methods.

## English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

In accordance with CHE directives regarding teaching English in institutions of higher education, changes were made in the structure and schedule of English language studies at the OUI, necessitating the revision of several courses. Four online courses are currently being developed for the use of students at colleges throughout Israel.

### Project ECOSTAR Tempus

The project, funded by the European Union, aims to develop a new EFL curriculum with the participation of experts in EFL from 15 institutions of higher education in Israel and abroad. The curriculum will be adapted to the Common European Framework for Teaching Languages as well as to the needs of students in Israel. OUI faculty members from the Department for Teaching English are participating together with representatives of the Research Authority, who oversee the OUI's time frame commitments vis-a-vis the European Union. The commitment includes development of learning resources to support the new curriculum for teachers in Israel.

## Departmental Academic Counseling

A committee that examined the academic counseling offered by academic departments recommended improving the counseling for undergraduate students. As in general academic counseling, meetings are scheduled by departmental counselors. A meeting is held with prospective or current students, and is summarized in Oracle. The Department of Counseling and Guidance is responsible for scheduling. A recently conducted evaluation of the pilot shows a high level of satisfaction with the improvement in counseling, both among counselors and students. For the period examined, in the second semester of programming, close to 20,800 counseling sessions were held at the OUI for approximately 15,300 current and prospective students. Approximately 18,300 sessions (88%) dealt with general counseling issues, and approximately 2,500 (12%) were departmental counseling.

## Evaluation

In 2014-2015, as in previous years, a number of evaluations were conducted in order to provide information and feedback on processes, trends, requirements, and level

of satisfaction among various stakeholders at the OUI. In addition to systemic reports, the staff of the Department of Evaluation regularly provides academic departments with evaluation reports and data on study programs, new courses and courses undergoing revision, guidance, etc. This year, the department conducted the following evaluations:

- Routine questionnaires, including course evaluation surveys, replacing the teaching survey of the previous year. It is now possible to receive feedback on all course components, including tutoring, assignments, study strategies, and technology.

- Quality evaluation for the CHE in the fields of management and economics.

The Department of Evaluation supervised and evaluated several projects, including the Assignment Submission Pilot Program, Zoom, MOODLE 2, the Third Hour project, and the Local Government project.

## Promoting Excellence in Teaching

The Training Department had its name changed this year, and is now called The Department for Excellence in Teaching. The department focused on several projects and workshops this year:

- **Workshops for veteran tutors:** New workshops this year focused on issues related to improving the quality of tutoring, such as employing storytelling, creativity and innovation, and development of personal skills for self-management and increased personal effectiveness. Ongoing workshops focused on promoting effective tutoring using Ofek and other technologies, managing discussions, and effective use of voice. Individual consultations with an expert on proper voice usage were also offered.

- **Playback Theater Ensemble for Tutors:** The project is designed to promote good listening skills and conflict resolution within a group. Through theater, tutors develop more effective responses to different work scenarios, events, processes and behavior patterns in the classroom. The lively interactive setting helps tutors improve their body language, listening skills, and empathy to individuals and the group, as well as cultivating a sense of partnership within the OUI tutor community. This year, for the first time, the ensemble

performed for colleagues at an OUI event which was part of the "giving back to the community" initiative. In addition, members of the group, together with other tutors, studied coping strategies in a unique workshop that combined peer teaching with theater playback.

- **Training film:** The first training film for tutors was produced this year. It combines video and animation, and deals with setting boundaries in the student–tutor relationship. Production of additional short training films is planned for next year.

- **Workshops for writing seminar papers:** Workshops for writing seminar papers continued this year, with the addition of five courses (two in the Department of Psychology and three in the Department of Management and Economics) offering sessions for seminar paper writing.

- **Training for senior faculty members:** Training has been provided for senior faculty members on issues such as writing and checking exams and an orientation tour of an exam day. In addition, personal consultation and coaching sessions are available for issues related to group management.

## Accessibility of Higher Education for Arabic Speaking Students

### Third Hour Project

Students participating in tutorial sessions at designated Arabic language study centers are allowed an extra (third) hour of study. In the first semester of 2014, the Dean of Academic Studies, in collaboration with the Department for Excellence in Teaching, focused on courses in the Department of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies. The goal is for Arabic speakers to acquire learning skills that will contribute to the success of their studies. To that end, an hour of the tutorial session is dedicated to reinforcement of learning skills tailored to each specific course. Evaluations conducted this year reflected the high level of satisfaction among coordinators, tutors, and students, and indicated an improvement in students' learning skills. Preparations were made this year for incorporating the Department of Language, Literature, and the Arts, and the Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication in the Third Hour project.

### Hebrew Mechina/Preparatory Program

This year, the Dean of Students launched a preparatory program of Hebrew courses and learning skills for eight Arabic-speaking study groups, focusing on Hebrew language and learning skills for reading and academic text comprehension, academic writing, and general knowledge.

## Teaching Technologies

### Course websites in the Opal learning environment

A pilot was conducted for several courses which included using a new version of the Opal 2 learning environment, based on the MOODLE system and developed at the OUI. The video environment in particular was improved, allowing students to choose between visual and audio formats, and other video player upgrades were made as well, making adjustments and options accessible from many types of devices and browsers. The new environment will be accessible and adjusted for users with disabilities. The new version was presented at an international conference in Dublin, and was highly commended by the global MOODLE community.

### Tutorial sessions and distance learning

The use of the new ZOOM system was extended for additional courses. The system enables student interaction with the tutor and peers during live tutorials via video and voice. Broadcasting is possible from the video studios in Raanana, from tutors' PCs, and from classrooms. The system is meant to replace video-conference classrooms.

### Departmental websites

Academic department websites are now displayed via SharePoint 2010. The new websites were constructed using a uniform and innovative design that improves the surfing experience and conforms to accessibility guidelines with total adaptability features for display on different mobile devices. A new lobby page for academic studies has also been launched which provides links to other useful university information, departments, and services.

### Upgrading interactive learning software

Efforts to upgrade learning software for older courses continues with the conversion of the courseware for the Natural and Life Sciences course, Sexual Reproduction in Flowering Plants. The courseware has now become interactive and responsive, with its contents adaptable to any screen size, thereby also enabling study from mobile devices. The updated courseware meets the strict accessibility requirements which have recently gone into effect.

### New players for audio books and video lectures

The video player which enables viewing video-recorded lectures was upgraded this year and students may now choose among five speeds for running video clips. For example, students can quickly skim a file or fast-forward to a particular point. Pace of speech can also be accelerated or slowed. A listening-only feature was added to the new player, and students may choose an audio version of video lectures. The new player also better supports many kinds of mobile devices and telephone. An audio player was also upgraded this year for audio books. The new player is adapted for use with mobile devices, and has many useful features.

## New Study Centers and Teaching Institutions

The Institutions Forum received 22 inquiries this year from various entities seeking to offer OUI degree programs.

OUI studies are available at the following locations:

- **Teaching institutions:** Beit Eckstein, Policity, Sapir College (teaching certificate studies)
- **Study centers at local authorities:** Yanukh-G'at, Hof Hefer, Abu Ghosh
- **Local Government Program:** Afaak College Community Development - Shfaram