The Open University: Largest University in Israel

Profile of Dynamic Growth

*The Open University is today the largest University in Israel, with a student enrollment of over 37,000 students. What is the significance of the continuous increase in the number of students enrolled in the university and of these impressive numbers in the overall socio-economic picture of the country?*

Ever since the establishment of the Open University of Israel 26 years ago, it has been steadily growing. In the past decade, student enrollment has increased by 100 percent, to more than 37,000 students, compared to about 18,000 students in 1993. Every sixth student in Israel chooses to study at the Open University of Israel. Why are more and more students choosing the Open University?

**Combining Working and Studying: The Financial Perspective**

Research on students of the Open University reveals that 90% of the students indicate that their need and desire to combine work and studies is the primary reason for their choice of the Open University. The unique and extremely flexible study method which enables them to continue working while studying, without having to move to a university location or disrupt their other obligations, appeals to more and more young students.

The University operates about 100 study centers throughout the country and students can participate in sessions with assisting instructional staff either weekly or once every three weeks, in accordance with the student’s individual preference. Attendance is not compulsory.

Students pay tuition for each course they choose to study, and not for a full-time, full-year program. In this way, their tuition is spread out in payments, an easier responsibility to assume. Working while studying is not simply a necessity. It also offers advantages. Accumulating professional experience gives Open University students and graduates a relative advantage over their counterparts in other universities who only study without concurrently working.

Says Open University graduate Haim Calfon, CEO of Teder Inc., “The world is more competitive and achievement-oriented. The younger you start, the better your chances to succeed. You have to accumulate more experience at a younger age, and that’s what distance education enables you to do.”

**Setting Your Own Pace**

The Open University of Israel method of studies is first and foremost flexible,
allowing students to study any place, any time. The Open University is more flexible in the time frame of studies, taking into account the student’s busy schedule, ordinarily carrying other obligations, such as work, compulsory military service or even high school studies, for gifted young people. The pace of studies is determined by the student’s individual and professional needs and may change from semester to semester in accordance with circumstances.

The curriculum is also relatively flexible. Over 30 programs of study and combinations of majors are available to choose from in undergraduate and graduate studies. And new degree programs have been added this year: an M.B.A. (Master’s degree in Business Administration), a B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and Management and a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting.

Alone but Together
The concept of a lonely student studying all by himself at home is passé. In this world of technology, obstacles of distance and time are transcended and students interact via Internet. Almost all of the University’s courses are computer-mediated. Interactive classes, utilizing the best possible instructors broadcasting from a central studio, bring first rate instruction all over the country.

Everyone Is a Student
In Israel, as in the international arena, life-long learning has become a widespread phenomenon. Students begin studying at an early age and continue to update throughout their lifetime. Students of the Open University range in age between 13 and 86, the average approximately 28.

Achievement-Oriented Studies
The Open University combines a policy of open admissions with uncompromising, high standards and exacting requirements in studies. The Open University focuses on students’ achievements in their demanding Open University studies rather than on their past experiences.

Open admissions combined with flexibility and accessibility opens study options to students throughout Israel and all over the world, among them: gifted high school students who wish to broaden their learning to include academic studies, soldiers on active duty who would like to utilize their spare time; the work force (managers, teachers, employees in the public sector and in the private sector); homebound parents of small children; homebound individuals, ill or physically challenged; Israelis abroad; yeshiva students; ultra-orthodox women and Arab women.

Higher education today is no longer in the realm of the select elite. It is accessible to tens of thousands of capable students, who in the past were left outside of the University system due to time, place and other technical constraints, but, today, contribute to raising the level of education of the work force and of the overall population.