

Teaching

The Open University's unique characteristics are reflected in various aspects of teaching. The University offers courses clustered into various programs of study, some of them inter-disciplinary. Unique teaching/learning modes are devised to suit academic courses studied via distance learning rather than on a central campus. Many courses have more than one tutor and the University invests considerable efforts to maintain uniformity in teaching, assessment and grading, and trains its course coordinators and tutors. Among the students studying at the Open University are populations that require unique teaching solutions.

Courses taught for the first time this year:

Accounting Principles for Students of Accounting
Analysis & Design of Information Systems [MBA]
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Beethoven: Romantic Rebel
The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages: Ideology and Politics
Choice in Education: Schools and Alternative Processes [MA]
Computer Applications for the Sciences
Constraint Processing Techniques and Applications [MSc]
Database Systems Implementation
Econometrics – Managerial Applications [MBA]
Field Laboratory: The Social Life of the Arabian Babbler
Giftedness and Special Talents [expanded version]
Holocaust Survivors, Outsiders and Others in Israeli Cinema and Literature
Intermediate Financial Accounting I
Introduction to Industrial Engineering
Introduction to Political Science
Laboratory: Animal Physiology
Laboratory: Organic Chemistry
Managerial Accounting for Students of Accounting
Nuclear Physics
Operations and Production Management I [MBA]
Operations Management I
Organizational Culture
The Polis: Government, Succession and Revolution [MA]
Research Project in Chemistry / Geology / Life Sciences / Physics
Seminar: Special Topic in Chemistry
Seminar: Special Topic in Geology
Seminar: Special Topic in Life Sciences
Sociology of Education
Strategic Management
Symbiosis (Field Trip)
Workshop: Database Systems



Programs of study offered for the first time this year

B.A. in Social Sciences – Emphasis on Education: Learning Disabilities

B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Communication

B.A. in Economics and Mathematics

B.A. in Mathematics and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)

Training the teaching staff

This year we placed special emphasis on improving teaching and supervision of teaching. Among the measures taken:

- It was decided that assignment booklets created by new course coordinators would be approved by a senior faculty member prior to publication.
- As of the summer semester of 2004, a new assignment sampling procedure was instituted which enhances monitoring and supervision of the sampling, makes the process more efficient, and cuts costs.
- We developed a training program for new course coordinators and a program in developing leadership skills for veteran course coordinators.
- We expanded the use of assessment centers in the various academic departments as a professional means of recruiting high quality tutors. A departmental assessment center enables the department to build up a database of tutors, to avoid duplication and to save time in recruiting tutors. These centers were first instituted in the Computer Science department, and the course coordinators who used them – either for a course, or for the department – were very pleased with the recruitment process and with the tutors who were recruited.
- Departmental meetings were held for Mathematics and for Education and Psychology faculty. The aim of the meetings was to provide enrichment for tutors, expand their knowledge in the field, enhance the relationships and communication between tutors and the Open University, and reinforce the tutors' commitment to the institution. The department of Education and Psychology conducted meetings and workshops with leading academics and practitioners. These emphasized acquaintance with different approaches and their value lay in the interaction and the experience itself. The focus in the Mathematics department was on work in mixed groups of faculty and tutors.
- A new and updated edition of the guide for new tutors was published.
- Training sessions and workshops were added for veteran tutors that focused on pedagogy and on management skills not related to their area of expertise (for example, the authority of the tutor; mechanisms of power and influence).
- We expanded the topics included in the new tutor training program. In addition, training sessions and workshops were held for tutors in specific courses.
- Websites were created for new and veteran tutors. The purpose of the sites was to ease new tutors' entry into the Open University and acquaint them with our unique teaching approach. The sites provide information about training sessions for tutors in various fields and enable them to register for the sessions.





Studying physics

- It was decided to increase tutors' use of learning technologies and to this end a computerized project for tutors was implemented. About 200 tutors in psychology courses participated, and several models of technology were evaluated.

Academic Advisors

This year we initiated an information-management project for academic advisors. The academic counseling Intranet site was upgraded and made into a platform for work and professional development for advisors.

Personal Counselors

Workshops were developed and conducted specifically for the benefit of personal counselors, focusing on skills required for helping students with special needs. The training emphasized defining expectations and developing the relationship between the counselor and the student.

Computerization

For the third year in a row, we conducted computerized tutoring in selected courses in order to utilize the power of technological tools to increase tutoring flexibility and accessibility. Such tutorials were conducted in courses and groups with small numbers of students or in which the students are dispersed throughout the country. Live sessions were broadcast (via InterWise or *Ofek*) and recorded sessions were integrated into these courses. Other elements were added to the sites, including a discussion forum for students in these courses. The course site was thus used for learning support and ongoing communication between the course team and the students and among the students themselves.

Academic-Level English Proficiency

We re-examined the assignments and examinations in all eight A-level English Reading Comprehension courses and began rewriting and adapting them to the required difficulty level and to students' needs.

When the number of students does not enable us to open groups for students registered for the same course, we open groups which include students taking A-level courses in different academic fields. This year we expanded the process of adapting materials for these groups, and developed a methodology for teaching and for the informed use of the different study materials.

In addition to regular and intensive course formats, we offer an online alternative. Lessons on CD-ROMs were produced for the online courses as alternatives to face-to-face sessions. Following positive feedback from students, it was decided to provide the CD-ROMs to all students – even those studying in regular and intensive courses.

Archive of Course Guides

A computerized archive of course guides was created that can be viewed through the course websites. The course guide is the document that organizes studies in each course. It is a compendium of different types of information, some generic and common to all courses (instructions for submitting tutor assignments and computer assignments, information on computer-mediated communication, etc.) and some course-specific (schedule, assignments, study guidelines, bibliography, etc.). Posting this material on the course websites increases students' access to this information.

Unique Student Populations

"Soft Landing" for new students

The aim of the "Soft Landing" program for new students is to ease students' adjustment to academic studies at the Open University and to reduce drop-outs without negatively affecting the high level of studies required by the University. The program focuses on courses with large numbers of new students and includes activities to improve teaching and learning: training of teaching staff in these courses; general learning skills workshops for students, and a specific learning skills workshop for students of Economics; a focus on developing learning skills during tutorials; individual training for students whose needs are not met by these workshops; and providing office hours when students can meet with tutors in some of the introductory

courses. A unique three-session workshop was designed this year to develop students' learning skills in the course **Introduction to Psychology**, which was offered in five study centers. In addition, extra office hours were provided for the course **Introduction to Microeconomics**.

The "Academic Nazareth" Project

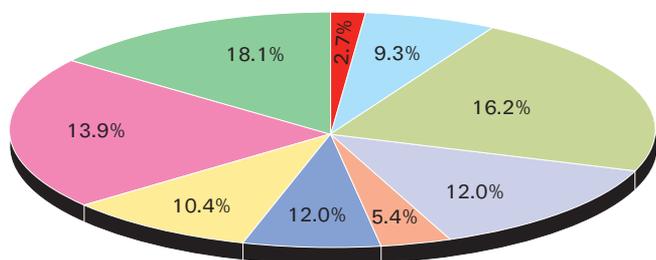
The M.K. Humanitarian Association took upon itself to support and finance a group of students from the periphery in their studies towards a Bachelor's degree at the Open University. Students from Upper Nazareth and Migdal Haemek were selected for the project. A unique framework was designed for these students during their first year of studies (2002-2003): preparatory courses in the social sciences combined with learning skills development, entry-level English proficiency, a preparatory workshop in mathematics for the social sciences and a course on distance learning and technology skills. This year the students began their academic studies and, when necessary, were given tutorials for reinforcement in their courses.

High School Students

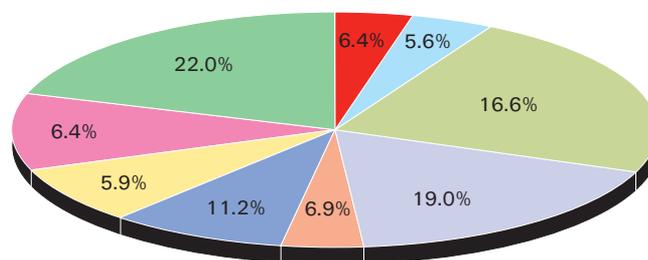
Six hundred high school students studied at the Open University in 2003-2004, in addition to 407 students who continued their OU studies after graduating from high school. Most of these students studied in regular groups, and others in special groups of high school students (some in a joint project with the

Course Coordinators and Tutors, by Department

Course Coordinators (N = 259*)



Tutors (N = 1,210)



- English Unit
- Natural Sciences
- Sociology, Political Science, Communication
- Education, Psychology
- Mathematics
- Computer Science
- Literature, Language, the Arts
- History, Philosophy, Judaic Studies
- Management, Economics

* Course coordinators who belong to more than one department are counted only in the department in which they primarily work.

Ministry of Education) at the Kfar Hayarok, Beer Sheba and Mikve Israel. In the 2003-2004 academic year, we prepared for the "Ashdod Excellence" project in collaboration with the Ashdod Municipality, and for the gifted student project (Haifa) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Department of Gifted Students.

As a result of the University's collaboration with the IDF, there has been a continuous rise in the number of high school students who receive military service deferment for the purpose of completing their Bachelor's degree at the Open University (41 students in 2003-2004 compared to 32 in 2002-2003). Moreover, some specialized IDF units approach these students through the Open University and offer them military service related to their fields of study.

High school students are among the outstanding students of the Open University. In 2002-2003, 71 high school students received academic excellence certificates, among them 24 President's List students who completed their studies with highest honors (*magna cum laude*) and 47 Dean's List students who completed their studies with honors (*cum laude*). It should be noted that the percentage of high school students among the outstanding students at the Open University is six times greater than their percentage in the overall Open University student population.

The Arab sector

For years, Arab students have received special handling from the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies with the aim of helping them overcome their unique difficulties as students. This year a special committee headed by the Dean of Academic Studies was appointed to examine studies in the Arab sector and approaches to dealing with this group. The Committee members met with course coordinators, students at the various study centers and academics from the Arab sector who presented the problems from their perspective. The Committee will submit its recommendations to the President of the University.

Several courses in Arabic are offered to students studying at our Wadi Ara campus and at other study centers in the Arab sector (Nazareth, Yarca, Kaukhab, Tira, Rahat). All Arabic-speaking students are entitled to a time extension on their final exams in their first six courses as well as at every tutorial session conducted in Hebrew.

The Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center developed special learning skills workshops for this population, some conducted in Arabic.

"First Step" in the Arab sector: The goal of this social involvement project, for which the Open University received funding from the Planning and Budgeting Committee, is to help Arab students cope with courses in which they encounter difficulties. 18 students and 12 mentors (7 in Wadi Ara and 5 in Nazareth) took part in the project this year. Each mentor received a scholarship (50% of the tuition of a course) for each trainee mentored, as well as a certificate of appreciation.

Bridges to Other Universities

With the encouragement of the Council for Higher Education, the Open University established transfer options to other universities in Israel that offer studies towards a Bachelor's degree in order to provide access to higher education to as many applicants as possible. The Open University currently has agreements with all these universities.

Three new agreements were launched this year:

- with the Department of Behavioral Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev
- with the Faculty of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Quality Sciences at the Hebrew University
- with the Faculty of Social Sciences – The Department of Economics at Bar Ilan University

In addition, the requirements for transfer to the Faculty of Engineering at Tel Aviv University were updated. Three additional science faculties were added to the agreement with the Technion – Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics.

Accelerated tracks

Flexibility is one of the characteristics of the Open University's method of teaching. Among others, students can study at the rate that suits their lifestyles or take a break for a period of time without impairing their previous studies. However, some of our students would prefer to complete their studies and obtain a Bachelor's degree within three years, as is the case in other universities. To answer this need, we offer "accelerated" tracks for all programs of study in the Sciences and the Social Sciences. These tracks are structured by semester and present

the recommended order of courses, enabling students to take the programs as presented, or to use the tracks to help them determine the order in which to take courses.

Enrollment in undergraduate courses, by department

Department	Course enrollments	%
History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	4,476	4.3
Literature, Language and the Arts	5,504	5.3
Education and Psychology	26,215	25.1
Sociology, Political Science and Communication	16,013	15.4
Management and Economics	29,050	27.9
Natural Sciences	3,208	3.1
Mathematics	6,777	6.5
Computer Science	10,629	10.2
English Unit*	2,273	2.2
Total	104,145	100.0

* The data refer only to A-level (academic) courses. In non-academic courses, levels B-E and the Workshop, there were 3,357 enrollments.

Enrollment

“Course enrollment” refers to a student taking one academic course. Thus a student taking two courses is listed as two course enrollments. In the 2003-2004 academic year, there were 104,145 undergraduate course enrollments, and 7,157 graduate course enrollments.

Enrollments in graduate courses, by degree (including enrollments in qualifying courses)

Degree	Course enrollments	%
Computer Science	666	9.3
Democracy Studies – Interdisciplinary	969	13.5
Biological Thought	243	3.4
Business Administration	5,251	73.4
Education, ‘Learning Technologies’ and ‘Learning Systems’*	28	0.4
Total	7,157	100.0

* In 2003-2004, students took only qualifying courses



Assignments and Examinations

38,042 computerized assignments and 409,526 tutor assignments were assessed in academic courses during 2003-2004. 109,458 examinations were administered: In the fall semester, 49,835; in the spring semester, 48,556; and in the first sitting of the summer semester, 11,067. Examinations were held in 39 test centers throughout the country.

Special test conditions: In 7,742 examinations, special test conditions were provided (such as extra time, dictation); 905 examinations were given abroad; 166 were administered in prisons.

Study Centers

Open University studies are not centralized on one single campus; we aspire to reach our students wherever they wish to study. Nonetheless, in recent years, in order to improve teaching practices and services for students in the periphery, regional campuses have been established through which these students have the same high-quality tutoring options as do students in the center of the country.

Course Enrollments and Study Groups in Academic and English Reading Comprehension Courses

Area	Course enrollments	Study groups
North	11,081	582
Sharon Area	9,779	430
Center	70,947	2,924
Jerusalem	8,085	374
Coastal Plain	4,908	270
South	4,906	275
Special tutoring	4,821	-
Total	114,527	4,855

Open University Campuses

Open University tutorial sessions are held on four campuses throughout the country: Haifa, Jerusalem, Beer Sheva and Wadi Ara. Activity on the campuses increases from semester to semester, and students indicate that they are satisfied with their studies in this environment.

This year the campuses focused on combating drop-outs. The tutors referred students with difficulties to various learning assistance frameworks. When necessary, these students were placed in workshops dealing with learning skills, writing assignments, preparation for exams, writing seminar papers, use of data bases, etc.

