

Teaching

The year 2006, like the thirty years of distance teaching that preceded it, was one of changes and improvements in teaching at the Open University. The development of new study programs was approved, new study tracks were offered and new courses were opened. Moreover, by its very nature, the Open University views itself as the most suitable venue for study populations that find it difficult to study in campus universities, and this year we can point to breakthroughs in teaching these special sectors.

Programs Approved by the Council for Higher Education

- M.A. in Culture Studies
- B.Sc. in Software Engineering

These programs still require additional development; we plan to offer them beginning in the 2008-2009 academic year.

Decisions of the Academic Committee

Programs of study that were approved by the Committee and submitted to the CHE

- M.A. in Education with a track in Managing Education Systems
- B.A. in Communication – dual-disciplinary
- B.A. in Philosophy – dual-disciplinary
- B.A. in Film Studies – dual-disciplinary

New combinations of approved programs and divisions that were offered for the first time this year

- B.A. in Natural Sciences: Emphasis on Biotechnology
- B.A. in Life Sciences and Economics
- B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in an Additional Field (Divisions in: the Arts, Communication, Economics, Education, Film Studies, History, Judaic Studies, Literature, Management, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology)
- B.A. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) and History
- B.A. in Sociology and History
- B.A. in Management and History
- B.A. in Economics and History
- B.A. in Psychology and Life Sciences
- B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Logistics
- B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Literature

New combinations of approved programs and divisions that will be offered in 2007-2008

- B.A. in Humanities or in Humanities and Social Sciences: Emphasis on Music
- B.A. in Political Science and History

Certificate studies offered for the first time this year

- Teaching Certificate in Literature

Additional decisions

- **Knowledge-expanding course:** In every program of studies that includes free credits, students must select at least one course from a different field of knowledge.
- The number of seminar papers required for the Master's degree in Biological Thought has been reduced from three to two, as in other graduate programs.

Courses taught for the first time this year

Graduate level

Computer Science

Advanced Topics in Database Systems
Research Seminar: Information Security and Privacy
Models and Specification Methods for Concurrent and Reactive Systems

Education and Psychology

Alternatives in Assessment
Approaches and Models in Designing Computer-Based Instructional Systems
Approaches to Curriculum Planning and Evaluation
Developing Curricula in Various Subject Matters: Theory and Practice
From Search for Information to Construction of Knowledge in Technology-Rich Environments

Instructional Design and Evaluation of Computer Environments
Integrating Learning Technologies in Various Disciplines
Issues in the Psychology of Internet Users
Varieties of Learning Technologies: Principles and Applications

Management and Economics

Advanced Managerial Accounting
Global Strategic Alliances
Labor Relations in Globalization
Multinational Financial Management

Sociology, Political Science and Communication

Methodological Seminar for Democracy Studies

Natural Sciences

Reduction and Teleology in Biology

Undergraduate level

Literature, Language and the Arts

History of the Cinema: From Classical Hollywood to Italian Neorealism
Visual Representations of Zionist Ideology in Israeli Culture
Teaching Literature: Methodology

History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

The Book of Genesis
Early Christianity
History of Israel during the First Temple Period [rewritten]
The Modern Middle East

Sociology, Political Science and Communication

Classical Sociological Theories [as intermediate course]
Families: Sociological and Anthropological Perspectives
Genocide
Jewish Identities in an Era of Multiple Modernities
The United States in the International Arena Since 1945

Natural Sciences

General Chemistry
Introduction to Geophysics
Laboratory: Biotechnology
Laboratory in Meteorology - Observations and Synoptic Analysis
Research Project in Life Sciences
The World of Electricity and Electronics
Echolocation and Bat-Insect Interactions in Desert Habitats *

Computer Science

Introduction to Computer Networks
Introduction to Computer Science Using Java II
Introduction to Cryptography

Management and Economics

Advanced Financial Accounting
Advanced Managerial Accounting for Accounting Students
Consolidated Financial Statements [face-to-face]
Ergonomics [face-to-face]
The Economy of Israel [as distance course]
Facility Layout and Associate Systems Design
Final Project in Industrial Engineering
Intermediate Financial Accounting II [face-to-face]
Introduction to Law [face-to-face]
Labor Economics [as distance course]
Principles of Business Law [face-to-face]
Project Management for Industrial Engineering
Quality and Productivity Management
Stochastic Models in Operations Research
Strategic Management [as advanced course]
Taxation II [face-to-face]

Seminar paper workshop

In Accounting studies, writing a seminar paper is not necessarily related to a specific course. To help students writing seminar papers in Accounting, this year, for the first time, a 6-session workshop was offered to guide and support students in "Advanced Managerial Accounting for Accounting Students" and "Advanced Financial Accounting."

* An interuniversity course offered by the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

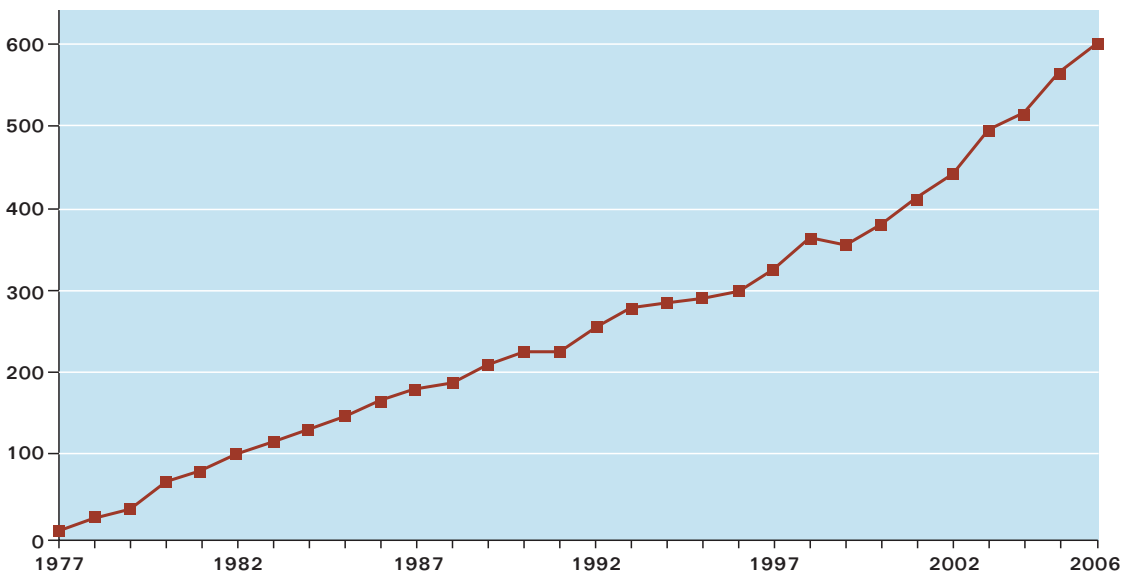
Offering "First" Courses in Every Field

"First" courses are basic courses which are prerequisites to further studies. To enable students to take first courses in fields that are not usually offered in all study centers, a first course in every discipline is now being offered at various study centers. For example, if until now a first course in the Natural Sciences was not offered in Carmiel, Tiberias or Kiryat Haim, one will be offered in each of these study centers (though not necessarily the same course in all centers), and is opened if there is sufficient enrollment.

Decisions of the Teaching Committee

- Tutors will no longer be employed if they receive a low score in the ongoing teaching survey over a period of three semesters, unless approved by the Head of the Department.
- A seminar advisor will not be permitted to serve as advisor to the same student for two seminar papers.

The number of academic courses offered over 30 years



Reaching Out to Special Sectors

Arabic-speaking students

With the adoption of the recommendations of the Dotan Committee for examining the Arabic-speaking sector, academic activities among this sector were expanded:

- Several new study centers were established and are operating in Sakhnin, Masadeh, Tamra, El-Mustaqbal College in Afula, Mgar, and the College of the Negev (the Bedouin Center).
- Learning skills workshops in Arabic were conducted for the first time.
- In Nazareth and Wadi Ara, the course offering was expanded to additional fields, among them Economics and Psychology. Workshops for the course "Introduction to Psychology" were offered in these centers, with the participation of about 150 students.
- Symposia were held in Wadi Ara and Umm el-Fahem.



The ultra-orthodox sector

Study groups of ultra-orthodox women have been conducted for several years at the Haredi College for Women. A new initiative was launched on the Jerusalem campus, with about 120 male Haredi students taking preparatory workshops in Mathematics and English specifically designed for them, as well as academic courses in Psychology, Management, Economics and Computer Science. Among other things, an English course was developed for these students, to prepare students lacking any knowledge in English (even the alphabet) for the lowest reading comprehension level.

Students of Ethiopian origin

In the Fall semester, a group of 29 students of Ethiopian origin took the course "Israel in the First Decade" on the Jerusalem campus, and received assistance in learning skills as well as additional tutoring hours. Nineteen of these students continued their studies in the Spring semester. Several of them participated in a course developed especially for them to improve mastery of the Hebrew language, and a few continued on to regular academic studies.

Overseas students

Studies abroad involve difficulties and special needs stemming, among other things, from the geographic distance and time zone differences. One way to overcome these difficulties is to use the InterWise and *Ofek* systems to conduct virtual tutorial sessions. To facilitate the studies of overseas students and to strengthen their relationship with the University and with other OU students abroad, a forum was added to the overseas students' website. It is an open forum that serves as a virtual meeting place where overseas students can organize as a virtual academic community.

Enrollment Data

"Course enrollment" refers to a student registered for one academic course. Thus, a student taking two courses is listed as two course enrollments. In the 2005-2006 academic year, there were 110,584 undergraduate course enrollments, and 8,700 graduate course enrollments (including qualifying courses).

Enrollment in undergraduate courses by department

Department	Course enrollments	%
History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	5,261	4.8
Literature, Language and the Arts	5,800	5.2
Education and Psychology	29,041	26.3
Sociology, Political Science and Communication	17,051	15.4
Management and Economics	33,655	30.4
Natural Sciences	3,671	3.3
Mathematics	6,827	6.2
Computer Science ¹	7,313	6.6
English Unit ²	1,965	1.8
Total	110,584	100.0

¹ Beginning this year, "Computer Applications for Social Sciences" is a non-credit course.

² The data refer only to A-level courses, which beginning this year are non-credit courses. In non-academic courses, there were 3,440 enrollments.

Organized groups in the workplace

Study groups were established this year in the Israel Electricity Company, Israel Railways, Tel Aviv Municipality and Israel Aviation Industries towards undergraduate and graduate degrees. Studies are conducted in the organizations' training facilities.

Tutor Day

For the first time this year, the OU held a "Tutor Day." The aim of this meeting of all Open University tutors was to bring the tutors closer to the university, to reduce their sense of alienation and to acquaint them with the new Raanana campus. The event was not of an academic nature, but rather a get-together that included a panel with the President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of Academic Studies, and a guided tour of the campus. During the year, several departments held departmental tutor meetings.

Outstanding Students

This year, the President's List includes 187 students who completed their studies in 2005 with an average grade of 95 or above and who were awarded scholarships. The Dean's List includes 848 students whose average was 90-94.

Graduate students, by degree (including those taking qualifying courses)

Degree	Students	%
Computer Science	507	5.8
Democracy Studies - Interdisciplinary	853	9.8
Biological Thought	187	2.2
Business Administration	6,442	74.0
Education, 'Learning Technologies' and 'Learning Systems'	711	8.2
Total	8,700	100.0

Regional distribution of enrollments and study groups in academic* and EFL courses

Region	Course enrollments	Number of Groups
North	12,788	635
Sharon	11,491	494
Central	71,047	2,833
Jerusalem	9,299	385
Coastal Plain	5,413	276
South	6,350	334
Special tutorials	6,443	-
Total	122,831	4,957

* including 44 courses in certificate studies and toward teaching certificates.

Teaching in Project Russia

More than 7,000 students in 326 cities and towns in the FSU studied in Project Russia this year. Teaching is conducted in collaboration with the Jewish Agency. Most of the project's staff members visited the various study centers, and a delegation of the OU, headed by the President, visited Moscow and met with students in the Project. Project activities in Germany gained momentum this year with more than 100 Russian-speaking students enrolled in our courses.

Computerized tracking of Project students – Courses taken in Project Russia are recorded in a computerized system, including calculation of the final course grade. For those students who studied in the Project and continue their studies in Israel, the course grades and assignments are entered into the Open University system.

Self-Evaluation of Teaching

In 2003, the Council for Higher Education decided to establish a system to evaluate the quality of higher education in Israel, as is customary in the United States, Britain and other countries. The aim of the system is to improve the quality of academic studies in Israel, to motivate institutions of higher learning in Israel to recognize the importance of the issue, to develop internal mechanisms for on-going evaluation of academic quality and to ensure the continued integration of academia in Israel into the global academic system.

This year the Open University evaluated teaching and research in the areas of History and Management. Teams of senior faculty members and the academic teaching staff in the departments involved conducted the evaluation. The teams submitted comprehensive reports that evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and research, and included data from the University's computer systems. The evaluation covered many areas, including teaching methods at the Open University, study programs offered in History and Management, the scope and variety of courses, monitoring the level of courses and tutoring, assignments, examinations, recruitment of faculty and staff in these fields, and training of teaching staff and tutors.

In the 2004-2005 academic year, self-evaluation was conducted in the field of Computer Science. The Council for Higher Education committee that examined this self-evaluation recently submitted its report. Alongside praise regarding the quality of our courses and the undergraduate programs, the report also included criticism that focused mainly on the Master's degree in the thesis track. The thrust

of the criticism pertained to the small number of senior faculty members in the field. The committee demanded the immediate addition of three senior faculty members and another three faculty members in coming years. We agree with the committee's recommendation, and have already recruited two new faculty members in Computer Science and recently published a bid for two additional senior faculty members. We will shortly send our response to the CHE that will also address inaccuracies in their report and a request that they be corrected in the final report.

Innovations in the Teaching-Assistance Computer Systems

Online format of the teaching survey – The ongoing teaching survey examines student attitudes towards various components of the course such as materials, assignments and assignment grading, tutoring and computer-based communication. For many years, the University conducted the survey using surveyors who went to tutorial sessions and distributed feedback questionnaires to the students. This process has now been computerized using Ransys Ltd.'s *Attentive* (a comprehensive feedback management system) and was initially used in 16 courses. In the Fall semester of 2006, the teaching survey was implemented for the first time in its new format for all OU courses. The response rate remained similar to the survey in its prior format and stands at about 50%. Every semester, following the survey, the system generates a variety of reports to the course coordinator and tutors, as well as summary reports for the President and department heads.

Computerization of opening tutorial groups and control of costs – Many factors within and outside of the University are involved in the process of opening tutorial groups and the decision to approve them. The process takes place within a short time span and has many implications, both academic and financial. To increase the effectiveness of the process, a system was developed that offers one tool that includes a variety of levels and functions to meet the needs and requirements of the various University bodies. The new system consolidates data from all information sources in the organization and enables the academic administration to examine the different alternatives, their budgetary implications and their impact on all relevant entities: students, study centers, course coordinators and department heads. With the press of the button, users can receive information about the number of groups, number of enrollments, averages, cost estimates by status and type of tutor contract.



System for assigning classrooms in study centers, managing rooms and sessions – The tutorial session schedule and changes of all OU courses are centrally managed. With the establishment of the Ramat Aviv campus, that has many types of rooms, a computer program was designed for assigning rooms there, which also serves for assigning rooms at the Kfar Hayarok study center.

Upgrading the Academic Counseling website – Following a four-year trial period, the Academic Counseling website was improved and updated. The website is a dynamic source of information for general and field-specific academic advisors that offers ongoing updates about the different counseling fields and serves as an organized archive. The site also includes links to information sources necessary for the advisors' work, as well as a forum in which they can share opinions and seek assistance.

Teaching in Time of War

The war in Lebanon broke out at the end of the Spring semester during the exam period, on the verge of the Summer semester and in the midst of enrollment for the Fall 2007 semester. The Open University organized to respond to the various constraints with respect to studies and examinations, and relaxed registration procedures in light of the circumstances. University activities in northern Israel were limited and adapted to the constraints dictated by the security situation. The OU took many actions to assist students in northern Israel and soldiers on both compulsory and reserve duty, made every effort to conduct tutorial activities on alternative dates, and initiated a series of administrative adjustments.

Tutorial sessions

During the 33 days of fighting, studies were conducted as usual in most areas in Israel, however routine life in the north was disrupted and it was impossible to hold face-to-face tutorial sessions in Haifa and northern Israel. The University implemented a series of steps with respect to tutorial sessions planned for northern Israel.

- 122 tutorials in Haifa and north of the city were cancelled.
- Throughout the war, the University made arrangements to hold alternative tutorial sessions the moment it was possible.
- In some courses, alternative tutorials were held through the *Ofek* and *InterWise* systems, enabling students to maintain asynchronous contact with tutors through the course websites. These were held from the beginning of the war, toward the end of the Spring semester.
- The University prepared tentative plans for scheduling tutorials in the north in accordance with the summer semester timetable, with the aim of conducting the semester according to plan, as much as possible.
- When the study center in Afula was forced to transfer its offices to another site due to military activities in the area, the University offered its assistance in order to ensure continued contact with the study center and its students.

Examinations

Even if they wanted to, residents of the north were unable to take examinations near their homes. Study centers in Haifa, Tiberias, Afula, Hedera, Netanya, Katzrin and the Haifa suburbs were not operational. Many students were recruited to military service and others suffered from anxiety and stress.

The University made arrangements for an increased number of examinees at other study centers and recruited more exam proctors and exam teams. The examination centers that operated also prepared for the possibility of bombs falling in the area and thus shelters and security rooms were checked and prepared for this likelihood. Additional and alternative exam dates were scheduled for students who were unable to take the exams in the first sitting of the Spring semester, which required the preparation of exam questionnaires for additional dates. Due to the delayed beginning of the Summer semester in the north, the first sitting of the exams in northern Israel was changed for all examinees and the scope of materials for Summer semester exams throughout the country was somewhat reduced.

Registration

Contrary to regular University policy, the Open University enabled students to change registration at no extra cost.

The Summer 2006 semester: Fees for intensive tutorials were refunded to students studying in the north. Because the semester in the north began two months after the planned date and though as many tutorial sessions were held as possible, this was not the regular full intensive tutorial format. The Summer semester for intensive English courses in the north was also postponed. As these courses are composed of several levels studied one after the other in the same semester, it was not possible to conduct them in the usual format within the limited timeframe.

The Fall 2007 semester: The final date of regular registration was deferred. Furthermore, residents of northern Israel received special payment terms during the regular registration period, to enable them to pay tuition at a later date. The University waived late registration fees for students who did not register during the regular registration period due to reserve duty.

The University Information Center

From the first day of fighting, the Information Center received many inquiries and there was a heavy load of calls. The number of inquiries increases during registration and exam periods in regular times, but in July of this year, the load was even heavier due to the numerous inquiries stemming from the situation in the north at the time. In order to deal with the load, the Center expanded its operating hours, and the number of call center operators in each shift was increased. Due to the heavy load on the telephone lines, callers were directed to Infodesk, the Information Center's electronic mail system. These inquiries were answered within 24 hours.

An "Attentive Ear" and Emotional Support

The staff of the Education and Psychology department opened two support channels for students, electronic and telephone. The message of the project was simple: we are here for you – we are here to assist you in anything you may need. To this end, a special forum was established on the OU website on which faculty members who are clinical psychologists and licensed therapists responded to inquiries, and the department head responded to administrative inquiries. These support channels were closed several days after the end of the war.

Eased Study Requirements

The Open University strove to remove obstacles that students faced as a result of the fighting, and hence eased requirements on an exceptional basis. Among other things, the University was flexible regarding timetables for meeting course requirements, provided additional study materials on course websites, expanded telephone office hours of course coordinators, tutors and academic advisors, and provided financial assistance to students who, due to the circumstances, faced financial hardships.

Open Day – Faculty members answer questions of prospective students and familiarize them with the options open to those who wish to take an undergraduate or graduate degree at the Open University.



A Spotlight on Examinations

The Open University's examination process, that includes conducting the exams, grading and handling them, is unique to the University and derives from our distance teaching method. It is a collaborative effort by the departments, in which the course coordinators prepare the questionnaires and grade the exams, and numerous administrative departments, in cooperation with the Dean of Academic Studies, plan the complex process and ensure its implementation.

In general, at the end of every OU undergraduate course and in some of the Master's degree courses, a written final exam is held. Stemming from the goal of ensuring equal and uniform study conditions for all students, the University does not permit students to take an oral exam, a take-home exam or write a paper in lieu of a written exam. Exams are held in OU study centers throughout the country and students take the exam in the center of their choice (by advance registration to enable the University to prepare accordingly). In most courses, the only time that students are required to come to one of the study centers is for the exam. The exam is uniform throughout the country and conducted simultaneously for all students taking the course (except for students located in distant time zones such as Australia and the west coast of the US who take the exam close to the exam hour, though not at exactly the same time. Separate exam questionnaires are prepared for these students). Grading the exams is also done with the greatest of care to ensure uniformity. The duration of all exams is three hours. Time extensions and special conditions are provided to students entitled to them.

The weight of the exam in the course grade

To ensure that all students have an equal chance to succeed, the examination questions reflect only the written study materials, irrespective of what topics arise in tutorial sessions or in forums on the course website. To receive a "pass" in a course, students must meet all course assignment requirements and receive at least 60 on the final examination. The relative weight of the exam in the final grade depends, among other things, on the number of assignments the student submits during the semester and the relative weight of each assignment.

Exam questionnaires

All the questionnaires are prepared by the course coordinators and approved by a faculty member holding a PhD, undergo

professional language editing and proof reading, and are duplicated several weeks before the date of the exam. At the end of the production stage, the course coordinators must answer the exam questions in order to make sure that there are no mistakes on the questionnaire. Six to eight questionnaires are prepared for each course annually (three each for the Fall and Spring semesters, and another two for courses also offered in the Summer semester). There are three main types of exam questionnaires – open-ended questions only; multiple-choice questions only; both open-ended and multiple-choice questions – and in most courses, the questionnaires are of the first type.

Timetable

Preparations for exams include setting exam dates about one year in advance in accordance with the semester timetable, reserving facilities for exams throughout the country and determining (using the computerized system) the dates of all exams for all courses on each exam date to ensure that every student can take more than one exam every semester. Close to the exam dates, the University recruits exam teams and proctors. A large part of the communication with them takes place through the computerized system that includes SMS messages and use of the OU website.

Geographical distribution

In academic courses, exams are held on "exam days" for about 100 courses simultaneously. In addition to these exam days, there are separate exam days for the different levels of English reading comprehension courses and for School of Technology courses. For every exam day, the University prepares examination centers with suitable rooms organized as required, as well as personnel from the University and from outside to manage the exam centers and monitor classrooms and the surroundings.

Exams are held in about 30 centers throughout the country, from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Eilat in the south. It is OU policy that all students take exams as near as possible to their place of residence or to the study center in which they studied. Classrooms are rented from various institutions to serve as exam centers.

Two population groups do not sit for the exams in the regular exam centers: students abroad, who take exams in Israel diplomatic missions, and prisoners, who take the exams in prison.

Examination Day

The team managing the exam center – In every exam center, a special team led by a “Proctor Coordinator” is sent by the OU to administer the exams. The proctors in the exam rooms receive a special kit that includes, among other things, the exam booklets, a list of learning aids that students are permitted to use, and a seating map of the room.

Physical conditions in the exam center – The team arrives at the exam center and checks, in coordination with the contact person of the institution, the physical conditions of the center: cleanliness, lighting and air conditioning; the number of rooms and tables in every room, compared to the computer plan provided; the suitability of the rooms for accommodating examinees who are allowed special exam conditions (for example, students who receive time extensions, or approval to have the exam read to them or even written for them because their mother tongue is not Hebrew, or who have a learning or a physical disability), and the functioning of technical aids (such as a photocopier).

Intake of examinees and assignment to rooms – Every examinee is directed to a specific desk in a specific room. In the exam room, examinees must present a valid OU student ID and a summons to the exam. Examinations for different courses are held in the same classroom. Students are assigned to their seat in the classroom by a computerized plan prepared

in advance to ensure optimal distance between examinees in the same course.

Questions during the exam – During the examination, the students may ask questions, which are transmitted to the course coordinators via the proctors. The course coordinators, who are at the control center at the OUI campus in Raanana, respond to the questions by phone. If necessary, and only based on instructions from the control center, the exam team circulates a correction or clarification to all examinees of the course in the exam center.

Transferring the exams to Raanana – At the end of the exam the proctors collect the exam booklets and add a report on any unusual activities by the examinees in the room, the number of exam notebooks and the time the exam was returned by every examinee. The material is delivered to the Proctor Coordinator, who verifies that the reports correspond to the number of exam booklets handed out and ensures that the booklets are transferred (along with the other equipment) safely and immediately to the OU campus in Raanana. On the OU campus, the exam booklets are received from exam centers throughout the country and all equipment is returned. The thousands of exam booklets are sorted and organized by course. The following morning, the course coordinators receive the exams to be graded.

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Grading the Exams

Grading the exams is conducted over a period of ten days after the exam date. The course coordinator grades the exams, and in courses with a large number of students, the coordinator is assisted by the course tutors. The Open University makes every effort to ensure uniformity of the grading: the course coordinator sets detailed criteria for grading each question and specifies the main points that constitute a full and correct answer; sometimes one person grades all the answers to the same question in all notebooks; when tutors participate in the grading, the course coordinator conducts a sample check.