

# Teaching



Distance teaching is the unique characteristic of the Open University, and the OUI continuously invests extensive efforts to improve it. This year, we developed new programs of study and increased the number of undergraduate and graduate courses. We have expanded and updated the variety of transfer tracks to other universities, which enable students to take a cluster of courses at the OUI and continue their studies toward a degree at another university in Israel. In addition, we took further measures to expand the University's accessibility to Arabic-speaking students.

## **Programs of study approved by the Council for Higher Education (CHE)**

- Dual-disciplinary B.A. in Philosophy and another discipline
- Dual-disciplinary B.A. in Communication and another discipline
- Dual-disciplinary B.A. in the History of the Middle East and its Cultures and another discipline

Two additional programs were approved by the CHE but require additional development and are not yet being offered:

- Dual-disciplinary B.Sc. in Physics and another discipline in the Sciences
- Dual-disciplinary B.A. in Cognition Studies and another discipline

## **Programs and divisions of study approved by the Academic Committee**

- M.A. in History
- B.A. in Philosophy, Economics and Political Science
- B.A. in Social Work
- B.A. in Social Sciences - Emphasis on International Relations
- B.A. in Social Sciences - Emphasis on Communication
- B.A. in Political Science and International Relations
- B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in International Relations
- B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in International Relations
- B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Film Studies
- B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Film Studies



## Courses taught for the first time this year

### Graduate level

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

Equality and Inequality – A Philosophical Perspective

#### **Computer Science Division**

Seminar: Online Algorithms

### Undergraduate level

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

The Thriller: Genres in Cinema

The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach [expanded and updated version]

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

Equality and Inequality – A Philosophical Perspective

Teaching Oral Law and Jewish Thought: Practical Training (Practicum)

Teaching History: Methodology

#### **Dept. of Natural Sciences**

Quantum Theory II: The Chemical Bond

General Chemistry II

Laboratory: Inorganic Chemistry

#### **Computer Science Division**

Numerical Analysis I

Biological Computation

Workshop: Operating Systems

Workshop: Computer Communication

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

Democratic Regimes

Dictatorships in the 20th Century

Teaching Civics: Practical Training (Practicum)

Citizenship: Theory and Politics

Sport and Society

#### **Dept. of Management and Economics**

Computer Integrated Manufacturing Systems

Strategic Thinking – Game Theory with Economics and Business Applications

Non-Linear Optimization Methods

Introduction to Law

#### **Dept. of Education and Psychology**

Cognitive Neuropsychology

Teaching Social Sciences: Methodology

## Decisions of the Teaching Committee

**Continuity in studies:** In order to enable continuity in studies, students will be allowed to register for a course before completing the prerequisites for it. This is conditional on the student having submitted 50% of the assignments in the prerequisite course.

**Publishing decisions of the Disciplinary Committee:** To increase transparency while ensuring confidentiality, the Disciplinary Committee will make its decisions public, without revealing the names of the students involved. Decisions will be posted on bulletin boards in study centers and examination centers, and on the *Sheilta* website.

**New immigrant students are permitted to use dictionaries during final examinations:** For five years after their arrival in Israel, new immigrant students (or students who graduated from high schools abroad) will be permitted to bring a dictionary with them to the exam, and, if they ask for one, receive a time extension of one-half hour. Thus, special permission from the course coordinator is no longer required.

**Informing interested students of the names of tutors:** In the past, students were not told the names of tutors to prevent transfer between study groups. This policy has been changed, and today the Information Center gives students the information, with the qualification that there may be last-minute changes.

**Creating an archive of seminar papers:** It was decided to create a digitized university-wide archive of seminar papers. Every student will be required to submit, in addition to a print copy, a digital copy of the seminar paper, which will be coded within the system by student's name, the topic of the paper, and keywords. The papers will be catalogued by department, and course coordinators will be able to locate papers and check whether identical papers were submitted in different courses.

## Change in the Structure of the Academic Year

Beginning in 2008-2009, the Fall and Spring semesters will be planned to ensure a 2-week vacation between the Spring and Summer semesters and that the Summer semester will not continue into the holiday period.

## Guidelines for Using Study Material at Exams

Following student discipline violations resulting from improper use of study material during exams, the issue was examined and clear guidelines were formulated. The new guidelines have already been implemented.

## Implementation of the Report of the Committee to Examine Teaching

The committee that examined teaching at the OUI submitted its recommendations in September 2007. Several recommendations were implemented this year: increased senior faculty involvement in teaching by ensuring that a faculty member is academically responsible for every course; and flagging new students in University records to ensure that they receive added attention in study groups. In addition, a document was prepared that defines the role of department heads and of faculty members responsible for courses.

## Evaluation of Course Coordinators

The procedure for evaluating course coordinators, which was not implemented in recent years in most of the academic departments, was revised and leveraged this year: evaluation and advancement criteria were formulated and a reflective self-evaluation questionnaire was prepared. A computerized system developed specifically for this purpose also includes feedback on departmental administrative services and other relevant activities (attending tutorial sessions, writing exam questionnaires and checking exams) as well as goals for the coming year.

## New Study Centers Opened

This year the OUI opened new study centers in Katzrin (operated by the Management College in the north) and at the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

## Expanding Access to Arabic-Speaking Students

During the year, the OUI implemented several recommendations of the Dotan Committee regarding Arabic-speaking students: we began to translate exam questionnaires into Arabic in courses in which students are entitled to submit assignments and/or exams in this language. Students in study centers in the Arab sector already receive exam questionnaires in Arabic. The workshop, "Hebrew as a Second Language," which is funded by scholarships, was

offered for the first time to Arabic-speakers. In addition, this year for the first time we conducted workshops for tutors in the Arab sector to familiarize them with the strengths and difficulties of their students so that they can help them improve their learning skills.

**"First steps" project:** Eight veteran students participated in the project this year, mentoring eleven new students in a variety of courses.

### Expanded Access for Students Abroad

To help our students abroad, we expanded the use of teaching technologies: in certain courses, tutorial groups were opened exclusively for students abroad via InterWise, a synchronous, web-based teaching system. We now regularly add students abroad to *Ofek* or video conference groups so they can view the broadcasts on their personal computers.

### Increasing Student Perseverance at the OUI

The system-wide effort to increase student perseverance continued this year: seven task forces met and three pilot studies were conducted. We also held a symposium for about 150 OUI employees – senior faculty, academic teaching staff and administration – to discuss the recommendations of some of the task forces and the report of the committee that examined teaching at the OUI. The task forces addressed issues identified as critical to increasing retention. OUI management approved several task force recommendations and some have already been implemented.

### Task Force Recommendations

#### Prior to enrollment

**Annual registration:** To help students plan the continued course of their studies without having to make new decisions every semester, it was recommended to add another registration option – annual registration.

**Academic counseling:** It was recommended to expand academic counseling activities and to professionalize them, mainly in the academic departments, by training academic advisors. The aim is to help students select a study track and to increase the number of students who take advantage of academic counseling services.

**New students:** One recommendation was to train tutors of large courses to give increased attention to new students in their groups. This recommendation will be implemented in the Fall semester of 2008-2009. Various activities will also be conducted to ease the socialization process of new students.

**Hetchel project:** We continued the project in three large courses which have relatively high dropout rates ("Introduction to Psychology," "Introduction to Microeconomics" and "Introduction to Statistics for Students of Social Sciences I"). In the project, outstanding veteran students (80 this year), carefully selected and appropriately trained, mentor new students (224), focusing on both socialization and help in studies. Evaluation findings accompanying the project show a tendency to succeed among students receiving mentoring, as well as very high satisfaction levels among the students and their mentors.

**Learning skills:** Following recommendations to increase activities aimed at improving learning skills as part of the tools required for perseverance in studies, a learning skills component was added to mandatory training for new tutors, training workshops for students were developed and a variety of workshops were offered to veteran tutors.

**Workshops on writing seminar papers:** Many students, mainly in the Social Sciences, discontinue their studies at the point when they need to submit a seminar paper. A model was formulated for a workshop to help students prepare seminar papers and, in doing so, to complete their studies. As of 2008-2009, students will be offered seminar-writing workshops that will accompany the courses. Each workshop will have a theme from which students will select the seminar topic. Participation in the workshop sessions will be mandatory, and they will be conducted by course coordinators with a PhD or seminar supervisors from other universities. Students will be required to complete the seminar paper during the semester.

**English:** A pilot study conducted this year examined the option of encouraging early registration for the English proficiency test. Two contact methods were examined: a letter and a personal telephone call from an English department tutor. Findings indicate that students are well informed and there is no need to continue the project.

**Bringing students back to studies:** For several years, we have examined the effectiveness of contacting students who discontinued their studies directly by phone compared to the effectiveness of contacting them in writing or not contacting them at all. Preliminary findings show that personal contact produces better results than a letter. It was decided to continue the project and focus on students about to complete their studies towards a degree.

**Developing and updating models of courses:** Seven major models of courses were defined, including technology-integrated models, and guidelines were formulated for their relative size according to the scope of the course. To help material writers, it was recommended to write an instruction manual for each model.

**Assignment load:** The issue of the heavy load of assignments was examined; however, based on findings, and meetings with course coordinators and department heads, it appears that this is not a general problem. Recommendations were offered for handling and tracking unique issues in specific courses that arose during the examination process.

**Developing a unique tutoring model:** In-depth analysis was conducted in three courses with many new students and a high dropout rate. For each course, specific ways to improve tutoring were recommended.

## Training Teaching Teams

Training activities for teaching teams were expanded specifically for academic teaching staff and tutors. Mandatory participation in training applied only to new tutors and new course coordinators, however training programs are also offered every semester to veteran tutors and course coordinators. These training programs are based on identified needs of teaching teams and address issues related to strategic OUI goals in the areas of teaching and learning. About 200 new tutors, 200 veteran tutors and 50 new and veteran course coordinators took part in training activities this year. Assessment meetings were held to recruit new tutors as well as course and departmental workshops and briefings for new department heads and new academic faculty members. Training activities included:

**New topics in tutor training:** Integrating learning skills into tutoring, tutoring in a heterogeneous class, tutoring in the Arabic-speaking sector, effective voice use, effective use of presentations, managing class discussions, dealing with burnout, checking online assignments and more.

**New topics in course coordinator training:** Writing and checking exams and assignments (with an emphasis on mapping the exam, closed items, open questions, etc.), new tutor recruitment, conducting interviews and assessment meetings, reinforcing student motivation, using technological tools in teaching and learning, etc.

**Veteran tutor peer group:** A 4-session workshop to address issues raised by the group of veteran tutors.

**Management skills:** An 8-session workshop to address management skills needed by course coordinators.

## Academic Counseling

**Handling prospective students:** Orientation sessions were held throughout the country during registration periods to clarify the basic aspects of the OUI study method. At the end of these sessions, participants were invited to set up individual meetings with academic advisors to receive help in selecting a program of study and first courses.

**Updating academic advisors:** Meetings to update academic advisors were held this year as well, some via videoconference. Advisors also met with senior faculty members and teaching staff in the fields of Communication, Middle Eastern Studies, Political Science, Economics, Psychology, and Management, as well as with the Accreditation Committee and the Study Program Approval Committee.

## Study Guidance

**Training in improving learning skills:** The OUI offers learning skill training to new and continuing students, focusing on learning skill development and improvement. As students approach the seminar paper writing stage, the University offers seminar-writing workshops. Each semester about 3,500 students participate in workshops and receive individual guidance offered at study centers throughout the country.

**Developing knowledge field-specific learning skills:** Following recommendations of task forces that examined student perseverance, the University developed field-specific training programs. In addition to learning skills workshops in "Introduction to Microeconomics," "Introduction to Psychology," and "General Biology I," a learning-

skill workshop was developed for "Mass Communication" this year. This is the first component in a general program for improving cognitive skills among Communication students.

**"A Glance at Academia" – pre-academic course for 9th graders:** This course opens a window to the academic world. In a series of 12 sessions, outstanding 9th grade students are exposed to the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Sciences, and develop academic learning skills. In 2007-2008, groups in 8 schools in Ashdod and in one school in Rishon leZion participated in the course.

**Learning skill training for students with learning disabilities:** This year, 552 students participated in small group (6-8 students) intensive sessions in learning skills. The sessions were held just before regular tutorial sessions in about 20 academic courses. 205 students with learning disabilities received individual training at study centers throughout the country and 90 students received training in preparation for the English A-level final exam.

### **Study and Exam Adjustments for Students with Special Needs**

206 students with special needs studied at the OUI in 2007-2008: 28 deaf and hearing disabled, 54 blind and visually disabled, 53 with motor disabilities and 71 suffering from chronic illnesses. These students received accommodations in studies and special exam conditions, as needed.

### **The Adult Learning Disabilities Diagnostic Center – Malal**

In winter 2008, the Adult Learning Disabilities Diagnostic Center (*Malal*) began operating on the Raanana campus. The Center offers diagnostic services to young adults studying – or planning to study – at one of the institutions of higher education in Israel. The aim of the diagnosis is to determine eligibility for adjustments in exam conditions on academic exams and the psychometric exam, and to formulate recommendations for assistance in studies. The diagnosis is entirely computerized and based on tests and questionnaires developed by the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation. The client receives a report prepared by professional diagnosticians working at the Center.

### **Outstanding Students**

This year, the President's List includes 290 students (of whom 27 are graduate students) who completed their studies in 2007 with an average grade of 95 or above and were awarded scholarships. About 5% are students with learning disabilities. The Dean's List includes 1,130 students whose average was 90-94. One-fifth of these students were on the President's List in the past, and about 29% were on the Dean's List in the past. Among the 505 high-school students at the OUI in 2007-2008, 24 were on the President's List and 25 on the Dean's List. Of 527 continuing students who began their studies while in high school, 22 were on the President's List and 35 on the Dean's List.

### **Academic Studies in Russian**

This year, again, more than 7,000 students throughout the CIS studied in Project Russia. As in previous years, we conducted a seminar for tutors and met with students in various locations. This year, a new course, "Ethiopia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism," was offered in Russian. For the first time, courses in Russian were taught in Israel. 81 students, to whom the regular OUI requirements apply, took these courses. OUI collaboration was expanded this year to additional universities in Russia and contracts were signed with the Herzen University in Saint Petersburg, the Nizhni Novgorod State University, Kazan State University and two universities in the city of Yekaterinburg in the Ural. Collaboration included joint academic publications by OUI faculty members and faculty from these universities, and teaching selected OUI courses in Russian to students at these universities.

### **Library Improvements**

The OUI library collection was enriched this year by 15,000 donated books (before sorting and cataloging). Among the donations received: the Yael Olnik collection on the archeology of *Eretz Yisrael*; the Ruth and Alexander Raanan collection on the history of the *Yishuv*; the Prof. Zvi Batsha collection on political science; the Mori Rader collection on history, mainly of WWII and India. The OUI library created special collections of OUI books and Open University (UK) books, theses and dissertations, reports and more. In terms of computerization, the library catalog was upgraded to version 18 of "Alef" which includes computerized services for readers (book return reminders to students and faculty via SMS; automated library card updating and email messages to students).

### Improved Service through *Sheilta*

Computerized services to students through *Sheilta* continued to improve this year:

- Students who do not meet the prerequisites for a certain course, or are accepted conditionally, now receive a message through the system specifying what prerequisites they lack.
- An option was added enabling course enrollment using a scholarship voucher.
- A pilot study was conducted on enabling students, who study through three colleges that charge enrollment fees, to register through the *Sheilta* system.
- A questionnaire was prepared for students enrolled in the "Computer Applications" course to determine their knowledge on topics related to familiarity with the computer and various applications.
- Emails are sent to students urging them to plan their study program and to apply for its approval, including updated details on the status of their studies.

### Enrollment Data

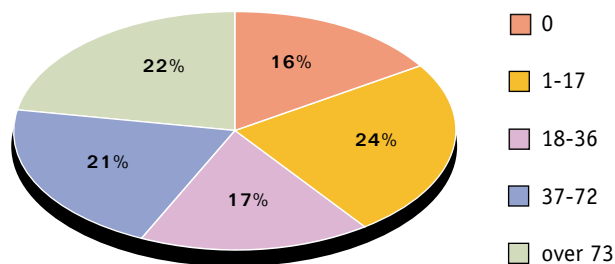
"Course enrollment" refers to a student registered for one academic course. Thus, a student taking two courses is listed as two course enrollments. In 2007-2008, there were 123,692 undergraduate course enrollments (compared with 116,170 last year) and 8,917 graduate course enrollments, including qualifying courses (compared with 8,782 last year).

#### Enrollment in undergraduate courses, by department

Department	Course enrollments	%
History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	5,972	4.8
Literature, Language and the Arts	5,414	4.4
Education and Psychology	31,848	25.7
Sociology, Political Science and Communication	19,147	15.5
Management and Economics	40,085	32.4
Natural Sciences	3,528	2.8
Mathematics	7,495	6.1
Computer Science	7,398	6.0
English Unit*	2,805	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,692</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* The data refer only to A-level (academic) courses. In non-academic preparatory courses, there were 4,688 enrollments.

#### Undergraduate students, by number of credits (including accredited prior studies)\*



\* At least 108 credits are required for a degree.

**Enrollment in graduate courses, by degree (including qualifying courses)**

Degree	Course enrollments	%
Computer Science	399	4.5
Democracy Studies – Interdisciplinary	539	6.0
Biological Thought	187	2.1
Business Administration	6,908	77.5
Education, 'Learning Technologies' and 'Learning Systems'	884	9.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,917</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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

Region	Course enrollments	Number of groups
North	15,704	712
Sharon	11,009	468
Central	75,567	3,003
Jerusalem	10,005	426
Coastal Plain	8,722	418
South	5,374	253
Special tutorials **	10,964	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>137,345</b>	<b>5,280</b>

\* Including 50 enrollments in certificate studies and toward teaching certificates.

\*\* Among others, students abroad, online teaching, and prisoners.

**Number of courses, study groups, enrollments and students in OUI-run study centers**

Study Center	Courses	Study groups	Enrollments	Students
Tiberias	23	26	344	185
Kiryat-Haim	32	40	955	568
Afula	17	19	356	219
Nazareth	42	52	882	377
Carmiel	32	35	570	293
Haifa – Beit Biram	180	350	8,143	3,520
Wadi Ara – Givat Haviva	53	80	1,421	599
Jerusalem – Technological Park*	184	442	10,014	4,046
Tel-Aviv – Ramat Aviv	279	834	20,511	11,580
Beer Sheva – Beit Yatsiv**	153	247	4,984	1,933
Eilat	17	17	238	121

\* Including 94 enrollments in the study center in Ma'ale Adumim.

\*\* Including 16 enrollments in the study center in Mitzpe Ramon.