

Graduates



In 2009-2010, the Open University conferred a Bachelor's degree on 2,779 students. 514 students were awarded Master's degrees. Of the students who completed certificate studies, 93 were awarded teaching certificates. Of the graduates, 13% indicated that they did not have a matriculation certificate when they began their studies.

Personal Story of a Blind Student

Ahuva Saraf, who received a BA in Humanities and Social Sciences, is blind, a disability that has not prevented her from leading a full life, including a career, family and studies. She has worked as a group leader at the Adler Institute for 25 years and in recent years has also engaged in family and couples therapy. In addition to her activities at the Adler Institute, she also runs support groups for the blind, drug addicts, the elderly, and other needy groups. She was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for her work in the Adler Institute.

Ahuva was helped in her studies by another student, to whom she dictated her assignments. She also made use of study materials recorded especially for her. She wrote her assignments on a computer fitted with voice technology enabling texts to be read aloud, and at exams, questions were read out to her and she dictated her answers.

Ahuva is currently going on to study for an MA degree in Educational Counseling at Bar Ilan University and is teaching at the Adler Institute's School of Coaching.



Message from a Busy Open University Graduate



Open University graduate Rivka Ravitz speaking at the graduation ceremony

As I set out in the ambulance to give birth to my sixth daughter, in addition to a file of essential documents and the few items I needed for the hospital, I also took along my laptop in order to complete the project I was writing at the time for a course in Logic and Artificial Intelligence.

I became aware that as beneficial as courses in Organizational Behavior or Labor Laws are to managers seeking to improve their managerial and awareness skills, science courses too, improved my own abilities beyond recognition. I understood that even the minimax algorithm, beyond enabling me to be a good computer programmer, also gave me the tools to be more effective as a mother and more successful as a manager. The underlying principle of maximizing benefit and minimizing damage can be applied not only to computer codes, but to real life as well.

Nothing can be more useful than an algorithm for enhancing structural efficiency when, in the morning, I have to prepare sandwiches for 11 souls about to set off on their daily activities; or in the evening, on my return home from a lecture and before leaving again for a round of PTA meetings, faced in the interim with babies needing baths and a mountain of homework to wade through, while washing the floors and cooking the next day's meals; when, in the course of my duties as Office Manager for the Speaker of the Knesset, phone calls, texts and e-mails seem never-ending.

When I gave birth to twins, bringing my total number of children to nine [...], I took with me neither a document file nor even a pair of slippers, but only the Open University text book that was in the car. At the time, I was already studying toward a Master's degree, and I made sure that OUI book came with me.

Then, driving down the Hamat Gader road – since then nicknamed by me “labor pain road” – in a desperate dash to reach the hospital in Tiberias in time, I reflected on how wonderful it is that in the academic world everything is organized according to precise algorithms, because in real life, it doesn't always work that way. I thought about applying the elevator algorithm to my own life: in my senior managerial position at the Knesset, I was faced with a number of important issues: laws, parliamentary questions, members of Knesset. Which way to save time is better? To approach each issue in turn and complete it to the end, or to do them in parts? I will share one secret with you: where laundry is concerned, I have yet to discover the most effective algorithm. Yet I continue to believe that thinking in terms of algorithms can be helpful in the home. [...]

Without a degree, I could never have achieved my ambition of advancement in public service or realized my dream of passing on the secrets of computers to the next generation, in my work as a lecturer at the Haredi College in Jerusalem for girls studying practical engineering.

Research was conducted long ago into the differences between humans and animals. At first glance, there do not appear to be major differences: we all have wishes and desires, jealousy and loathing, we all eat and drink, love and have children. So where is the difference?

The answer lies in the Yom Kippur prayer, which states: "Every creature will **know** that You made him, and every being **understand** that You formed him." Thus, the main difference is knowledge, encompassing intelligence, understanding and the ability to analyze with our minds what we see with our eyes.

For the knowledge we have accumulated here, knowledge that represents the most sophisticated of all human abilities, the fact that we have reached where we are today, achieved what we aspired to – for all this, we are deeply indebted to the Open University.

For accepting us in the most "open" way possible – with no matriculation diploma, no psychometric test – requiring only that we prove ourselves in the course of our studies;

For offering us the most "open" study format: with maximum flexibility, using the most advanced technologies in the world, allowing us to choose how and when we study – as distinct from all other universities – without necessarily having to be physically present on campus;

For being able to continue working while studying, and at the same time carrying on our regular personal routine;

And above all, for making all this available to us without compromising on the highest, most up-to-date academic standards, even when compared to long established and illustrious universities.

In my work as a manager, when I need to recruit workers and their résumés tell me that they are Open University graduates, I consider that a definite point in their favor. I immediately imagine a person with a highly developed degree of concentration and self-control, a person who pushes himself. The difference between those of us with degrees and so many others, who wished for the same but failed to achieve it, is the fact that we made demands on ourselves. We managed to set aside our comfort and regular routine and devote ourselves to a life of weekly tutorials, *Ofeq* broadcasts, sessions with tutors, studying from books and taking exams on the highest academic level.

I can only suggest to you – to all of us – that we continue to be strong! Don't ever allow yourselves to give in, whether under pressure of hard work, or any family or other constraints in your personal lives. Do not hesitate to carry on to a Master's degree at the Open University. It may sound like Mission Impossible, but in fact, it is even easier than a first degree.

And do please listen to one piece of advice I would like to pass on: even when you feel the pressure of studying weighing hard on you, do not give in, do not give up what you most want to do. While studying for my degree, I painted my house a few times on a whim, hung several different wallpapers, spent long hours taking care of the garden, never stopped swimming, exercising and – most important of all – being a devoted wife and loving, caring mother to my wonderful children.

Since we Open University students are known for our highly developed self control and managerial ability, and need especially strong powers of concentration, I will conclude with the words of Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, who quotes from the great Vilna Gaon: "A person who controls his thoughts is very rich, for at every available moment he is able to think. One ought to do exercises to control one's thoughts, and do so persistently, since he who persists will succeed."