

# Teaching

Distance learning, which makes it possible for students to study anywhere, at any time, is a unique characteristic of the Open University of Israel. The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, Prof. Sonia Roccas, deals with university-wide and interdepartmental issues related to studies at the Open University. Teaching at the OUI is constantly being improved and upgraded with the help of state-of-the-art technologies. Specific technologies are selected for each course according to its particular features and requirements. This year, there was a special focus on posting video tutorials on many course websites. The range of courses for Bachelor's and Master's degrees has grown and the University's activities have been made more accessible to various target groups. In addition, more transfer channels were introduced to enable students to continue their studies in other higher education institutions.

## Courses Taught for the First Time This Year

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

From Descartes to Hume (**replaces** Philosophy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Rationalism and Empiricism)  
Introduction to Analytic Philosophy  
King, Kingship and Kingdom (**replaces** The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah)  
Russian Jewry and the Challenges of Modernity

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

Creative Writing Workshop: Poetry I, II  
Creative Writing Workshop: Prose Fiction I, II  
Ear Training  
The History of Jazz  
Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics  
Memory, Trauma and Fantasy in American Cinema  
Gender: Culture and Identity (MA)

### Dept. of Education and Psychology

Introduction to Psychology (**revised**)

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

Introduction to Mass Media (**revised**)  
Sociology of Culture  
Citizenship: A Comparative Perspective (MA)  
Pierre Bourdieu: Taste, Cultural Capital and the Arts (MA)  
Popular Culture (MA)  
Selected Topics in Public Policy (MA)  
Qualitative Research Methods (MA)  
The Welfare State: Citizenship, Rights and Resource Distribution (MA)

### Dept. of Management and Economics

Public Economics (**revised**)  
Work Study: Methods Engineering, Work Measurement and Wage Incentives

### Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science

Computer Organization (**revised**)  
Discrete Mathematics: Set Theory, Combinatorics and Graph Theory (**replaces** Discrete Mathematics: Set Theory, Combinatorics and Logic)  
Final Project in Software Engineering  
Fundamentals of Programming with Java  
Numerical Analysis II  
Ordinary Differential Equations II  
Principles of Information Systems Development (**revised**)  
Computer-Aided Verification of Hardware and Software (MSc) (**revised**)  
Introduction to Computer Vision (MSc)  
Seminar: Software Testing (MSc)

### Dept. of Natural Sciences

Inorganic Chemistry (**revised**)  
Integrative Project in Field Studies  
Laboratory: Biochemistry of Proteins (**revised**)  
Laboratory: Cell Biology (**revised**)  
Laboratory: Fundamentals of Physics (**revised**)  
Mammalian Reproduction (**revised**)  
Organic Chemistry for Biology Students (**revised**)  
Waves and Optics

## Programs of Study Offered for the First Time This Year

- Program of studies in African Studies toward a dual-disciplinary BA
- Program of studies in Film Studies toward a dual-disciplinary BA (with History, History of the Middle East and its Cultures, Philosophy, Sociology, Political Science & International Relations, Communication, and Psychology)
- BA in Education (Learning Disabilities) and Psychology
- BA in Cognitive Science and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)
- Division of studies in Public Policy for BA programs with a division of studies

## Cognitive Science – Outstanding Students Track

The Open University has opened a track for outstanding students studying toward a dual-disciplinary degree in Cognitive Science with Psychology or Philosophy. Students accepted will receive benefits, including tuition grants, participation in an Outstanding Students Seminar, and the option to conduct a funded research project tutored by a senior faculty member.

## New Bridges to Other Universities

These transfer channels enable students to take advantage of the Open University's flexibility so they begin their BA studies at the OUI and then, having passed a cluster of courses with the required grade, can choose whether to complete their degree at the OUI or to transfer to another university and continue their studies there. This year, bridges were created to Bar Ilan University in Music and to Tel Aviv University in Physics.

## Outstanding Students

An average grade of 95 or over was earned by 194 students (including 13 graduate students), an achievement that entitled them to inclusion on the President's List for 2009-2010. There were 1,015 students (including 168 graduate students) who completed their degrees with an average of 90-95, placing them on the Dean's List.

## Measurement and Evaluation

As in previous years, a series of evaluations was carried out this year, with the primary goal of providing information and feedback about processes, trends, requirements and satisfaction levels. These included:

- Analysis of trends and characteristics of enrollment patterns among new students over the last 15 years
- Analysis of characteristics of all generations of OUI graduates in preparation for events to celebrate reaching over 30,000 alumni
- Analysis of trends and characteristics among different student populations as a basis for targeted activities by various strategic teams, e.g., students who dropped out after accumulating 72 credits, students writing seminar papers, students in the Arab sector, new immigrant students, and soldiers
- Following up on projects and experiments with a view to designing processes, tools and applications, e.g., the use of digital books, the application of the new virtual learning environment called OPAL, the use of audio books

## Evaluation of student perseverance patterns

A wide ranging study was conducted to learn about continuing study patterns among undergraduate students who began their studies at the OUI in 2001-2005 and dropped out, and patterns of continuing study toward advanced degrees among OUI alumni.

## Training

**Training the teaching staff:** All training programs this year were designed to enhance tutoring skills and course coordination, improve processes on the course and departmental levels, increase commitment to the University among the teaching staff and reinforce their sense of affiliation with the OUI. The new programs included: utilizing automated tools in tutoring; boosting motivation among students; implementing group tutoring principles in tutorial sessions; managing an effective lesson; integrating learning skills into tutoring; using the voice more effectively when tutoring; and more.

There was increased peer group activity for veteran and new tutors, which included a 4-session workshop for new participants and an additional 3-session workshop for tutors who had participated in previous peer group workshops. The workshops enable tutors, teaching different subjects in different geographical locations around the country, to share knowledge and experience and enhance their tutoring skills. Tutors who have taken part in such workshops report a high level of satisfaction, an intention to implement what they learned and a consequent improvement in their tutoring skills.

In response to requests from tutors and/or coordinators of certain courses, observations were carried out at tutorial sessions by a training team that provided feedback on the tutoring. Forty observations were conducted and the participating tutors and course coordinators reported a high degree of satisfaction.

## New in the Library

**Library website:** The new Open University library website was launched this year. The homepage explains the main functions. A new quick search by Ebsco of databases and the catalog has been added.

**The digital book collection:** The collection was expanded this year as well, in accordance with a strategic decision made a year ago and further to agreements between MALMAD (the Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services) and publishers:

- **Books:** Over 200 electronic encyclopedias and textbooks were purchased; the database of the American Psychological Association (APA) was expanded and a further 40,000 book chapters and 1,700 quality encyclopedic entries were added; the *Kotav* library, which includes electronic textbooks in Hebrew, grew to 683 titles; the *Otzar HaHochma* comprehensive digital library of Judaic titles increased to over 50,000 scanned books with the addition of 1,835 new books. Many e-books were added to the catalog to enable easier access for faculty and students.
- **Journals:** Access to the collection of Cambridge journals is now available and prestigious Brill academic publications will be acquired in the near future.
- **Special collections:** A collection of Oxford University Press bibliographies on the Classics, Philosophy and Islamic Studies is available, as is a collection of biblical Judaic sources including over 400 titles in full text.

**Multimedia:** Collections of classical music, jazz, opera and film have been expanded.

**Donations:** This year, the library received major book donations, including the library of prominent Second Temple scholar, the late Prof. Menachem Stern, containing books on the classics, Judaism and the Second Temple era. The collection was a gift from Prof. Stern's son, Pinchas Stern, who is a member of the OUI academic teaching staff. Among the other donations that were received were collections from the late Dr. Eran Oded, the late Ruti Ben Natan, and the late Yoram Ben-Meir. The library completed cataloguing the Arie Leo Motzkin collection, comprising over 5,000 titles.

**Catalogs:** The Aleph catalog was upgraded to an advanced version (Version 20) and designated software now enables the display of book covers in English, as well as abstracts and tables of contents. Work is underway on cataloguing a collection of YouTube video clips of OUI symposia. Approximately 200 clips have already been catalogued and can be accessed from any library in the world. A special collection of rare vinyl records is also being catalogued for use by Music students.

**Auxiliary software:** Auxiliary software has been installed in the reading room for students with disabilities: audio reading programs in English and Hebrew; OCR (optical character recognition) software that converts images and PDF files to text that can be read or edited.

## Pilot Project for Expanding the Accessibility of Studies to Arabic-Speaking Students

In answer to a national need, the Open University's current five-year plan presented a program aimed at expanding the accessibility of higher education to students from the Arab sector, increasing the number of Arabic-speaking students, and raising their rate of success. The program is designed to provide wide-ranging assistance to offset the factors that



limit this population in institutions of higher education. By offering an academic assistance package, the OUI provides these students with a “soft landing” when they begin their academic studies.

The assistance package includes, among others, Arabic-language tutorial sessions, the option to submit assignments and exams in Arabic, posting recordings of tutorial sessions in Arabic on the course websites, offering workshops for improving Arabic-language skills, and learning skills workshops. These students can take up to six courses in Arabic, thus enabling them to familiarize themselves with academic studies before being required to take more advanced courses in Hebrew.

For the last few years, we have been offering parts of this assistance package to students in the Arab sector. This year, we began a University-funded pilot project that examines additional components: We have recorded and videotaped tutorial sessions in Arabic in several courses and posted them on the course websites, where they are accessible

to students at any time. We have increased the awareness of difficulties stemming from learning disabilities among this population, and found Arabic-speaking diagnosticians to provide them with full and suitable support.

Implementation of the program in the framework of the 5-year plan is contingent on state financing.

### Translation of texts into Arabic

Work is continuing on translation of courses into Arabic. “Educational Psychology” has come out in a final edition and the courses “The Middle East Between the World Wars” and “Introduction to the Social Sciences” have appeared in provisional editions.

### Facebook page in Arabic

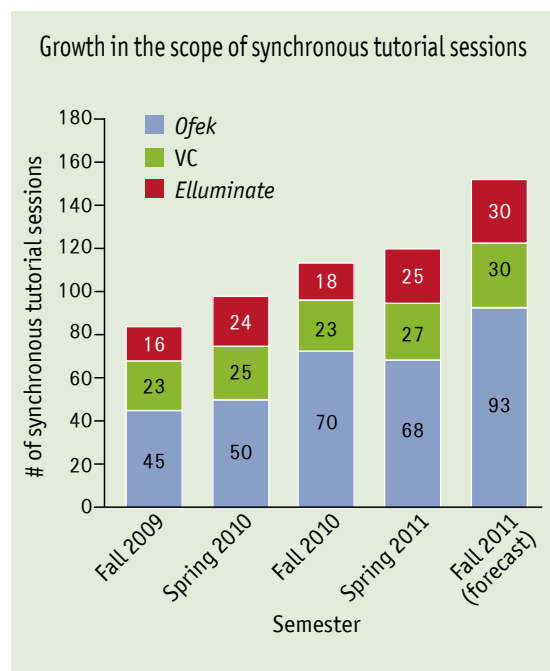
The Open University is the first University in Israel that created a Facebook page in Arabic. The Facebook page serves as a virtual meeting place for its users, and through it, the OUI transmits concise information and updates on topics of interest and importance to students. Through the page, students and potential students can ask questions and receive rapid responses. The page has been online for a year and has 4,259 users – students and many others from Israel and abroad – with between 75 and 150 active users on the page at a time.

## Learning skills guidance

- Sessions with students with learning disabilities were held throughout the year at study centers around the country
- A workshop was offered this year to new OUI students: “Writing Workshop – From the Assignment to the Exam.” The workshop focused on strategies for understanding and analyzing the requirements of questions and formulating answers to different types of questions, as well as suggesting tools for self-assessment in writing
- An updated workshop was held for students taking the revised “Introduction to Psychology” course
- Following the success of the pilot group workshop on writing seminar papers, a decision was made to extend the workshops to all academic departments. The workshop combines group and individual sessions, creates a framework for structured work, and provides feedback more rapidly than in the past to students who submit their papers

## E-Learning Technologies

Use of learning technologies expanded significantly during the year, mainly as a result of enhancing infrastructures and the opening of additional studios, and many new courses now offer regular or intensive tutorial sessions through live online tutorials. Great effort was made to implement the decision that recorded tutorial sessions be posted on all course websites by the end of the summer 2012 semester. Video sessions are designed as synchronous distance lessons and recorded for asynchronous viewing. Live video sessions are supplied by three OUI systems: the *Ofek* system; video-conferencing (VC); and the new *Elluminate* virtual classroom software.



**The OPAL virtual learning environment:** The OPAL virtual learning environment is based on Moodle, an open source course management system, and is gradually replacing the old OPUS learning environment. The development team at *Shoham* (the Center for Technology in Distance Education) is working on enhancing the available OPAL tools and is continuously developing a variety of additional tools designed for the unique requirements of the Open University. All course coordinators will be able to create contents for their courses. To facilitate the switch to the OPAL system, training workshops are offered for course coordinators and individual instruction is available.

**New video studios:** In accordance with the strategic plan to expand video components in teaching and add a set of recorded tutorial sessions to all course websites, four new video studios were constructed. The first studio began operation during the fall 2010 semester and the remaining three have been fully operative since the fall 2011 semester.

**Filming of tutorial sessions without students:** New production methods were developed to support recordings without student attendance. Teaching material for 45 courses was produced this year.

**Filming of classroom tutorial sessions:** Filming tutorial sessions in classrooms began this year and the recordings are posted on the course websites within a few days. The recorded sessions are intended for the group whose session was filmed – whether for review for students who attended the session or those who, for whatever reason, were unable to attend. However, they can also be helpful to students in other study groups, as well as those who may take the same course in future semesters. Classroom filming enables transmitting the interaction with students while tutors teach in their “natural habitat.” To date, 186 sessions in 22 courses have been recorded.

**Open University e-books:** With a view to implementing the digital textbook vision, several working groups were established in four areas: contents and sources; technology and infrastructure; academic products and services; and products and services for the general public. The next stage of work on the program has begun.

**Digital publishing:** Configuration has begun on a new process enabling the production of digital versions of OUI books. The work process is already being implemented on our new textbooks.

**Mobile e-book pilot (*Sadan*):** A pilot experiment was conducted on *Sadan*, the Hebrew acronym for mobile digital book, in which students were loaned mobile digital books on an e-book reading device similar to Kindle, and digitization began for the courses "Genocide" and "Sociology of Culture." The outcome is a file containing learning materials that can be viewed on any device, including a laptop. The pilot was accompanied by an evaluation survey to ascertain the convenience and comfort of reading mobile books, learning styles and the ease of operating the devices, as well as logistical and operational aspects. Initial results indicate that about half of the students (who also received printed books) used the *Sadan*. Overall, 73% of the students reported mobile reading as a positive (64%) or excellent (9%) experience. Most students used the *Sadan* together with the printed books. The survey shows that the main disadvantage of the mobile books, compared to printed versions, is that students had difficulty bookmarking portions of text and adding comments and notes. On the other hand, they were enthusiastic about the benefits of *Sadan*, due to its convenient weight and size, allowing them to carry several books at once with ease.

**Audio books:** Audio books include full versions of the printed texts. Users can listen to the books through the Internet or download them to their personal computers and listen to them on mobile players. Twelve new audio books were published in the following courses: "Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion," "Democratic Regimes," "Genocide," and "Introduction to Psychology." A survey conducted this year among 8,000 students revealed that 26% of students make use of audio books. For the great majority, listening did not replace printed books but supplemented them and provided initial acquaintance with the content, or was used instead of repeat reading. About 27% of those who used the audio books noted that their level of concentration and comprehension increased.

## Improvement of Online Services to Support Teaching

**Assignment submission system:** The system's navigation was improved in the new version.

**Automation of application for studies:** A computerized system has been developed for applying for certificate studies, teaching certificates, continuing studies and graduate studies.

**Computerizing the exam centers:** The secure automated system for exam teams (exam coordinators and staff) at exam centers was expanded to provide up-to-date information during exams. Components include: online transmission of corrections on the exam questionnaire, security of questionnaires, and an option to print out additional questionnaires at the exam center. The new system also enables better management of examination days.

## New Study Centers and Institutions

Activities began in several new study centers this year: Yokne'am, Sakhnin, Um-el Fahm, Bnei Brak (for the ultra-Orthodox sector), the Beit Berl Technology Center, the Performing Arts Academy, Bitui College, as well as El Al and Elta Systems.

The Institutions Forum decided to grant approval, in principle, for two years of activity at any new institutions in which the Open University holds studies toward academic degrees. If the institution does not begin to function, the matter will be re-examined at the end of the two-year period. A format was reached to comply with financial expectations at the approved institutions prior to the start of activity.