

Globalization of Open University Studies



The delegation from Moscow State University for Economics, Statistics and Informatics (MESI) visiting the Open University

The effort to expand globalization of OUI studies focuses on finding channels to make the university accessible to individuals, universities and interested organizations abroad; seeking collaborative ventures with overseas universities with a view to teaching courses and exchanging information on technological capabilities; and through collaboration via international organizations.

External Relations and Collaborative Academic Ventures

- As part of the Open University's cooperation with the University of São Paulo in Brazil, Dr. Zeev Rosenhek, of the Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication, recorded 12 tutorial sessions in Spanish for the course "Trends in Israeli Society." A website was also prepared for the course, with all of the necessary material translated.
- A cooperation agreement was signed with Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (the Open University of Catalonia). The contract includes an option for students of both institutions to sit for exams at the facilities of either university; it also reinforces links on joint study and research programs.
- The Open University joined EADTU as an associate member. EADTU is an umbrella organization of distance learning universities in Europe and serves as a consortium of several universities in various European countries. OUI representatives attended the organization's Executive Committee meetings.
- An agreement was signed between the Open University and the Israel Business Center for a specially designed MBA program for students from France. The students first take courses to improve their Hebrew language skills, and then study in the Department of Management and Economics. Candidates have already been tested in Hebrew and are due to begin studying at the University in the fall 2011 semester.
- A contract was signed to reinforce research links between OUI faculty members and INALCO (the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in Paris). Under the contract, the OUI will be able to award two grants to INALCO students to study courses in Hebrew.
- Links with universities in the CIS continue to grow, with cooperation agreements already signed with 18 different universities, and preparations are at an advanced stage for signing similar agreements with nine others. Representatives of six CIS universities visited the OUI this year. A delegation from the Open University that included Prof. Hagit Messer-Yaron, Prof. Yitzhak Dotan, and Dr. Victorya Libin visited a number of universities in Russia.

- Links were strengthened with MESI (Moscow State University for Economics, Statistics and Informatics) in the field of distance learning. A MESI delegation visited the OUI to look into ways of offering our courses to their students in Russian and to propose relevant courses from their own syllabus for Russian speaking students at the OUI.
- As part of the EADTU project, contact was made with Fernuniversität in Germany, a distance learning university, with a view to enabling OUI students to sit for exams at their study centers in Frankfurt and Berlin. There has also been contact with the Open University of Cyprus (OUC), which is interested in cooperating on technology and MA programs.
- OUI Vice President, Prof. Judith Gal-Ezer attended the 2010 ICDE (The International Council for Open and Distance Education) Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) meeting in Pretoria, South Africa, and President Prof. Hagit Messer-Yaron attended the 2011 SCOP meeting in New York.
- Prof. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit was invited to serve as one of five members of an international advisory committee at the Portuguese Open University, Universidade Aberta.
- OUI President Hagit Messer-Yaron attended the 55th annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, an organ of the UN Economic and Social Council Chamber. Prof. Messer-Yaron, a professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, was invited to participate in a panel on "Key policy initiatives and capacity-building on gender mainstreaming: Focus on science and technology."

Online Studies in Russian

Academic activities in Russian were transferred to the different academic departments, a project requiring extensive attention. The following innovations were introduced:

- Coordinators of courses in Russian were appointed for every course and work in full cooperation with the Hebrew language course coordinator. As far as possible, assignments are identical in both languages.
- All course books were posted on the Russian-language course websites and study is entirely online. Assignments are electronically submitted and checked in Israel by the Russian course coordinators.
- Examinations are held in the usual manner in study centers in the CIS and graded in Israel by the course coordinators.
- Students pay tuition.
- Enrollment for courses takes place online via a designated registration site.
- An asynchronous online marketing and teaching pilot was launched for the 24 courses that were translated into Russian.

This year, about 80 students enrolled for online Russian language studies at the Open University; more than half of these are new students. Two video-conference seminars were held with universities in Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk. Considerable effort was invested in raising funds to allow the translated courses to be included in the *Pe'er* project, so that the unique study materials developed by the OUI can be made available to the general public.