

Teaching

Distance learning, which makes it possible for students to study anywhere and at any time, is a unique characteristic of the Open University. The office of the Dean of Academic Studies, headed by Prof. Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, deals with university-wide and interdepartmental issues related to the OUI. Teaching at the OUI is continuously progressing and growing in sophistication, drawing on a wide range of technologies. Individually-adapted technological "tool boxes" allow solutions suited to the specific characteristics of each course.

During the past year, 5,921 study groups were opened, comprising 42,560 undergraduate students (126,600 enrollments) and 3,755 graduate students (11,648 enrollments). Study groups met at 78 study centers around the country, from the Druze village of Majdal Shams in the north to Eilat in the south.

Programs of Study Offered for the First Time This Year

- BA in Arts
- BA in Literature
- Certificate studies in Educational Administration

Courses Taught for the First Time This Year

Dept. of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies

Fundamentals of Cognitive Science
Philosophy of Cognitive Science

Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts

Digital Music Notation and Creation
Holocaust Survivors, Outsiders and Others in Israeli Cinema and Literature (revised)

Dept. of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication

Introduction to Quantitative Research I: Principles and Design
Introduction to Quantitative Research II: Statistical Analysis
Workshop: Public Relations
Communication as Culture (revised)
War and Strategy (revised)
Introduction to Anthropology (revised)
Introduction to Sociology (revised)
Introduction to Local Government (revised)
Democracy and Democratization (revised) (MA)
Democracy: An Interdisciplinary Approach (revised) (MA)
Relations between Society, Politics and the Military (MA)
Policy Analysis (MA)

Dept. of Natural Sciences

Human Genetics: Medical and Ethical Aspects (for Non-Biologists)
Lasers: Principles and Applications
Introduction to Meteorology (revised)
Secrets of the Universe (revised)
Biological Clocks (revised)
Faunistics of Terrestrial Vertebrates: An Israeli View (revised)
Vegetation of Israel (revised)

Dept. of Management and Economics

Intermediate Macroeconomics I
Intermediate Macroeconomics II
International Economics (revised)
Organizational Behavior (revised)
Game Theory with Business Applications (MA)

Dept. of Education and Psychology

Social Psychology (revised)
Individualized Instruction (revised)
Classroom Interaction (revised)
Economic Aspects of the Education System (MA)
Benefits from Using Assessment Data in Education (MA)
Technology in the Service of People with Special Needs (MA)

Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science

History of Mathematics: From Ancient Greece to Euler's Time

Quality Control

Computational Models in Cognitive Science

Advanced Computer Applications (revised)

Ergonomics (revised)

Discontinued Courses

Idea and Practice: Thomas Jefferson and the Making of American Federalism: 1780-1820

Kibbutz Society: Patterns of Change and Continuity

Educational Theory

Attitudes and Persuasion

Psychology of Gender

Psychology of the Holocaust

Studies in Mathematics Education

Chemistry in Action

Laboratory: Animal Physiology

Wave Transmission and Antennas

Microelectronic Technologies

Bridges to Other Universities

This year, more transfer "bridges" to other universities were added, making it possible for students to benefit from the OUI's flexible undergraduate admissions policy, which has no psychometric entrance exam or high school matriculation requirement. Through the Bridges program, students who successfully complete a cluster of OUI courses have the option of completing their degree at the OUI, or of transferring to specific programs in other universities.

The following bridges to other universities were added this year:

- Bar-Ilan University – Faculty of Engineering
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Dept. of Statistics
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem – School of Social Work and Social Welfare
- Tel Aviv University – School of Mathematics
- Tel Aviv University – Dept. of Statistics and Operations Research
- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev – School of Nursing
- University of Haifa – Dept. of Computer Science
- University of Haifa – School of Nursing

Teaching Committee Decisions

- **Prior proficiency exam:** Students who have not yet taken advantage of their entitlement to improve grades in three degree courses will now be notified in advance that they have another option: Results of the *prior proficiency exam* (required to write a seminar paper) may count towards improving their degree grade, provided that at least two years have passed since completing the course.
- **Exam appeals:** Appeals returned to students must include a detailed response. Computerized processes will decline responses which are not sufficiently detailed.
- **Recordings on course websites:** A recommendation was made to indicate the availability of recordings on course websites and in the course description.
- **Authorization for former course coordinators:** Course coordinators who have ceased work on a particular course, must be authorized by the current coordinator in order to access that course's website.
- **Extended time for English exams:** Students whose high school studies were in a language other than Hebrew are entitled to an additional 30 minutes on exams in their six initial OUI courses. English courses, (with the exception of level A courses) may now be included in these six courses.
- **Use of supplementary materials during selected exams:** Only course materials, including handwritten course notes, may be brought into exams. No printed matter, or any other materials may be used. Notice of this decision will appear, both on the exam notification, and on the exam workbook.
- **Adding media to course websites:** The committee adopted a proposal for adding media to course websites, except for one reservation regarding the posting of tutors' supplementary materials on websites.
- **Exams in revised courses:** In cases where a course number has changed, and the original course material overlaps with the revised course, students may take the exam on the material of the revised course and will receive the credit allocated to that course (although the new course credit may be less). In the case of a revised course whose course number remains unchanged, students who take the exam on the revised course are responsible for any new course material.

- **Seminar papers :** A recommendation was made with regard to locations for meetings between students and seminar paper facilitators.
- **Late enrollments:** The status of a student who submits an enrollment application after the start of the semester will be clarified by the registrar (either invalid, or provisional) no later than the first week of that semester.
- **Internet access requirement:** The Committee recommended that the OUI declare its status as a university in which computer and Internet access are essential requirements for all students. The university remains aware of the need to find solutions for special student populations with limited access to technology, such as incarcerated individuals and Arabic speaking residents of the Negev.

Evaluation

In 2012-2013, as in previous years, a number of evaluations were conducted in order to provide information and feedback on processes, trends, needs, and level of satisfaction among various stakeholders at the university. These studies included:

- Conclusion of the second stage of a study to examine retention rates among students who began studying between 2001 and 2005, combining OUI data with data received from the Central Bureau of Statistics
- Evaluation of progress and persistence indices, according to course level and department
- Specific OUI indicators, examined according to comparative data for 2009-2012
- Evaluation of data on the number of assignments per undergraduate course, according to academic department and semester
- Evaluation of a third group of students' use of e-books via differing technological platforms
- Student evaluation of courses offered as part of the Soft Landing project
- First-year evaluation of Project 100
- Evaluation of accessibility for students with special learning needs (part of the National Insurance Institute's Revolution in Higher Education initiative)
- Processing of data collected as part of the CHE evaluation

Training

Training for faculty members

- The training program for new tutors focused on the OUI tutor's role. Topics included supporting students through tutorials, providing useful feedback on assignments, and building effective tutor-student relationships, as well as additional advanced tutoring skills.
- New workshops, available to veteran tutors wishing to improve the quality of their work, included: public speaking, integrating manipulatives into tutorials, creating effective presentations, correct use of the board, efficient combination of visual aids such as video clips and demonstrations, tutoring of students with special learning needs, and topics related to the first and last sessions of each semester.
- As requested by tutors and study coordinators, observations of tutorials have continued this year.
- Seminar paper workshops increased from 19 courses offered in 2011-2012, to 30 in 2012-2013, and training was provided for study coordinators and seminar paper instructors.
- This past year, a decision was made to begin tutor evaluations. The idea was introduced to each academic department, after which, the Training Department introduced workshops for course coordinators on "Tutor evaluation, feedback and discussing feedback." The workshops were attended by 200 course coordinators.
- Workshops were offered on effective tutorial observations.

Expanding Accessibility for Arabic-Speaking Students

The OUI has continued its efforts towards making higher education more accessible to Arabic speakers by offering more options to ease their entrance into university studies.

- The Soft Landing program offers Arabic tutorial sessions, the option of writing assignments and taking exams in Arabic, and recordings of tutorials in Arabic on course websites.
- **New study centers in the Arab sector:** Four new study centers were opened in the Arab sector last year: the Arab Community College, (an East Jerusalem branch of Beit Hanina), the Rassala Center in Qalansuwa, the Academic Advancement Center in Kfar Kassem, and the

Israeli College for Sports Science in Akko. Thanks to these four new sites, OUI studies are now available at a total of 16 Arab-sector study centers.

- **Project 100:** Approximately 100 students took part in this program, which is supported by the PBC. This structured study program includes specific OUI courses which are required for students wishing to transfer to other universities. Curricular areas included in this project focus on preparing students for careers which are in high demand in the Arab sector. The Soft Landing program incorporates academic courses taught in Arabic, workshops in Hebrew language, courses in English, and extra academic support. After successfully completing the initial coursework, students have the option of transferring to other universities or continuing to study at the OUI.
- **Additional measures:** During 2012-2013, the modifications initially offered only at Arab-sector study centers were expanded to include all Arabic speakers at the OUI. The following services are now offered in Arabic: exams, assignments posted on course websites for six of the courses in the Soft Landing program, and academic support, both by phone and online. In addition, several course books which have been translated into Arabic are delivered free of charge to any student enrolled in the course. Students attending study centers who are interested in receiving course books in Arabic may order them as well.
- **Soft Landing course assignments in Arabic:** The process of submitting assignments in Arabic has been computerized, and eligible students may also receive grades online for assignments submitted in person.

E-Learning Technologies

The number of courses taught via e-learning technologies increased significantly this past year, as did the number of courses offering audio or video-recorded tutorials on the websites.

Course websites in the OPAL learning environment

The Open University continues to develop the OPAL system (based on the worldwide Moodle learning environment), while customizing it to specific OUI requirements. OPAL is accessible on laptops, tablets and smartphones. Interest in

the OUI's specific advances among Moodle users in Israel and abroad has led to the creation of OPAL Global, which introduces OUI systems to academic institutions around the world.

Live distance-learning sessions

Three different OUI systems offer distance-learning sessions: *Ofek*, video-conferencing (VC), and virtual classrooms. These synchronous distance sessions were also uploaded to course websites for asynchronous viewing. During the past year, students were offered 344 courses in this format, including 163 courses via *Ofek*, 43 courses via the virtual classroom, and 53 courses through video conferencing. In-class videos comprised 54 courses; and 22 courses were recorded in studio. In addition, there were 9 recordings of Arabic tutorials. Since Fall 2013, synchronized tutorials have been broadcast via *Ofek* and video-conferencing to PCs, MACs, tablets and smartphones.

Videos for training and marketing

In the past year a variety of different videos were produced, some of which were added to course toolboxes. These included films of course facilitators, study guidance, solutions to practice questions in various courses, a seminar paper writing workshop, and promotional films for courses and for potential students. In addition, a series of library database training films was produced, as well as a series of training films for faculty, focusing on video tutoring and learning technologies.

Online Teaching Support Services

- **Scanning of exam workbooks:** This past year, scanning of the main section of the exam workbook was completed.
- **Additional formats for submitting online assignments:** Students now have the option of uploading standard format files to the assignments system, which now accepts Office 2007 and later versions (including *xlsx*, *docx*, and *pptx*).

New in the Library

During the past year, the library administration, together with the *Shoham* Center for Technology in Distance Education and the Computer Administration, developed a

bibliography training website on OPAL. The site includes videos, practice questions, and a bibliography exam, which students must pass before registering for advanced courses. The exam is automatically graded and posted online, showing the correct answers and providing feedback on errors. Grades are automatically transferred to the Oracle database. The new website replaces the library's outdated Learners Portal.

New Study Centers and Institutes

Many organizations have sought permission to offer OUI degree studies, among them the following new study centers and institutions, authorized during the past year:

- Teaching institutions: Ruppin Academic College; *Basis* School of Art and Sculpture.
- Places of Employment: SuperPharm; Hatzetim Air Force base.
- Arab sector: Al-Qasemi College of Education, Baqa-el Gharbia; Arab Community College, Beit Hanina branch; Rassala Center, Qalansuwa; Academic Advancement Center, Kfar Kassem; Israeli College of Sports Science, Akko.
- Ultra-Orthodox sector: *Hakidma Hatechnologit* (Technological Progress) religious seminary, Rishon LeZion; YNR Institute for Marriage and Family Studies, Jerusalem; *Or V'Yeshua* religious seminary, Haifa; Magid Institute for Continuing Education, Jerusalem; and the Higher Education Technology Institute, Tel Aviv.
- Local authority employees in the Local Government Program: Ma'alot Tarshiha, Nahariya, Be'er Sheva, Ramat Gan.
- New study centers were opened in Arad and Mitzpe Ramon under the auspices of Be'er Sheva's Beit Yatziv.