

# 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 character of each course.

During the past year, 5,429 study groups were opened for 701 courses. Study groups met at 78 study centers around the country. In addition, students in Israel and abroad participated in online instruction via a variety of advanced technologies.

## Programs of Study Approved by the CHE and Offered for the First Time This Year

- BA in Philosophy
- BA in Philosophy with concentration in other fields
- BSc in Life Sciences, with a cluster of pre-med courses

## Courses Taught for the First Time This Year

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

The Crusades: History and Historiography  
Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma in Islam

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

Linguistics and Cognition  
Popular Music in Israel  
Foundations of the Theory of Meaning: Semantics and Pragmatics (revision)  
Basic Cinematography Workshop  
Basic Scriptwriting Workshop  
Introduction to Israeli Cinema: 1948-1990 (revision)

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

The Human Commodity: Slavery and  
Slave Trade in and from Africa

### Dept. of Management and Economics

Contemporary Theories of Economic and Social Justice

### Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science

Object Oriented Programming  
Database Systems Implementation (revision)  
Approximation Algorithms (revision)  
Software Project Management  
Research Seminar: Topics in Software Engineering

### Dept. of Education and Psychology

Cognition and Threat (MA)  
Social Cognition (MA)  
Selected Issues in Social Psychology I (MA)  
Selected Issues in Social Psychology II (MA)  
Learning and Education in the Information Society (MA)  
Psychology of Aging and Old Age  
Feelings, Emotions and Information Processing (MA)  
Individual Differences (MA)  
Research Seminar I and II (MA)  
Curriculum Planning, Teaching, and Evaluation (revision)  
Questionnaire Development: Theory and Practice (MA)  
Advanced Statistics and Research Methods I and II (MA)  
Judgment and Evaluation for Students of Management and Economics (revision)

### Dept. of Natural Sciences

Plant Physiology

### MA in Social Psychology

This past year, a master's degree in social psychology was offered for the first time. The program provides a strong theoretical and methodological basis. Social psychology is a dynamic field requiring that those who work in it be able to independently keep current with the evolving professional literature. The study program exposes students to research and provides them with the tools necessary for critically evaluating the validity and quality of the research that they will encounter.

The study program combines theoretical courses with applied aspects of social psychology. Students will gain a thorough understanding of the field, as well as relevant tools and experience.

## School of Local Government

The Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI) and the Open University signed a joint agreement in February 2012 to establish a School of Local Government, further to a tender issued by the Union which was won by the OUI. The school's goal is to promote higher education among local authority employees. Studies began in Fall Semester 2013. The provisional agreement was extended until the end of the 2016 academic year.

The school is managed by a joint steering committee of the university and ULAI, headed by Prof. Yagil Levy. Academic management is the sole responsibility of the university.

The school originally offered a BA in social sciences with an emphasis on public policy, but as of Summer Semester 2014 most of the students had switched to a BA in social sciences and humanities with a diploma in local authority studies.

In the past year the school taught a total of three hundred students, of whom over two hundred are employed at local authorities or NPOs connected to local authorities.

Grants are offered to the students; further to the agreement with ULAI, the university contributes 4% of the tuition fees (not including auxiliary payments) to a cumulative fund in favor of a ULAI grant fund. Special grants are given for English courses in peripheral regions. As of 2014, an agreement was also reached between ULAI and Mifal HaPaysis to offer all local authority employees a grant of NIS 4,400 for each year of study.

## Transfer Tracks to Other Universities

This year, more transfer tracks 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 transfer tracks 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 transfer opportunities were added this year:

- Tel Aviv University – School of Psychological Sciences
- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev – Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- University of Haifa – Department of Psychology

## Structured Study Programs

The university is preparing to introduce three- and four-year structured study programs for students beginning their studies in 2014-2015. The programs offer students an additional tool to help plan their degree studies, and are designed specifically for new students with no prior study experience. In order to enroll in a structured BA program, students must first receive academic guidance to plan their program. Tuition is paid annually, as at other universities, rather than on a course-by-course basis. At the pilot stage, eight structured programs will be available:

- BA in Humanities: Emphasis on Middle East Studies
- BA in Literature and Film Studies
- BA in Social Sciences: Emphasis on Communication
- BA in Psychology
- BA in Management and Economics
- BSc in Computer Science
- BSc in Computer Science – Systems and Applications
- BSc in Life Sciences: Emphasis on Cellular and Molecular Biology

## Pilot Program – Submitting Assignments

A pilot program introduced this year by the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies allows students to determine their final grade weighting format for courses and to decide which, if any, assignments to submit as part of their final grade.

## Evaluation

In 2013-2014, as in previous years, a number of evaluations were conducted in order to provide information and feedback on processes, trends, requirements, and level of satisfaction among various stakeholders at the OUI. These studies included:

- A general assessment of all course elements, including tutoring, assignments and study methods (including technology), instead of focusing only on the teaching component

- Assessment of Project 100 for Arabic-speaking students
- CHE quality assessment for Education and Management
- A comprehensive survey on library usage, which included students, graduates, teaching staff, and senior faculty

An evaluation of the MOOCs pilot, which covered three courses in three different languages, showed a very high degree of satisfaction. Many participants said they would recommend a MOOC to their friends. Information obtained from the pilot will be used in the design of new courses.

## Training

The Training Department continues to coach new tutors and course coordinators, while also organizing workshops for veteran instructors. Technical training and pedagogical workshops are offered every semester. The department also helped design a recruitment and training system for the information call centers.

- The training program for new tutors has three foci: the role of the tutor, checking and providing feedback for assignments, and advanced tutoring skills. This year, accessibility was highlighted as an integral part of overall OUI policy.
- New workshops were offered to veteran tutors with a view to improving the quality of study sessions. Some of the topics discussed were the use of metaphor, teaching unpopular subjects, improving organizational skills, and boosting effectiveness. As part of the university's general accessibility initiative, a workshop introduced tutors to cognitive-behavioral strategies for students with attention deficits. Other workshops addressed tutoring in front of a camera (in synchronous *Ofek* sessions or via other technologies), and public speaking. Tutors were also offered the option of consulting with experts to discuss teaching skills and strategies.
- The Tutor and Lens workshop for faculty members and course coordinators was part of the ongoing pedagogic training offered throughout the year. The workshop focused on teaching in front of a camera, as well as on lesson planning. New and veteran course coordinators can receive pedagogical support from a Shoham professional.

- The Playback Theater Ensemble for tutors was launched this year as an annual event in order to promote good listening skills and conflict resolution within a group. Through theater, tutors develop more effective responses to various work scenarios, events, processes and behavior patterns in the classroom. The lively interactive setting helps tutors improve their body language, listening skills, and empathy to individuals and the group, as well as cultivating a sense of partnership within the OUI tutor community.
- Observations of tutoring sessions continued at the request of tutors and/or course coordinators.
- Training for course coordinators continued this year, with coaching for work-related issues and management skills.

## Accessibility of Higher Education for Arabic Speaking Students

### Third Hour Project

Students at designated Arabic language study centers are allowed an extra hour of study in all Hebrew-language courses and those included in the Soft Landing program. The goal is for Arabic speakers to acquire learning skills that will not only help them succeed in specific courses, but will help them ultimately earn an Open University degree. The project reinforces learning skills such as reading and analyzing primary sources and academic articles, writing assignments, and academic writing in general. In the past year, the project focused on courses in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies.

## Teaching Technologies

### Course websites in the Opal learning environment

Configuration and development began during 2013-2014 for the new responsive version of the Opal virtual learning environment, based on the Moodle 2 model, which will adapt itself in structure and interface to any device.

### Live distance-learning

The Open University offers three systems for distance learning sessions: *Ofek* – live broadcasts from video studios on the Raanana campus; video conferencing (VC) – live sessions broadcast from classrooms to VC classrooms at

study centers and to students' computers; and virtual classrooms – sessions transmitted from tutor to students via computer. All sessions are recorded and posted on course websites after the live transmission for use by all students in the course. The live sessions and recordings are also available on all mobile devices. This year, the new ZOOM system has enabled learning with video footage for multiple participants. It is hoped that this system will improve the ability of students to interact during live sessions. It is currently in an experimental stage, and further decisions will be made as to its implementation in future courses.

Video studio infrastructures and broadcast systems were upgraded during the year. Computers were replaced, state-of-the-art cameras purchased; and control station and video transmission cables were improved, resulting in significantly improved filmed courses and live and recorded transmissions.

### Training videos

Several short training films were available to students during the year, including a filmed workshop on reading and comprehension; using library data bases; tutoring for Arabic speaking students (part of the Third Hour project); and more.

## New in the Library

The most outstanding innovation in the library during the past year was the establishment of the National Reference Center, which offers OUI students and staff support in accessing information from catalogs and databases, using advanced communications technologies. In addition to traditional methods of accessing reference materials, new real-time desktop sharing technologies such as GoToMeeting are available, with additional technologies being considered. A direct link to the National Reference Center is available to students on campuses around the country. In addition, libraries hours have been extended on days preceding exams. Many students took advantage of the quiet environment to prepare for exams.

## New Study Centers and Learning Institutions

- **Learning institutions in the ultra-Orthodox sector:** the Y.N.R. Center (Bnei Brak branch) of Image College for graphic design and communications for women, at the Ein Hemed campus, under the sponsorship of the Mali campus in Musrara.
- **Study centers at local authorities:** Nahariya; and Dimona, Ofakim and Yerucham (under the auspices of Beit Yatziv).



Classroom in Ofakim

כיתה לימוד באופקים