

Students

A "student" at the Open University is defined as a person who has registered for one or more courses. The "total number of students" refers to the number of people studying at the OUI. A student taking two or more courses is counted only once.

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 42,266 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses, compared with 42,865 in 2014-2015. An additional 3,717 students registered exclusively for seminar papers. Of the total number of undergraduates, 13,253 (31%) were new students.

Enrollment for graduate courses reached 3,114 students (including qualifying courses) compared with 3,296 in 2014-2015. An additional 98 students were registered for writing seminar papers, 26 for final projects, and 70 for writing theses.

The OUI teaching method does not require undergraduate students to complete a structured study program within a determined period of time. Therefore, in addition to

absolute statistics, we are presenting data that enables comparison with students pursuing a full program towards a degree (FTE=Full Time Equivalent). The calculation is based on the number of course enrollments in a given year, divided by a factor expressing the number of annual enrollments that entitles a student to complete a degree over four years. In FTE terms, 24,546 undergraduate students were enrolled in 2016, (compared with 25,019 in 2014-2015).

Scholarships

This year, 4,410 scholarships were awarded to students, including 3,296 scholarships based on financial need.

Outstanding Students

During the past year, 302 students, including 39 graduate students (0.7% of the total number of OUI students) were included on the President's List, and 1,179 students, including 189 graduate students (2.6% of the total student population) were included on the Deans' List.

Profile of an outstanding student

Avital Kessler, a mother of five from Kiryat Shmona, is a graduate student in education, in the technology and learning systems track. She heads the Thinking Gym project that promotes thinking in children with learning disabilities.

"I arrived at the OUI by chance, almost by mistake. I generally mistrusted the academic establishment. I felt certain I would not be accepted because of my unorthodox educational approach. After being accepted, I was still not sure that I would succeed. But during the first semester, I realized that I was in the right place. Gradually I regained confidence in the academic system and at the same time, in myself. I have studied with wonderful professional guides and course coordinators, who, first and foremost, were first-rate human beings. To my surprise, my unusual perspectives received positive feedback, and I have learned much from people who thought differently from myself. I am surprised and excited every time I encounter the OUI's

serious and respectful attitude towards its students. The technologies which had once intimidated me were revealed to be effective tools in nurturing the children whose progress I see as my calling.

The magical Tiberias landscape of the learning center and its dedicated staff, motivated me to persevere and participate in face-to-face sessions. The diversified learning group made me comfortable with the "less known and less accepted" which I represented. My initial goal was to study, but in retrospect, I have also made true friends. When people ask me, 'How do you manage to study and be a mother to a large family?' I fail to understand how else this can be done. Distance learning requires strong support. My husband and my wonderful children envelope me in boundless support. The skills required to fulfill assignments are not so different from those required to raise a child. They take perseverance, devotion, positive focus, patience (especially in the face of challenges), and sometimes, sleepless nights."

Special population groups - undergraduates

Population	No. of Students*
Arabic speakers	6,390
High school students	1,124
Soldiers on compulsory service	647
Ultra-orthodox**	1,300
Students with special needs	690
Students abroad	747
Incarcerated students	72

* Undergraduates

** Based on the Central Bureau of Statistics report "Higher Education in Israel – Selected data for 2016" (6/11/2016)

Students with Disabilities

A total of 747 OUI students have disabilities and special learning needs, including impaired hearing, impaired vision, physical or motor disabilities, and various chronic illnesses. Study materials have been made accessible, and exam conditions have been adapted and tailored to their special requirements.

Student Rights

In compliance with the law and the practice of the CHE regarding adjustments of terms for studying and exams due to fertility treatments, pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, child custody or fostering, requests were submitted by 820 students.

Accessibility to Services and integration of students with disabilities

In 1998, a law was passed legislating equal rights for persons with disabilities, to promote their full integration in society and in the community. According to the law, a service is defined as accessible to people with disabilities if it meets their needs and enables them to profit of this service equally and with honor, similar to people without disabilities.

The accessibility unit of the Office of the Dean of Students has been promoting infrastructural and building operations to improve accessibility, and to ensure appropriate services. In 2015-2016, the five main OUI study centers received

accessibility certifications. An information pamphlet on accessibility is regularly distributed to all OUI employees.

Israeli-Ethiopian Students

Following an analysis of the needs of Israeli-Ethiopian students, the OUI launched a program intended to assist students who require the academic and social support made possible within the unique framework of the OUI. The program focuses on reinforcing academic and personal skills and encouraging academic perseverance. Eligible students receive an individualized support package comprising financial aid, guidance, academic and personal counseling, and access to a variety of workshops.

In 2016, about 80 Israeli-Ethiopian students participated in the program.

High School Students

This year, 1,189 high school students from 9th through 12th grade, representing 145 schools, enrolled in degree studies (an increase of about 100 compared with the previous year). Of these students, 37 were acknowledged for academic excellence and received scholarships, and 17 were included on the Dean's List. Among the students graduating this year, 44 began their OUI studies while still in high school. Twenty of the students graduated *cum laude and summa cum laude*.

This has been the fourth year of the Academia in High School program, implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. This program is supported by the schools and the Ministry of Education, and allows high school students to exchange specific matriculation examinations with OUI courses. This year, 990 high school students enrolled in the program (20% more than in 2014-2015). In a ceremony held at the OUI in May, 193 program participants received certificates and scholarships from the Ministry of Education for outstanding achievements in the 2015-2016 school year.

Student Retention Unit

This year, the OUI defined student retention as a strategic goal. This requires a conceptual revision of the Unit for Student Retention's focus, from handling dropouts to encouraging active students, and fostering their

perseverance towards graduation. The unit will use its authority and knowledge to generate a policy that will encourage the promotion of student retention as an integral part of OUI work procedures.

Improved Student Services

Student registration at study centers by QR code: Posters carrying the website address and the QR code have been hung in study centers. Candidates at the study centers can scan the code or feed in the website address, and complete their registration independently. This will make the registration process more efficient, reduce the need to transfer forms from the learning center to the registration center at the Ra'anana campus, and eliminate the need to key-in the information by registration center staff, thus reducing the time required to integrate the information into the system. This development also enables study centers to maintain contact with students.

MyOp: A new app now available on the OUI home page and the OUIPORTAL enables the students to see all the OUI systems and services that correspond to their authorizations and user-properties, from anywhere, at any time and through any format.

OUI Website in Arabic: A new website has been developed for Arabic-speaking prospective students.

The "easy connection" system: The system enables users to set, change or restore their password and codename online, in a fast and user-friendly way, from the very beginning of their interaction with the OUI. Secure identification is ensured, among other ways, by emailing a dedicated link to the system, and by texting a personal verification code to one's mobile phone.

Improved notification about packages sent to students by post: A new method has been developed to notify students by SMS. This cuts down on the waiting time for notification.

Career Guidance and Placement

This year, a new employment and career site, OpJob.com, was launched. The site offers access to job sites, information on new jobs, events, conferences and workshops, online courses on career and personal development, as well as tips and blogs. Over 4,000 students are registered

in the job search system, and over 1,000 graduates are seeking employment. Over 2,000 employers offer employment opportunities, which are updated daily. OpJob has conducted three workshops this year on career development. Newsletters regarding employment and careers are now sent to all students and recent graduates.

Student Association

The association continues improving its services and the individual and collective learning experience of students. Once again, its main event this year was Student's Day. The association has granted over 80 scholarships for voluntary work on campus, community help, reserve military service, and more. Traditional activities and projects continued this year, including the trip to Poland, popular debate workshops, the Saluting the Reserves project, collaboration with Taglit, study marathons, enrichment courses, and free legal advice to students. New projects were added, including the OpPortunity Project, which creates opportunities for students who are artists or own small businesses to engage in cooperative and marketing ventures, and female-empowerment workshops held at Beit Berl. Three clubs were inaugurated for students with common interests: OUpla for students who are parents, the Real Estate Club for students who wish to become familiar with this field in Israel and abroad, and Model UN.

In 2015-2016, special attention was focused on student volunteering, with a variety of volunteer projects taking place around the country, and participation in Good Deed Day. Sahbak, the new flagship project of the Students' Association, coordinates community work, and organizes encounters between volunteering students. The association aims to continue expanding its collaborations with various non-profit organizations.

Towards the end of the 2016 school year, elections were held for the Student Association Council, and a new management entered office. The management aims to leverage and extend the variety of activities, and increase the number of students participating in them. It aspires to represent all the students and intensify their sense of belonging, and promises to be attentive to their needs and offer them a supportive environment during their studies at the university.

Athletics

The men's squash team, and the women's judo and rowing machine teams spearheaded this year's OUI team achievements. The teams won first place in the Academic Sports Association's international games. The men's tennis team won second prize, and the men's table tennis team won third prize for teams, and second prize for two players. The debate team won third place for teams (fourth place for institutions), the men's judo team won third prize, and the chess team won fourth place. In addition to the team victories, OUI athletes won personal gold medals in judo (men and women) and in table tennis (men), as well as silver and bronze medals, and medals in squash and chess. The OUI teams also participated in 3x3 basketball competitions for women, and in 2x2 beach volleyball matches for women and men. At the close of the 48th

International Academic Sports' Association games, OUI athletes had reached 15th place out of thirty participating Israeli higher-education institutions. This year too, the OUI held internal championships for students and employees in chess, table tennis, bowling, debate, rowing machines, tennis and squash.

Eight women and 24 men were granted certificates of excellence from the dean of students and study scholarships for their achievements in representing the OUI in competitions. We are pleased and proud to note that Israel's judo delegation to the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro included two OUI students – Gilli Cohen, and bronze medal winner Yarden Gerby.