Course Development and Learning Technologies

Course development, which lies at the heart of the OUI's academic endeavor, is under the auspices of the Office of the Dean of Development and Educational Technology. The Dean, Prof. Oren Soffer, oversees the office's two divisions: The Center for Technology in Distance Education (Shoham) and the Academic Development and Publishing Department.

The development process is complex and involves multiple stages. Together with the faculty, many OUI professionals are involved in the process, combining expertise in text, design, video, programming, and pedagogy.

Most of the developed courses are based on printed and digital books and textual study materials. OUI textbooks provide the basis for courses offered at most of the institutions for higher education in Israel.

Along with the printed materials we offer, each year has seen an increase in the scope of study materials produced in other formats as well, including filmed courses, educational software and interactive resources. All materials, both textual and visual, can be found on the course websites, where they can be accessed via a variety of formats, to enable dynamic and effective independent study.

Courses Approved for Development

History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies

Brothers and Aliens: The Role of the Other in Shaping National Identity in Biblical Historiography (MA)
Journalism as a Formative Tool in Modern Arab History (MA)
Between East and West: Intercultural Meetings in the Hellenistic Era (MA)
Knowledge, Interpretation, Understanding: An Approach to Humanities
Gender and Revolution in the Middle East (MA)
Textual Research in the Digital Age
Issues in the History of Consumption and Consumerism (MA)
The Pantheistic Controversy: A Foundational Episode in German-Jewish Intellectual History (MA)
Prague and the Czech Reformation: Jewish and Christian Lives in a Multicultural Reality (MA)
Colonialism and Modernization, Jews of Muslim Countries in the Modern Era: Fundamental Questions (MA)

Literature, Language, and the Arts

Elements of Music I
Elements of Music II
Elements of Music III
The Classical Literature of India: Religions, Cultures, and Philosophies
Across Boundaries: Linguistic Interfaces

Management and Economics

Introduction to Law

Sociology, Political Science, and Communication

International Political Economy
Training Program of the Knesset
Introduction to Law
Morality Without Rules: Character, Virtues, and Vices
Research Seminar: Gender and Politics (MA)
Research Seminar: States and Globalization: Anthropological Perspectives (MA)
Contemporary Cultural Cosmopolitanism (MA)

Education and Psychology

Ethics in Education (MA)
Psychological Distance and Construal Level (MA)
Honors Research Seminar: Attention and Cognition
Attention and Cognition (MA)

Mathematics and Computer Science

Introduction to Cyber Security
Data Science Workshop
Seminar on Natural Language Processing (MA)
Research Seminar: Deep Learning for Natural Language Processing (MA)
Final Project in Industrial Engineering
Defensive System-Programming

Natural Sciences

Introduction to Surface Science
Physics Lab C2
A Lab of One's Own: Women in Biological Research (MA)
Animal Physiology
Physical Climatology

New OUI Titles

Category	No. of Titles
Textbooks, final version	23
Textbooks, provisional version	57
Anthologies and study guides	91

Learning Technologies

The learning environment and course websites

In the past year, approximately 5.5 million visits were logged on our course websites, an increase of 8% over the previous year. Most activity took place via forums and through the viewing of videos. The focus this year was on development and improvement of the following areas:

- **Forum accessibility:** Navigation, keyboard accessibility, and use of a screen reader.

- **Video transcription, subtitles and search tools:** Complete, automatically rolling transcription of filmed courses was added, and fully synchronized. In addition, a textual search links directly to corresponding points in the film.

- **Optimal compatibility of the learning environment to mobile devices.**

Online tutoring

In the second semester of 2018, online groups were opened for 338 courses; 88% via the ZOOM system, and the remainder on Ofek. In 2017-2018, registrations for online groups reached 32,392, accounting for 24% of all course registrations. This is an increase of 12% compared to 2016-2017.

Pedagogical planning and development

Over the past year, a new methodology – the pedagogy of online learning sequences – was formulated for the development of OUI courses, in order to present print and digital learning materials in an organized format on course websites. Teaching syllabi are now presented according to the units of a course, and are composed of an interactive combination of learning and study resources, including texts, video, audio, animation, interactive exercises, etc. Every such syllabus clearly states the goals of the unit, expected learning outcomes, and the skills which will be attained. The study materials are divided into smaller units of content, making them more accessible for students. This method also provides academic staff with statistical data regarding the study habits of students and enables pedagogical intervention to fix points of failure identified on the basis of data analysis. The methodology is already offered to students in ten courses and is being tested for additional use.

Filmed courses

The production of filmed lectures continues to develop and grow, ranging from short video clips intended for focused explanations of certain issues, to a full array of filmed lectures which form the main study format for certain courses, replacing textbooks, selected chapters, or study guides. Lectures are filmed by leading experts from the OUI and elsewhere, and are presented in a dynamic, visual manner. The presence of the lecturer creates the sense of an actual meeting. This format is an alternative and relatively fast way for developing or updating OUI courses. Production improvements have been noted in the use of filmed courses in the pedagogy of online learning sequences, development of a prototype, professional supervision in the studio, editorial supervision, and uniformity of graphics.

Enriched digital learning materials

Texts and study guides incorporate video and audio clips and links to websites that offer additional resources and information. Students using the print versions of books can also take advantage of these media resources via a smartphone app that scans the QR codes embedded in the books, which then refer the reader to media specifically to the textual material. Linked resources can be organized, updated, and managed without having to reprint the book. The system also allows the accessing of statistical information pertaining to students' use of these books.

Digital accessibility

Over the past year, regulations were approved requiring institutions of higher education to make services accessible. The digital aspect is the joint responsibility of The Center for Technology in Distance Education (Shoham), the Office of the Dean of Students, the Computer Center, the Academic Development and Publishing Department, and the Unit for Exam Logistics. Much work has been invested in developing work processes, instruction, and integration of tools in order to produce accessible digital products. These include the production of subtitles for some filmed courses, and the design of processes in order to create accessible versions of digital textbooks. Instructional sessions were held for administrative staff and academic faculty members.