Evaluation

The evaluation department assists policymakers at the OUI to improve procedures and make decisions based on data. In order to accomplish this, the department conducts studies and processes data on matters of importance to the OUI, and provides quality results with applicable and valid conclusions.

The department specializes in three main areas:

- Formative evaluations – These assessments supplement projects conducted at the OUI at their outset. Formative evaluations focus on improving processes through feedback during the course of implementing the program. For that purpose, measurements are taken at defined points which enable project directors to improve the processes in real time, so that the process of learning and improvement can take place. The evaluation tools mainly take the form of questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews.

- Applied research – This is the study of effectiveness of interventions and their impact on different success indexes defined in advance. Special student populations (Arabic speakers, students with learning disabilities, Ethiopian-Israeli students, the ultra-Orthodox, etc.) are studied and evaluated. The work includes planning research methodologies and the use of suitable comparison groups, even before launching intervention programs, in order to ultimately ascertain whether the intervention was effective or not. The studies in this field are based on existing data in OUI databases, and, as needed, in the results of designated questionnaires measuring attitudes, values, feelings, etc.

- Data science – The data science field is a major and developing branch, which allows data to be drawn from large databases, producing new insights for the organization, which do not necessarily result from standard research methods. In this field, advanced data processing is conducted, based on complex, statistical algorithms, which take many factors into account simultaneously.

Below are examples of some of the studies conducted by the department during the past year.

Formative evaluations:

- Evaluation of the key courses which have undergone pedagogical modification led by the Department of Teaching and Learning: The evaluation was conducted during the first two semesters of change implementation. The study included conceptualization of the theoretical model of the change, definition of the success indexes in different time ranges, and development of evaluation tools. To date, formative evaluation has been conducted which has included data collecting via questionnaires and/or interviews with teaching coordinators, academic tutors, and students several times during the implementation. This will be continued for the next key courses. The data from the evaluation of the first semester enabled the directors of the program to improve the training processes for tutors and the implementation processes to be integrated into other courses.

- Supervision of the Honors Seminar of Management: This course was first launched during the first semester of 2018. Participating students were chosen via a screening process. The course combines internships in organizations with tutorial sessions, and close supervision by teaching staff. The information obtained during the two interviews with students during the year enabled the course staff to improve the processes in anticipation of the next year.

- The implementation of a project in which female Arabic-speaking students mentor new students was tracked with a view to improving the project before it is expanded.

Applied research:

- A study dealt with the characteristics and progress of Arabic-speaking students at the OUI over the past ten years at different types of study centers.

- A study described high school students at the OUI within the framework of the Academia in High School program and their chosen study tracks.

- A study described trends of registration for courses, and successful retention of new students in each academic department and in each field of study. The evaluation reflects the burden of teaching placed on every department and the increasing burden as students progress through their studies. This research is part of a two-year project of ongoing discussions with the academic departments regarding data, and will address a different issue each time.

- A study was conducted on the subject of course evaluation surveys and their connection to various characteristics of the students who respond to the surveys (for example: background variables, success, academic degree, stage of progress towards a degree). These data helped us learn about the course evaluations in preparation for constructing a renewed process of thinking about the evaluation survey.

- The studies of Ethiopian-Israeli and ultra-Orthodox students were tracked including an examination of the effectivity of interventions.

Data science:

- An examination was made of the feasibility of using prediction models with OUI data. For this purpose, eight models were constructed for predicting cancellation of registration for courses out of a pool of demographic and academic variables of students. Presently, additional models are being checked, which deal with predicting retention, and will be presented to the relevant parties at the OUI in the coming year.

- Models were constructed describing the track for choosing courses after the first course, as evident from course registration by new students in a department. The results were presented to the heads of academic departments and other faculty members, and subsequently, ideas were proposed for more complex models that will be able to assist or support with information and consultation provided to students.

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