

Students

A *student* at the OUI is defined as a person who has taken at least one academic course in a given year. The total number of students relates to the number of people studying at the OUI. The statistics for students counts a student registered for two or more courses only once.

During the past year, 44,447¹ students studied towards bachelor's degrees (including those writing seminar papers). The number of new bachelor's degree students for the year was 12,818 (29%).

Graduate students numbered 2,529² (including those writing theses or final papers). Another 594 students were enrolled in completion studies.

The OUI method of instruction does not require an undergraduate student to choose a structured program limited by a time frame. It was therefore decided, alongside the absolute numbers to also present the data which allow for comparison with the figures for students in a full time degree program, i.e., Full Time Equivalent (FTE). The calculation is based on the number of registrations for courses in a given year, and is divided by a factor that represents the annual number of course registrations by which a student can complete a bachelor's degree in four years. In FTE terms, there were 23,392 bachelor's degree students in 2017-2018 (compared to 23,535 in 2016-2017).

Retention – The path to degree completion

Improved retention of students at the OUI is a strategic goal for the entire system.

The chief goal of the Unit of Student Retention is to raise the rate of students who persist in their studies, and to increase the number of graduates. The department has developed a Code of Operation for all OUI departments in order to address the issue at all stages of the process, from initial contact by a prospective student to eventual completion of a degree. Support includes proactive supervision of students while identifying indicators of dropout, and creating an organizational language and values which will lead to improved rates of student retention.

In 2018, a process began in which counselors were assigned new students. In some courses, academic supervision is

accomplished via a dedicated computerized system. In the upcoming semesters, the goal is to increase the size of the population participating in this process. In addition, the unit is continuing its efforts to attract students who have abandoned their studies and encourage them to complete their degrees. Since the establishment of this unit, the number of dropouts returning to study has risen constantly.

Outstanding Students

During the past year, 242 students, including 29 graduate students, were included on the President's List, while the Dean's list included 740 students (146 graduate students). In 2016-2017, the students on the President's List were 0.5% of the total number of students at the OUI, and the students on the Dean's List were 1.6% of the total number of OUI students.

1 Registration at the OUI is on a per-semester basis for individual courses, instead of a yearly basis or for specific study programs. At advanced stages of studies, students write seminar papers, projects, or theses. As of the 2016-2017 academic year, students writing papers in a given year (even if not enrolled in a specific course) have been included in the total number of students.

2 As of the 2016-2017 academic year, the total number of master's degree students in a given year factors in only those students accepted to master's degree programs (not including supplementary courses) and registered for courses in their programs, or those writing papers for their programs.

Special population groups (bachelor's degree)

Population	No. of students
Arabic-speaking students	6,964
High school students	1,298
Soldiers in compulsory service	837
Ultra-Orthodox students *	1,700
Students with disabilities	907
Overseas students	701
Prisoners	63

* According to figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics

Arabic-speaking students

This year an assistant was appointed to the Dean of Academic Studies for the purpose of setting clear policy with respect to all matters related to Arabic-speaking students.

The university works to increase retention of Arabic-speaking students by adding academic tutoring hours, opening small study groups, teaching courses in Arabic, making available Arabic-speaking counselors, allowing the use of a bilingual dictionary, additional time for exams for the first six courses and during the month of Ramadan, workshops for improving fluency and expression in Hebrew, and a mentoring project. Selected course websites feature recordings of tutorial sessions in Arabic. Some websites offer registration for online tutorials using the ZOOM system. In addition, Arabic teaching has been monitored, and workshops have been conducted for tutors (both Hebrew and Arabic speakers) teaching at designated study centers.

The OUI received funding this year within the framework of an RFP by the PBC for the One Step Ahead program for continued development of programs promoting academic opportunities for Arabic-speaking students; especially Bedouin students.

This year, in cooperation with the Matnasim Co., a study group of Bedouin women was opened in Segev Shalom for a degree in social sciences and humanities, with an emphasis

on education. The program included 34 women in the first semester of 2018. This study center receives the full complement of supervision, including personal advising, and a language scholarship at each of the five levels for the purpose of learning Hebrew. A pilot preparatory program (*mechina*) in Hebrew was implemented.

Ethiopian-Israeli students

The assistance program for Ethiopian-Israeli students focuses on strengthening academic skills and on encouraging retention. During the past year, 210 students participated in the program. Eight graduates of the program completed their studies and received bachelor's degrees at the graduation ceremonies held in May 2018.

As in the past, the OUI marked the Memorial Day for immigrants from Ethiopia with an official ceremony attended by 300 students, employees, and guests to commemorate those who tragically lost their lives on the journey to Israel

Ultra-Orthodox students

The Rennert Family Program for the Integration and Retention of ultra-Orthodox Students is administered by designated staff under a steering committee appointed by the president. The program's goal is to increase retention of ultra-Orthodox students by providing personal supervision. Services offered include providing information as to specific scholarships from philanthropic foundations, referrals to academic services provided by the OUI (such as counseling, acceptance of credits from prior studies, study skills workshops, courses in English, financial-based scholarships), mentoring programs, and internships during their studies.

This year, a structured program for ultra-Orthodox seminary students was opened at a seminary for women in the center of Jerusalem. The three-year program offers a degree in sciences with an emphasis on computer science. In the coming year, more groups are expected to open at an additional seminary.

High school students

During the past year, 1,502 young students studied at the OUI while still in high school, 1,126 of them in the Academia in High School program. The program, which is in its sixth year in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, encourages youth to study towards a bachelor's degree with the support of their school and the Ministry of Education. High school baccalaureate exams (*bagrut*) may be exchanged for OUI courses. The program this year included 168 schools.

This year, 21 high school students received certificates and scholarships for achievements, earning them a place on the President's List, and 24 high school students received certificates in recognition of their placement on the Dean's List. At a ceremony held at the OUI in April, the Ministry of Education granted honors scholarships to 231 students in the program for their achievements in 2016-2017.

This year, a designated portal was opened for the counselors from the Ministry of Education and the coordinators for the program, in order to improve coordination with the OUI, and to provide relevant information regarding students, including course registration, assignments, exams, scholarships, etc.

Students with disabilities

During the past year, 824 students with disabilities were enrolled at the OUI. These included 52 students with hearing disabilities, 74 students with visual disabilities, 251 students with physical or motor disabilities, 323 students suffering from chronic diseases, and 142 students with emotional disabilities (some have more than one disability). Study materials have been made accessible, and modifications have been made at the study centers they attend. Exam conditions are adapted to special needs as required.

Students with learning disabilities

The Learning Disabilities Unit assisted 2,750 students in 2017-2018. This year, 1,290 new inquiries were received, out of which 840 students were granted recognition. The unit offers a range of services on behalf of students with learning disabilities beginning with diagnosis and testing, to adaptation of methods of assistance.

The assistance includes advising and individual supervision at different stages during their studies, particularly during times of crisis. Likewise, it includes counseling in cases of complex personal difficulties, tracking of students, and finding creative solutions.

In the framework of supervision, students are offered individual or group counseling; individual supervision and assistance in studying English as a foreign language; adaptation, counseling and instruction with respect to assistive technology; and access to a dynamic process of exam modifications. The unit also offers a workshop for exam anxiety to all students.

The Diagnostic Center for Learning Disabilities in the Learning Disabilities Unit bases its diagnoses on the Matal tests by the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation for diagnosing learning disabilities. In the 2017-2018 academic year, 310 individuals were diagnosed.

Pregnant and post-partum students

In compliance with the Students' Rights Law and CHE procedural regulations, 1,031 pregnant and post-partum students were provided with accommodations for nursing, fertility treatments, adoption, or receiving child custody.

Accessibility

The accessibility division of the Office of the Dean of Students, in partnership with the study centers department, have continued to handle the issue of accessibility at OUI study centers. In 2017-2018, the OUI achieved almost complete accessibility for all of its study centers (50 out of 54 centers have accessibility approval). Likewise, additional efforts were made to make ceremonies and OUI events accessible, as well as classrooms and campuses. This year, seven issues of the OUI accessibility newsletter, were published and distributed to all OUI employees.

Scholarships

During the past year, 5,434 scholarships were distributed, including 4,900 financial aid grants.

Improvements in Student Services

- **Planning of course offerings and study groups:** For the first time, study groups for students were published prior to registration for the first semester of 2019 in an annual format, rather than by semester. This aids in planning of study schedules.
- **Online messages to students:** As part of the trend to improve student services, students receive messages via email only and not by regular mail.
- **Scanned authorization:** Students have the option of receiving their grades for their bachelor's degree online, electronically scanned at no cost. Transition to online delivery of other documents of authorization is also planned. In 2017-2018, an increase was noted in the demand for scanned documents, instead of requesting hardcopy documents for a fee.
- **Amiram exams for English proficiency:** Due to CHE regulations and new rules requiring proof of proficiency in a foreign language at an early stage of studies, the Center for Academic Achievements expanded the infrastructure for Amiram testing. The classification exams were conducted this year at 13 testing centers and students were given the opportunity to be tested over four annual testing cycles.
- **Accessibility indications on call center screens:** Indications of accessibility needs which appear on the work screens of call center representatives, enable services to be suited to each student in accordance with the modifications determined for them by the professional department. These may include written communication only; preference for voice responses; or difficulty in operating a computer. These adaptations enable representatives at call centers to be more sensitive to the needs of these students and to improve their experience with respect to receiving call-center services.
- **Assigning students to lab sessions for courses in the natural and life sciences department:** This year, a new system was introduced which enables students to select the time and location of their lab classes, instead of being assigned randomly, as has been done until now; a process which resulted in many changes and

cancellations. The new system allows students much more flexibility in choosing the lab times and locations most suited to their schedules.

- **Website for degrees and study programs:** The new website was constructed on the SharePoint platform, with an innovative design improving the surfing experience in accordance with the rules of accessibility, and completely adapted for responsive display on mobile devices. Special emphasis was placed on making sure that study programs are just a click away; on developing a lead form for contact information for receiving additional information, advanced search options, etc.

Career Guidance and Placement

OpJob prepares students and graduates for the world of employment and introduces them to diverse job opportunities by posting extensive information on job and career opportunities, and offering access to an online job search. Over 7,000 students and 2,000 graduates are registered in the system, which gives them access to jobs which are posted by more than 4,000 employers and which are updated daily.

For the second year in a row, a career center under the auspices of OpJob has been working towards integrating Arabic-speaking students into work places. In 2017-2018, OpJob offered seven employment-centered workshops and career guidance (five of which were for Arabic-speaking students), dozens of individual counseling sessions, a lecture, and two sessions for introductions to employers. Thousands of students were offered information on employment opportunities, and professional articles were sent by email. The programming is offered throughout the country for all students and graduates.

The Student Association

The OUI Student Association continues, a decade after its establishment, to improve the study experience and services for students.

- The Mizrahi Group was established to raise awareness of social injustice in Israeli society.

- A connection was forged with the project, WeJoin – Girls Are Equal, for girls in junior and senior high school to strengthen their sense of empowerment and to help them develop greater awareness regarding their professional futures.
- The Student Association worked together with other organizations to promote the Law for Social Involvement, which passed the third reading in the Knesset in May 2018. The law, which will go into effect next year, will allow students, once during the course of their degree studies, to earn academic credit for reserve duty or social action (in accordance with the terms of the law).
- The Op'ale Club for OUI students with children held a series of lectures this year, as well as performances and shows for the holidays. During the summer, they also held a second Students' Day for parents and children at the pool in Kadima-Zoran, with performances by Roy Boy, Tal Mosseri, and Ana Zak.
- Several delegations from the Student Association represented the OUI abroad: Within the framework of the Seeking Change project, under the auspices of the Foreign Relations Department of the Student Association, a delegation of women, including female students from the OUI, attended an international seminar for women's entrepreneurialism and leadership in Poland. Documentation of the journey was presented in the first episode of the documentary series, *Turning Point*, marking the 70th anniversary of the State of Israel, and broadcast on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Model UN Club, has, for the past three years, provided students with tools for integration into the labor market, specifically the local and global diplomatic scene.
- To mark International Women's Day, a conference of female leaders in sports was held for the first time through the initiative of the Student Association and the NA'AMAT Sport and Senior Citizens Department in order to emphasize the subject of gender equality in the field of sports and health.

- The Student Association continued its work on the financial level and established a company, StudentOp, for the purpose of extending services in the most professional manner possible.

Athletics

This year, achievements were led by the chess team, women's judo, and men's ping pong. All came in first place at the International ASA Games. The women's netball team, and the men's judo and bowling teams came in third place at the International ASA Games.

In addition to the team victories, OUI athletes won individual gold medals in women's and men's judo, and in men's ping pong, as well as additional silver and bronze medals in these sports and in chess, bowling, orienteering, and running.

OUI athletes participated in other competitions, including 3×3 basketball, beach volleyball, mountain biking, swimming, open water swimming, and track and field events.

At the conclusion of the International ASA Games, the OUI took 14th place among thirty participating institutions of higher education from Israel.

This year, intramural OUI championship games for students and employees took place in chess, bowling, ping pong, stationary rowing, squash, and tennis.

In world championships, in European championships, and in World Cup competitions held throughout the year, athletes on the Israel team or its Olympic staff who are also studying at the OUI competed in judo, swimming, and rowing.

Men and women who excelled in representing the OUI in sports competitions this year received certificates of excellence from the Dean of Students and scholarships for their studies. The OUI also continued its cooperation with the Israel Olympic Committee and awarded scholarships for study to excelling male and female athletes on the Olympic team who are studying for an academic degree at the OUI, in appreciation of their efforts and achievements in combining studies with their demanding athletic activities.