

Graduates

In 2017-2018, The Open University of Israel granted bachelor's degrees to 2,974 students, 912 of them *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude*. Another 34 students completed a division of studies following a degree. Master's degrees were awarded to 549 men and women, of whom 124 completed their studies *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude*. Of those receiving degrees and certificates, 14% did not have high school matriculation. (For data on bachelor's degree graduates, see Appendix B. For data on master's degree graduates, see Appendix D. For data on certificate studies and teaching certificates, see Appendix E.)

Jhonatan Tavori, BSc, *summa cum laude* in computer science. Remarks made at graduation ceremony, Spring 2018

My name is Jhonatan Tavori. I am 19 years old, from Tel Aviv. I am excited and proud to deliver remarks here today as a graduate with a BSc in computer science from The Open University of Israel.

I joined the university as a teenager in junior high when I was 13-1/2 (yes, then I still counted half years). From that moment, over the following four years, I studied and completed my degree at The Open University of Israel while simultaneously completing high school, and in each of the four years of my studies, I was on the President's List.

Very quickly, the academic studies, like the many messages and alerts in the WhatsApp groups from the courses, turned into a major part of my life, and the lives of all of us, I am sure.

After completing my studies for the degree, I continued on towards a master's degree in computer science at Tel Aviv University, where, for the past two years, I have also been a teaching assistant. Today, I am a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces.

But I want to go back with you for a moment to the first step. My first class at the university. The name of the course was Introduction to Computer Science. The class began, and the lecturer opened by asking, "You know what an algorithm is?" We said we didn't. He said to us, "It's exactly like preparing pasta!" We looked at him in wonder, and began to laugh. In response, he approached the blackboard and began writing a recipe for making pasta (with tomato sauce, if I remember correctly). A little surprised, I said to my friends that I didn't know we had registered for a cooking club. We all burst into laughter until one of the students had to leave the room because he couldn't stop. The lecturer began to explain to us how the recipe that appeared in front of us was actually an algorithm.

Graduates of the university are sitting here today, including those who began their studies in high school; as soldiers in compulsory service or as career officers in the army; as students of various ages, from various work places and occupations, coming and studying from all corners of our country; parents; and even some a bit older who have already retired. Today, as the representative of the graduates, I ask myself, what is the recipe for preparing a graduate of The Open University of Israel – what is it that has brought all of us, happy and excited, to this honorable occasion?

The basis of the recipe begins with a high level academic education; education made accessible interactively and through books facilitating independent study. Add a cup of open acceptance and equality for all, even independent of age. Thus, for example, it was possible for me to begin my degree studies. A full tablespoon of research innovativeness, and we'll add a bowl of self-discipline. Last, but no less important, we'll add tasks and assignments to the recipe. And more assignments.



Photo: Shlomi Mizrahi

Everything gets mixed together by the partnership between the students that exists at the university. This partnership is evident from our first day of school – it begins with discussions during breaks in classes and by the ongoing connection that we maintained throughout the semesters. Mostly, when submitting assignments and during exam periods, when we kept up a continuous connection, especially for exchanging information.

As opposed to the algorithms and the segments of code we wrote during our studies, this recipe can't be run on any computer. It didn't undergo computer compiling by any computerized compiler. Rather, we – graduates of The Open University of Israel – worked according to the recipe devotedly and unrelentingly, as well as with curiosity and the aspiration to learn. Today, our "pasta" is ready for all of us. Unlike the pasta, we can't eat the diploma, but at least we can hang it on the wall. After all of this, I did not learn how to cook, but I did acquire many tools and skills which have accompanied me throughout my academic studies and will continue to accompany me along my path.

In conclusion, I want to thank my parents who supported me all along the way.

And a huge thanks to The Open University of Israel, for each and every course that established and broadened scientific worlds for all of us, and granted me a new understanding of the world. The Open University of Israel is not without reason called *open* – because it opens possibilities for all who enter its gates. My 15-year-old sister is already in her second year at the university, and is excelling in her studies.

Anwar Shokri-Shibli, MA, *cum laude* in education, learning technologies and systems. Remarks made at graduation ceremony, Spring 2018

I, Anwar Shokri-Shibli, have a BA in special education, and an MA in education, in learning technologies and systems from the Open University of Israel. I have a certificate in measurement and evaluation from The Open University. I am a special education teacher, responsible for electronic data processing in the Bedouin sector in the northern district, a lecturer for in-service training and continuing education courses for teachers, and this year, I was chosen as the outstanding district and national teacher by the Ministry of Education.

Everything begins with a dream. When I was little, I walked around all the time with a handbag and high heels that were far too big for me, and when people would ask me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" the answer was always unequivocally: "a teacher." That has been my dream ever since I was a small child. I was a dreamer and an ambitious girl and I believed in my abilities.

In elementary school, I was the student that always initiated activities in the classroom or helped the weaker children. I remember that, in junior high biology class, I sat in a special place in the classroom. Weak students sat around my table and I was their little teacher. In high school too, I was considered the "mature student;" highly self-confident, and they let me be responsible for the morning roll call activities. All of these steps only strengthened my desire to be a teacher; and not just any teacher, but an outstanding teacher, an entrepreneur, and a leader.



Photo: Oded Karni

After completing high school, I was accepted into a bachelor's degree program at a teachers college. The same year, when I was 19, I married my charming husband, Riyad, who is currently also a bachelor's degree student at the Open University. Although I was very young when I started, and there were distractions, there was always something to keep me on track. During my bachelor's degree studies, I gave birth to my two children, Ali and Omri. In my fourth year, I received a part-time position as a special education teacher, and from that point, my dream began to be realized.

Everybody says that to succeed, you have to love your job, but I say you have to be in love with your job to succeed, and to succeed big time.

In my third year of teaching, the electronic data processing program came into my school. I wasn't a teacher in that field, but the principal chose me to take the job of coordinating it for the school. In the beginning, the job was very hard: I had to stay long hours to learn and promote the school in the field. At the end of the year, I was awarded the title "outstanding coordinator" and I became a regional instructor in the field. Two years later, I was chosen to be responsible for electronic data processing for the entire Bedouin sector in the northern district. The field really interested me a lot, and therefore, I decided to study for a master's degree.

The search began on Internet websites and advising sessions at universities. While wandering around websites, I came upon The Open University of Israel, and I felt, as they say, "love at first sight." I was seriously interested in the master's degree in technologies and learning systems, and immediately, I picked up the phone and asked for a counseling meeting. At the study center in Tiberias, I met two lovely women: Ela and Ahuva, the directors of the center, who added further to my motivation to study at the university.

I faced many challenges while studying for my master's degree. The main challenge was to complete the degree with my certificate studies in measurement and evaluation, and one of the difficulties was the course in statistics (everybody knows how it is with statistics), but with the help and encouragement of the lecturer, in the end, I managed to pass the exam with a good grade. The support that the students get from the lecturers and the consideration are the secret to the university's success.

The most important tools I received from the OUI are not only related to academics, but are tools for life: self-discipline, taking personal responsibility for the learning process, time management, understanding that everything is in my hands, and that I determine my path, and, of course, responsibility for the outcome. All of these things and more, contributed heavily to forming my character.

Even with all of the burdens placed upon me, including work, raising children, and running a household, I managed to complete my master's degree.

Today, I work at The Open University of Israel in the Education and Psychology Department as a research assistant. I am participating in a study that deals with digital literacy, conducted by Prof. Yoram Eshet, Prof. Ina Blau, and Dr. Gal Ben-Yehudah, and I wish to say a huge thank you to them for this opportunity. In the future, I aim to study for a doctoral degree in order to contribute to the education system, and to society.

Dear bachelor's degree and master's degree graduates, I want to congratulate you for making the wise decision of choosing to study at the Open University. You did it, and you did it well! If you have reached this point, I believe that you can realize all of your aspirations. May you all be successful.

In conclusion, a tremendous thank-you to my supportive family and to my amazing partner who always pushes me forward, standing by me and supporting me. Although my partner is one-of-a-kind, I know that by the side of every man and woman graduating there is supportive family: a family that knows to be quiet when you are studying for an exam, to push and encourage you when your strength is depleted, and to be happy for you with every good grade. This degree is yours too.