

Students

A "student" at the OUI is defined as an individual who has taken at least one academic course in a given year. "Total number of students" refers 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, 45,328¹ students studied towards bachelor's degrees (including those writing seminar papers). The number of new BA students for the year was 13,703 (30%) .

Graduate students numbered 2,425² (including those writing theses or final papers). Another 546 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 timeframe. It was therefore decided, alongside the absolute numbers, to also present the data that 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 24,124 bachelor's degree students in 2019 (compared to 23,392 in the previous year).

Retention – The path to degree completion

Improving student retention is a strategic goal for the entire OUI system. The chief goal of the Unit of Student Retention is to raise the rate of student perseverance, and to increase the number of graduates. The department has developed a code of operation for all OUI departments and units involved, in order to address the issue at all stages of the process, from initial contact with a prospective student to eventual graduation. Support includes proactive monitoring of students while identifying indicators of dropout, and establishing an organizational language and values that make improved rates of student retention an institutional goal.

In 2019, the process of introducing and integrating retention-supporting processes into relevant units and functions continued and expanded. These processes were applied to a growing number of students in a broad range of courses from different disciplines. The retention-supporting practices introduced in various departments

included assigning academic counselors to new students for each semester, based on defined criteria, and continuing proactive counseling by advisors assigned to students in previous semesters. To date, 16 advisors specially trained for this task proactively encouraged 700 students to register for the second semester of 2019. Faculty members also advise students during their first courses, and address specific cases where dropout indicators emerge. The English department proactively addresses the issues of students whose English level has not been categorized, to ensure that they do not drop out for failing to meet the criteria. This task is facilitated by a computerized system, and enables record-keeping of measures taken and ensures transparency. The system also enables the Unit for Retention management to control the processes and maintain a comprehensive view of the situation.

Alongside these efforts, the unit continuously engages in reintegrating students who have dropped out. The number of students resuming studies has been on the rise since the unit's establishment.

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 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 2017 academic year, the total number of master's degree students in a given year includes 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.

Outstanding Students

In 2018, 218 students, including 26 graduate students, were included on the President's List, while the Dean's List included 774 students (137 graduate students). In 2018, the students on the President's List made up 0.5% of the total number of OUI students, and the students on the Dean's List made up 1.6% of the total number of OUI students.

Carmel Neuburger, a BSc student in physics at the OUI, was admitted to the summer program of the CERN particle accelerator in Switzerland, and will join a research project engaged in improving particle accelerator detectors. The CERN program accepts 280 outstanding students from 83 leading institutions worldwide.

Special population groups

Population	BA students	MA students
Arabic-speaking students	6,854	145
High school students	1,436	-
Soldiers in compulsory service	878	26
Ultra-Orthodox students*	1,625	30
Students with disabilities	968	53
Overseas students	727	78
Prison inmates	51	-

* According to OUI data. May slightly differ from Central Bureau of Statistics data.

Arabic-speaking students

This year, the OUI received budgeting for the second time, having responded to a call by the PBC to join the Gateway to Academia (*Sha'ar la'academia*) program designed to improve access of Bedouin students from the Negev to higher education. In the first year of the program, 39 students participated in three bachelor's degree tracks in psychology, economics, and computer science. In 2020, the program's second year, forty additional students will participate in psychology, economics, social science (public policy and administration), and management and computer sciences: systems and applications.

In the second semester of 2019, a study group of 24 students was opened at the Halissa – Neve Yosef Community Center in Haifa, in collaboration with the Association of Community Centers. The students are studying towards degrees in the social sciences and the humanities, and benefit from a full assistance package that includes an advisor, personal counselor, and a language grant for participation in a preparatory Hebrew language class. This unique study group offered, for the first time, an external English language mechina course that prepared students for the Amir screening test in English. The course was designed to improve their chances of success in coping with the English language, and will enable them to find the appropriate English level.

The Dean of Academic Studies, in collaboration with "Israeli Hope" (*tikva israelit*) has begun a new tradition intended to create a shared public space on campus during Ramadan. The encounter, which brings together Arab and Jewish students and employees, introduces participants to Muslim culture, traditions, and religion, as they share the traditional *iftar* meal that celebrates the end of the fast.

Students of Ethiopian descent

The assistance program for students of Ethiopian descent focuses on strengthening academic skills and encouraging retention. In 2019, about 450 students participated in the program; 200 of whom began studying this year. Six students completed their studies and received bachelor's degrees in graduation ceremonies held in June 2019.

This year, as in the past, the OUI held a memorial day event for immigrants from Ethiopia who perished on the journey to Israel. The official ceremony was attended by students, employees, and guests. A team of volunteer students from the program participated for the first time in organizing and producing the memorial ceremony.

Ultra-Orthodox students

Designated OUI staff under a steering committee appointed by the president runs the program for integrating and advising ultra-Orthodox students. The program's goal is to increase retention by providing personal guidance. The benefits offered include facilitating access to information on specific scholarships from philanthropic foundations, referral to academic services provided by the OUI (advising, recognition of credits from prior studies, learning skills workshops, English language courses, socio-economic scholarships), and mentoring and internship programs.

This year, another structured program for ultra-Orthodox women was opened at a women's seminary in Jerusalem. This three-year bachelor's degree program is in the sciences, especially computer science and management. The total number of ultra-Orthodox students registered for OUI courses has grown by 18% this year.

High school students

This past year, 1,667 young students studied at the OUI while still in high school, 1,439 of them in the Academia in High School program. This year was the seventh year the OUI has been running the Academia in High School program in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The program encourages young people to study towards a bachelor's degree with the support of their school and the Ministry of Education, and enables certain high school matriculation exams (*bagrut*) to be exchanged for OUI courses. This year, twenty schools joined the program, for a total of 185 participating schools. The program includes another 103 grade-thirteen students (including those with academic deferment of military service).

Although other academic institutions also run special programs for high school students, a significant increase was noted in the number of students and schools that entered the joint program with the OUI. A sharp increase occurred in the summer semester of 2019, when 199 high school students joined the program; a 52% increase compared with the same period last year.

This year, thirty high school students joined the President's List, and 14 high school students were on the Dean's List. At a ceremony held at the OUI in May 2019, the Ministry of Education granted honors scholarships to 217 of the program's students for their achievements in 2018.

Bi-annual introductory meetings were held this year in Ashdod, Petah Tikva, and Be'er Sheva. About 100 people attended each conference. A conference held this year for the first time was dedicated to encouraging female students to register for computer science studies, and was attended by more than sixty young women from schools throughout Israel.

Students with disabilities

In the past year, 755 students with disabilities studied at the OUI, including 54 students with hearing disabilities, 62 with visual disabilities, 251 with physical or motor disabilities, 267 with chronic illness, and 159 with emotional disabilities (some of the students have more than one disability). Study materials were made accessible, and the study centers they attended as well as the exam conditions were adapted as needed.

Students with learning disabilities

In 2019, the Learning Disabilities Unit extended assistance to 2,550 students. This year, 1,173 new applications were submitted, of which 633 were granted recognition. The unit offers a range of services to students with learning disabilities, from the stage of diagnosis and testing to adaptation and management.

Assistance includes individual counseling and guidance at different stages during their studies, particularly in times of crisis. The support also comprises counseling in cases of complex personal difficulties, monitoring of

struggling students, and finding creative solutions to problems which arise.

Students are offered individual or group tutoring, individual counseling and assistance in studying English as a foreign language, adaptation of assistive technology accompanied by counseling and instruction, and modification of exams as needed. The unit also runs a workshop for overcoming exam anxiety, which is open to all OUI students. Eighteen students participated in two workshops held this year.

A learning disabilities diagnostic center operated by the unit offers diagnoses based on the Learning Functions Tests (MATAL) of the National Institute for Testing, Evaluation and Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities. In the 2019 academic year, 433 applicants were diagnosed by the center.

Family and personal status

In compliance with the Students' Rights Law and CHE procedural regulations, 1,120 students were entitled to study accommodations due to pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, fertility treatments, adoption, or child custody.

Scholarships

In 2019, 4,683 students received scholarships, including 3,407 financial aid grants.

Improved Student Services

- The OUI handbook comprises basic information and annual updates on academic studies, support services, and administration at the OUI. This year, the handbook appeared for the first time on the OUI website in a digital format based on dynamic up-to-date information. The website contains a "lobby" page for each academic year, with built-in links to various types of information. Search options have been improved, a printable PDF version of the handbook is available, and handbooks of previous years are accessible.
- The OUI library launched two pilot projects this year. The interlibrary loan service will be exclusively used for teaching, research, and study purposes, and will benefit the university community. Eight universities

participate in this initiative, whose aim is to allow students and faculty to obtain the materials they require free of charge. Research students are encouraged to improve the quality of their research by using this service. The second pilot is for a free delivery service of books and articles from the OUI library to students. The purpose of this service is to expand the ongoing national pilot and ensure that OUI students throughout Israel have access to OUI library materials.

- Digital versions of textbooks have been available to students on certain course websites for several years. This year, the distribution process was upgraded through an interface with the new learning-material management system (*Nahal*), under the Department of Academic Development and Publishing. New textual learning material (textbooks, study guides, anthologies or single articles) are tagged and uploaded to *Nahal*, from where they are transferred to course sites. Digital learning materials will gradually be available for most courses.
- The OUI students' cellular application has been remodeled on a new technological platform that offers useful information to students from Sheilta, such as the status of registration, updates on meetings, grades, payments, messages and applications, video lessons, and recordings. In developing the new system, emphasis was placed on a favorable user's experience, standardization, information security, and flexibility that will enable further expansion.
- Adaptations have been made to the OUI official website including reorganization of information, accessibility, updating content, and visual enhancements that highlight OUI fields of study. Forms were added for use by prospective students, and the processing of queries has been improved. An increase of about 18% in readership compared with the same period last year was noted shortly after the launch of the new website, as well as an increase in the number of inquiries by prospective students.

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 available jobs and career directions, and offering access to an online job search. About 11,000 students and graduates seeking employment are registered in the system, giving them access to jobs that are posted and updated regularly by some 5,000 employers. The section also operates a career center for Arabic-speaking students.

In 2018-2019 OpJob ran nine career-oriented and employment guidance workshops (six of which were for Arabic-speaking students), about 120 individual counseling sessions, two lectures, and four introductory meetings with potential employers (including one for Arabic-speaking students). Thousands of students received professional articles and information by email on employment opportunities.

The Student Association

In 2019, the OUI Student Association continued its efforts to enhance the learning experience and improve services offered to OUI students.

In the first semester of 2019, a new mentoring project was launched – "Students for students" – in which first-year students are assisted by students who have completed with honors the same courses in previous semesters. The project is extremely popular, and has been greatly acclaimed.

In the second semester of 2019, a project was launched to provide opportunities for continuous review in core courses throughout the semester. External teachers gave the lessons during the project's first run; however, the idea of assigning this task to outstanding students is currently being contemplated.

This year, an OUI delegation traveled to Morocco for an inspiring historical tour. Another similar delegation is planned to travel to Ethiopia to become acquainted with

the Jewish-Ethiopian heritage. Other delegations traveled abroad through the Model UN club, which has been active in the OUI in the past four years. The club provides students with tools to facilitate their integration into the job market, particularly in the local and international diplomatic sphere.

The association has initiated volunteer activities in children's wards of different hospitals throughout Israel. It has also entered into cooperation with organizations such as Latet (Giving), to increase the involvement of students in assisting Holocaust survivors, and Mahshava tova (Kind thought) – a national project in which students tutor using computer applications, the internet, etc.

The association, in collaboration with the Dean of Students, organized a "Social Engagement Week" for the second time to encourage involvement in society and community matters. During the week, selected students are awarded scholarships, honorary prizes, and certificates in recognition of their volunteering work on campus and in the community. Scholarships are also granted to students doing active reserve duty, and assistance is offered to students in need.

The Op'ale Club for OUI students with children offered a series of lectures this year, as well as performances and shows for the festivals of Chanukah and Purim, and four subsidized film screenings at Yes Planet branches in Haifa, Ramat Gan, Be'er Sheva and Jerusalem.

Student's Day was celebrated this year on four different dates in cooperation with student associations throughout Israel. Emphasis was placed on celebrating Student's Day in new locations.

As part of the international Taglit Project, Israeli students have been escorting the guest groups during their time in Israel.

Christmas events celebrated in campuses accommodating students from the Arab sector included standup performances in Arabic and the screening of family films with Arabic dubbing.

Athletics

At the top of the OUI team achievements this year were the men's chess and women's judo teams, which again won first place in the international ASA games. They were joined by the men's judo and bowling teams, which also came first. The women's bowling team won second place for the first time, and the men's ping-pong team won third place. The OUI won its first trophies for reaching third place in men's orienteering, men's sport climbing and gaming (a new ASA sport).

In addition to the team victories, OUI athletes won individual gold medals in men's ping-pong, sport climbing, orienteering, chess, and women's and men's judo. Our athletes also won silver and bronze medals in women's mountain biking, men's bowling, women's and men's judo, gaming, and chess. OUI athletes took part in other competitions, including women's netball, men's tennis, men's squash, women's and men's beach volleyball, men's mountain biking, swimming, open water swimming, and off-road running.

At the conclusion of the 50th International ASA Games, the OUI came 15th in the overall ranking (15th place in men's competitions and 18th place in women's competitions) among 31 participating Israeli institutions of higher education.

Further to the OUI initiative to start a women's netball program, and the inclusion of netball in the ASA competition program last year, the OUI has extended its socio-cultural activity in Israel by setting up another netball team at the Givat Haviva Campus (Wadi Ara). In addition to participating in the ASA games, the two teams also took part in the netball Friendship League, whose teams are comprised of athletes from all the Israeli sectors, and engage in joint social activities in addition to the competitions.

In addition to intramural student and staff championships in chess, bowling, ping-pong, rowing machines, squash, and tennis, the OUI this year held chess and ping-pong tournaments for women and men at the Givat Haviva (Wadi Ara) campus, to extend athletic activities further afield and make them accessible to additional audiences.

The OUI team participated for the second time this year in the European Universities Chess Championship in Hungary, and won fifth place. One of our chess players won sixth individual place among dozens of participants.

For the first time, an OUI student participated in the students' world championship in orienteering, and won 20th place among over 80 competitors.

Students who excelled in representing the OUI in this year's sports competitions received certificates of excellence from the Dean of Students as well as study scholarships for various courses. The OUI continued its cooperation with the Israel Olympic Committee and awarded scholarships to outstanding male and female athletes from the Olympic team who are currently studying at the OUI towards an academic degree, in appreciation of their efforts and achievements in combining studies with highly demanding athletic activities.



Inbal Shemesh, OUI student

Photo: European Judo Association