

Evaluation

Evaluation processes assist OUI policymakers in improving procedures and making decisions based on data. To accomplish this, the evaluation 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 a variety of areas:

- Formative evaluation of programs and evaluation of program effectiveness
- Evaluations and reviews to enhance learning and decision making
- Advancing the use of accepted methodologies in applied research
- Developing tools to assist in resource allocation using machine learning

Below are examples of studies conducted during the past year:

- Evaluation of online learning sequences on course sites. In 2018, the OUI formulated a methodology for the pedagogical development of OUI courses. All learning materials, both printed and digital, are displayed systematically on the course site. Since spring semester 2019, course sites have used this method. During fall and spring semesters 2020, the sequence project underwent evaluation that began with the short-term outcomes intended for the students, tutors, and teaching coordinators who took part in the project. The evaluation included in-depth interviews and surveys to collect hard facts on student use of the sites. The project's evaluation will continue next year.
- A formative evaluation was conducted of KKL-tech, a unique studies program which is a collaboration between Rad-Bynet Group, the Jewish National Fund, and the OUI and supported by the Arad municipality. The program encourages Arad citizens to study at the OUI for a degree in computer science. The students also receive professional training at Rad-Bynet plants, with a view to employment in this field. The evaluation department followed the first-year of implementation with a formative evaluation that included surveys and interviews. Focus groups of active students and dropouts and of the program's team and teaching staff were also conducted. The program managers and OUI management received a comprehensive report.
- Teaching and studying in the shadow of COVID-19: The Coronavirus epidemic has forced higher education institutions and students in Israel and abroad to face a new reality. The dramatic change has required enormous efforts to switch rapidly to a distance learning format, without being able to adapt the pedagogy to the new conditions first. The crisis created unique opportunities for exploring distance learning with all of its advantages and challenges, as well as the implications for normal times. The department launched a comprehensive evaluation project that included over twenty interviews with teaching staff (tutors and teaching coordinators), over seventy interviews with students, and surveys of 500 tutors and over 7,000 students.
- Analysis of retention and dropout of OUI students was conducted, with a special focus on Arabic-speaking students in various study centers and study programs. An additional evaluation explored aspects of the initial courses taken by Arab-speaking students. The study evaluated the courses, teaching language, success and retention of students. The connection between difficulty of courses and student success and perseverance in the following years was analyzed. The link between study characteristics and perseverance was also explored. Learning pace was categorized based on the type of educational institute.
- Analysis of OUI call-center use. The characteristics of students who request information from the center were evaluated. The frequency and pattern of calls throughout the study period, and the differences between various student groups were studied. The assessment aimed to improve the call centers and improve effectiveness of information accessibility processes.
- A survey questionnaire for evaluating new courses was developed this year, and was pilot-tested for four central courses during the semester fall 2020. The questionnaire's effectiveness was analyzed using deep data processing, which led to formulation of a final version.