

# Graduates

In 2021, The OUI granted bachelor's degrees to 3,497 students, 479 *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude*. Another 36 graduate students completed programs for studies following a degree. Master's degrees were awarded to 400 men and women, of whom 96 completed their studies *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude*. Of those receiving degrees and certificates, 16% did not have high school matriculation certificates. (For data on bachelor's degree graduates see Appendix B. For data on master's degree graduates, see Appendix D. For data on diploma studies and teaching certificates, see Appendix E).

A new website offers information on graduation ceremonies, including photos and speeches. Stories about graduates are featured, as well as social events and career openings.

## Rabaa Monther, BA in Social Science and Humanities

I am standing here today with great pride, both for my personal accomplishment and for belonging to the wonderful Open University.

You might say that mine is a "Syrian Bride" story. In 1987, at the age of twenty, I arrived in Israel from Syria to marry my cousin. Since then, and until the age of 49, I started a family and worked to support it. At 49, as the mother of five grown children, I decided it was time to do something for myself. I decided to develop in a way that would help advance my personal life and my career. I entered a preparatory class in a northern Israeli college, to improve my Hebrew and to prepare for enrollment in a BA program. It did not take me long to realize I could not conciliate college studies with my home life. Then I discovered the OUI method of studies.

At first, Hebrew was difficult for me. However, focused work and perseverance helped me overcome this difficulty. I learned the language by listening to recordings of tutoring sessions wherever I was – in the kitchen, walking, waiting at a clinic, etc. They were with me every moment. I am happy to have overcome my difficulty in writing and understanding Hebrew.

Four years later, I completed my BA in Social Science and the Humanities at the Majdal Shams study center. I am grateful to the study center management for supporting me throughout my degree studies.

It has been my aspiration to take up academic studies since I arrived from Damascus in 1987. My studies help me in my work, providing crucial tools I implement in my everyday reality. I know from experience, that OUI graduates acquire tools and skills that help them integrate into the job market and into society.

Today I am the manager of a Ministry of Welfare and Social Services after-school home-care center, where I look after children. I am also a facilitator for sexual education groups.



Photo: Oded Karni

I wish to emphasize that the university has offered me assistance and support and has given me tools with which to overcome my difficulties and complete a B.A. degree in four years. These were four years of great effort and great achievement in my studies and in my personal development.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your encouragement and support along the way, and for allowing me to share my personal story on this special day.

My deepest thanks go to my parents, husband, children, and tutors for their support and continuous help.

Finally, I would like to congratulate my co-graduates on this exciting moment, for which we have long waited. It is a moment of joy, achievement, hope, and fulfilled dreams.

### **Marom Goldshmidt, MBA in Business Administration**

My close friends have always said that I do things differently. So, let me begin at the end this time too, and say that, even today, standing on this stage, it is hard for me to fully grasp this event and this exciting and meaningful moment. I am here today to receive my MBA, having completed my BSc in Industrial Engineering on the Dean's List.

This is my second time participating in these ceremonies in as many years, as I began my graduate studies before completing my BSc I applaud the OUI for its flexibility, demonstrating how far it allows one to reach. The OUI has embraced distance learning, particularly live online sessions years before COVID-19 made Zoom so popular. Another unique feature of the OUI, in addition to that flexibility, is that it is home to people from different backgrounds, from every corner of the country, and at various points in their lives, be they soldiers in compulsory military service or full-time hi-tech workers. These are people who combine degree studies with their personal life, at any age, without pausing.

My story is also unusual. I reached the OUI by mistake. At the time, I was employed by Israel's Rafael Weapons Development Authority in the Krayot, north of Haifa, and was living in Nahariya. The nearest academic institution was an hour's drive away, and this was not a practical arrangement. So, I decided to join a one-year transfer track to later move to central Israel and go to another academic institute. A year later, I had already moved to the center of the country but chose to continue at the OUI, simply because it suited me. What started as a default path in the absence of another choice turned into a routine that enabled me to have a full life while studying for a degree. But you don't need me to tell you that. I am sure that everyone present this evening know very well what I am talking about!

In time, my commitment to the OUI kept strengthening. During my post-graduate studies in Business Administration, I responded to an appeal to set up an entrepreneurship club at the OUI. I did this, among other things, to make up for



Photo: Oded Karni

something that I lacked as a student – personal and business networking. I am currently one of the club's managers. We offer theoretical lectures and practical workshops to assist those who are interested in entrepreneurship realize their dreams and establish significant personal and business ties.

In addition to workshops and lectures, I have decided to create a podcast to make the content accessible to all. My podcast is called "Open for Business," and it tells interesting stories of entrepreneurs, in order to propose practical solutions and to inspire those who relate – even if only theoretically – to entrepreneurship and business.

When you complete a chapter in your life, and a degree is definitely a significant chapter, the question always arises "What now?" or "What did this give me?" Just a few weeks ago, a friend asked what I gained from my degrees, especially since I work in hi-tech and not in any of my fields of study. This is a good question, but it did not take me long to answer him that every course I took towards my two degrees changed, forever, my outlook on the world.

I have chosen the word "look" intentionally. The difference between "see" and "look" is that "seeing" means viewing reality as it is, non-judgmentally, and without necessarily even understanding it.

But "looking" is intentional, and means understanding what one sees. So, if anyone asks you how your studies impacted you, you can say that, before starting them you just "saw," and now you "look."