



THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF ISRAEL

**Department of Management
and Economics**

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Economics

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The following individuals cooperated in the preparation of this report: The senior faculty members in the Department of Management and Economics, the academic teaching staff, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the individual responsible for dealing with quality evaluation at the Open University, as well as colleagues in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, the Dean of Students, the Academic Development Administration, the President's Office, the Human Resources Department, the Computer Center, the Teaching Services System, the Evaluation Department, and other Open University departments.

The Open University of Israel
ECONOMICS PROGRAM SELF-EVALUATION
Executive Summary

The Open University of Israel (OUI) was established in 1974 as an institution of higher education based on distance learning, with the aim of making such education accessible to a wider public in Israel. The first courses were offered in 1976. The university produces advanced study materials suited to independent study, and operates dozens of study centers throughout the country. The university has no admission requirements; its doors are open to all. Students' academic ability is gauged only by their performance in the courses they take. At present, over 40,000 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses.

The OUI has been offering academic degrees in Management and Economics since 1993. The Department of Management and Economics is the OUI's largest, with approximately 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and has offered a B.A. degree in Economics since 2002. The department also offers a B.A. in Management, a Master's degree in Business Administration, a B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and a B.A. in Accounting. Additionally, in conjunction with other OUI departments, the department offers dual-disciplinary and interdisciplinary degrees.

Consonant with the OUI's credo, the department continuously strives for excellence, focusing on high quality scientific, scholarly and developmental activities. The department promotes research, maintains study programs, and develops and disseminates academic education through the development of superior learning materials. We endeavor to increase access to higher education by employing a sophisticated distance teaching system. Hence, we reach out to all those willing and capable of meeting our academic standards irrespective of age, origin, prior education, occupation or geographic location.

Senior academic faculty members are engaged in research and in the initiation, development and maintenance of courses, while the academic teaching staff caters to frontal and distance tutoring of groups and individuals. Supported by the OUI's uniquely structured organization of distance teaching facilities, the department's administrative staff maintains direct contact with the students and performs all other administrative duties.

OUI courses differ markedly from courses in conventional universities as they are first and foremost printed scholarly-scientific works, specifically developed for self-study. The course books are the major source of knowledge. Books are written either by the department's senior faculty members or by scholars from other universities. In some courses, materials include readers of articles, accompanied by study guides.

Each course has a course coordinator who is a member of the academic teaching staff, whose task is to hire and oversee tutors, write assignments and exams, and maintain the course website, under the guidance of a senior faculty member who has academic responsibility for the course. Course coordinators have M.A. degrees, and some hold a Ph.D. or are doctoral candidates.

In order to facilitate the students' comprehension of the material in the course book, OUI offers group tutorials in each course conducted by tutors in classrooms throughout the country or via video conference. Attendance at tutorials is not mandatory and many students opt for their home as a private campus supported by the OUI distance teaching method, notably via internet. Thus, beyond the conventional merits of the academic degrees offered by the department, graduates gain value added in the form of a high degree of self-discipline stemming from the OUI's unique learning methods. These qualities, in which our graduates excel, are highly valued by employers in the job market.

The academic year at OUI is divided into semesters – fall, spring and summer – with courses offered on the basis of demand each semester. Before the beginning of the semester, students are sent course books, study guides, course booklets that include the assignments and the timetable, and additional materials for the courses for which they are enrolled. During the semester, the course coordinators have regular telephone consultation hours. Each course has a website, maintained by the course coordinators, where supplementary study materials are posted and discussions, both between students and faculty and among the students themselves, take place. This makes it possible for people from around the country and, indeed, around the world, to take part. During the course, students are required to submit several written assignments by mail or via the internet. At the end of the course, a written examination is held simultaneously at the study centers, and the student is given a grade.

The department maintains rigorous academic standards with respect to courses developed by its faculty members. We maintain an ongoing quality assurance and control system whereby courses undergo extensive refereeing during the development phase, and periodic assessment concerning adequacy, relevance and scientific rigor while the course is being taught. Furthermore, the quality of teaching is routinely monitored by means of student feedback, gathered each semester; samples of assignments and examinations; and visits paid to tutorial sessions by the course coordinators and the senior faculty.

The Economics program has enjoyed significant growth during the last five years. When a B.A. degree program in Economics was first offered in 2002, the development of several important elective courses, like Labor Economics, The Economy of Israel and Public Economics, was not yet concluded. Consequently, these courses were taught at the Open University by professors from other universities, and broadcast to Open University students in study centers all over Israel.

Since then, two senior academic faculty members joined the department – Dr. Mordechai Schwarz (the editor of this report), who wrote a textbook for an elective course in Inter-generational Economics, and is currently writing a textbook in Public Economics (jointly with Prof. Eitan Sheshinsky); and Prof. Aviad Heifetz, the undersigned, who wrote a textbook for a game theory course, which will be offered in the coming fall semester.

Concurrently, the development of textbooks for other elective courses in the program has also been completed: Labor Economics (by Prof. Yoram Weiss), The Economy of Israel (by Prof. Benjamin Bental and Dr. Ami Barnea), Social Preference and Choice (by Prof. Shmuel Nitzan), International Monetary Economics (by Dr. Eran Yashiv). These courses are currently being taught through the Open University distant learning method described above. Also, a proposal for developing a course in Economic History (by Prof. Joel Mokyr) has been approved by the relevant subcommittee of the academic committee, and proposals for further elective courses for the program are being actively discussed.

The senior academic faculty members in Economics, as well as some of the academic teaching staff members holding doctorates, are very active researchers. They publish in first-rate journals, cooperate with colleagues in Israel and abroad, apply for and benefit from competitive grants, present their work at international conferences, serve on the editorial boards of journals, and take part in the organization of conferences and workshops both at the Open University and abroad.

Prof. Aviad Heifetz, Head
Department of Management and Economics

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Additional Materials

Enclosed with this report: Catalog and Registration Guide (in Hebrew and English);
Programs of study in Economics (in English)

On CD:

Catalog and Registration Guide (in Hebrew, also enclosed with this report)

Rules and procedures (in Hebrew): Code of appointments and advancement;
Course development process; Disciplinary code; Program approval
procedure; Regulations for preventing sexual harassment; Tuition fees

Syllabi (in English): Descriptions of all courses in the program

Curriculum vitae (in English): Updated CVs of all staff members

Extras: Report on the status of course coordinators (in English); Programs of
study in Economics (in English, also enclosed with this report); Guide
to writing a seminar paper (in Hebrew)

Chapter 1

The Institution – The Open University of Israel

1.1 About the Open University of Israel

The Open University of Israel (OUI) is a distance education university designed to offer academic studies to students throughout Israel and abroad. Its study method allows students all over the country to pursue higher education, whenever and wherever convenient, in spite of their other personal and vocational obligations. Established in 1974 by the Ministry of Education, with the support of the Rothschild Foundation, the University began operating in 1976. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) authorized the University to confer Bachelor's Degrees (B.A.) in 1980, and in 1996 the University was authorized by the CHE to teach programs leading to a Master's degree. At this time, the OUI does not offer studies towards a doctoral degree.

Study Centers: In addition to the central campus in Raanana, the OUI operates study centers throughout the country. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 4,957 groups of students took part in tutorial sessions held in 52 study centers (see map, p. 70). Most of the study centers provide registration, academic counseling and some library services in addition to classroom facilities.

Academic Departments: Seven academic departments (History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies; Literature, Language and the Arts; Management and Economics; Sociology, Political Science and Communication; Education and Psychology; Mathematics and Computer Science; Natural Sciences) and a unit responsible for teaching English as a Foreign Language function within the OUI. The departments are autonomous units, which deal with all professional matters related to the disciplines within each department. The members of the departments – senior faculty and academic teaching staff – are involved in research, course development and teaching.

Degree entitlement: In order to earn a Bachelor's degree from the Open University, students need to accumulate at least 108 credits (this does not include English language studies and seminar papers). However, the credit requirements are not identical for all programs of study. Some programs require more than 108 credits, sometimes because of the scope of the specific program, and sometimes because of the courses that each individual student chooses to take. Usually, no more than 120 credits are required. A B.Sc. in Engineering requires about 160 credits. This difference in the scope of the programs reflects the situation in other universities, where studies are organized according to years and degrees in Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences take 3 years to complete, while an Engineering degree takes 4 years to complete.

Students at the Open University must accumulate at least 24 advanced credits, and fulfill the seminar requirements. Students may accumulate no more than 36 introductory credits. The amount of choice among advanced courses and the seminar requirements, differ from program to program.

To be awarded a Bachelor's degree from the Open University, students must demonstrate evidence of English language proficiency. Students who are not exempt from English studies must take a non-credit A-level English course. They must take bibliographic instruction, either through the Library website or by participating in training sessions in the Library. These requirements must be fulfilled before students begin taking advanced courses. Beyond these general requirements, students must fulfill the specific requirements for the degree toward which they are studying.

Number of Students: Students at the Open University are not required to enroll in a department as is customary at other universities, but rather register for specific courses. A student's program of study may include a variety of courses offered by more than one

department. Consequently, numbers of students at the Open University are difficult to present according to academic departments. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 40,914 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses and 3,164 students in graduate programs. In FTE terms, this is comparable to 16,579 undergraduate students and 1,274 graduate students. While we have a large student body, we have relatively fewer graduates than other universities because of our open admissions policy: some students are simply not suited to academic studies. In addition, there are students (such as soldiers) who begin their studies at the OUI and continue in other universities, and there are those who take individual courses for personal enrichment only.

Bridges to other universities: With the encouragement of the Council for Higher Education, the Open University established transfer tracks from the OUI to all other Israeli universities for second year studies in various departments. After examining the OUI curriculum, these departments found significant congruence in content and academic level between first year studies in their departments and specific course clusters at the OUI. Accordingly, these departments committed to accept to second year studies in their institutions every student who successfully completes (i.e. achieves a specified minimum grade) the necessary cluster of courses at the OUI, as defined jointly by the academic institutions, independent of his or her success in high school or on the psychometric test.

1.2 **Mission statement of the institution, its aims and goals**

The mission of the OUI can be derived from its name: to **open** the gates of higher education to all individuals capable of high-level studies, by providing a superior scientific and scholastic **university** environment.

The following are the three specific goals derived from our mission and the structural and pedagogical means necessary for their realization.

Our goals:

- **To increase access to higher education for groups in the population that, for various reasons (family and/or work obligations, place of residence, religious restrictions), have difficulty studying at traditional universities or to those who prefer the Open University study method.**

1. Open Admissions: The OUI is open to all who wish to undertake studies toward a Bachelor's degree, without preconditions or admission requirements. Enrollment is open to all interested individuals and does not require a matriculation certificate or a psychometric test grade. Students enroll in an individual course, not a specific program of studies or faculty, and accumulate credits by passing the courses they take. Thus, the first courses represent a kind of individual entrance exam. Only those who are capable of academic studies can continue.

2. Distance Teaching: The OUI specializes in distance teaching. Textbooks are the primary component of the OUI method of instruction. Every course also offers tutorial sessions held at study centers throughout the country. Students who choose to participate in the tutorials can usually do so, on days convenient to them, in one of two ways: regular or intensive. Regular tutorials meet once every two or three weeks; intensive tutorials usually take place weekly. Students submit assignments during the semester and take a final exam in every course.

3. Special populations: The Open University welcomes special student populations who may find it difficult to study in other universities: **Periphery** – The OUI aims to

provide financial aid and pedagogic assistance to populations located in peripheral areas. **The working population** – The flexibility offered by the OUI enables these individuals to study at their own pace, toward a degree or for enrichment. **The Arabic-speaking sector** – The OUI attempts to answer the specific needs of this group, including by means of establishing study centers in Arabic-speaking areas and translating introductory courses into Arabic. **The ultra-orthodox sector** – The OUI offers separate tutorials for men and women in centers close to their homes. **Soldiers in compulsory military service and career army personnel** – The Open University's distance study methods are especially suitable for soldiers. The OUI hopes to expand access to soldiers by maintaining study centers on the larger military bases. **Teachers** – The OUI is engaged in a variety of activities related to teacher training, awards teaching certificates in several subjects and offers a master's degree in Education. **Retired individuals** – The geographic dispersion of the OUI enables this group to study toward a degree or for enrichment at any time and any place.

- **To create and disseminate academic knowledge in different fields by developing study materials and teaching and learning aids, and through basic and applied research.**

1. Integrated study materials: Open University textbooks, written by preeminent specialists in Israel and abroad, serve students at the OUI and at all of Israel's universities. In order to enable the maximum number of students to realize their potential, it is important to provide study materials that integrate the pedagogic and didactic aspect. To achieve this goal, the Open University develops study materials in Hebrew that combine a classic textbook and exercises. Merging the content and didactic aspects in Open University course books contributes to students' active, independent learning.

2. Research: The Open University offers a unique environment in which a small group of scholars is committed to the creation and transmission of knowledge on the highest level. The Open University aims to build a strong, university-wide culture of excellence in research, by increasing the number and proportion of its faculty who are regarded by their national and international peers as excelling in their disciplines; by striving to improve the excellence of its research programs and by providing institutional support to the development of cutting-edge research. In both basic and applied research, the Open University measures achievement against national and international standards. Rigorous assessment and review are central to advancing its research faculty, as are participation and leadership in national and international academic forums.

- **To enable all those capable of academic studies maximum flexibility in time, place and pace of studies and in learning styles.**

1. Flexibility in Time, Place and Pace of Studies: Within the framework of an academic semester, OUI students can study from any location in Israel and the world, at a time of their choice. Students can adjust their rate of progress to their needs and lifestyle. The OUI does not require them to complete a structured and uniform program of studies during a specific academic year. Their progress depends on the number of courses in which they enroll each semester. Students determine their own pace of study based on the time at their disposal, taking into consideration family and professional obligations, as well as their determination and diligence. Students can also choose to follow a structured program based on the accepted pace at other universities. The

University opens study centers throughout the country wherever there is a large enough group of students to justify this, and holds regular tutorial sessions at these centers.

2. Disciplinary Flexibility: In creating an individual program of study, students can select courses from a diverse array of disciplines or a focused disciplinary format. Students who choose to expand their horizons and to enhance their knowledge and understanding in a variety of disciplines in pursuit of a degree can enroll in courses in diverse fields, while students who choose a more focused approach can select one of the structured programs of study towards a degree offered by the University. In either case, students are bound by rules that limit the multi-disciplinary flexibility of their personal program of study, so that their course list – which is the basis of their degree – has both internal logic and academic justification accepted in the general university community. The OUI offers 75 structured undergraduate programs of study in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, 12 in the Sciences, 12 interdisciplinary programs, and one Engineering program. In addition, there are six graduate programs (to which candidates are accepted only after fulfilling strict admission requirements, as is customary in all other Israeli universities): Master of Business Administration (MBA); M.A. in Democracy Studies (Interdisciplinary); M.A. in Education – Learning Technologies and Learning Systems; M.A. in Biological Thought; M.Sc. in Computer Science and a recently approved M.A. program in Cultural Studies. The University also offers programs toward high school teaching certificates in several areas as well as certificate studies in Computer Science.

3. Developing teaching and learning aids: Together with its textbooks, the OUI also incorporates innovative and advanced technologies into its teaching: Internet, interactive instruction through broadband communication, multimedia, etc. The learning aids afford enjoyable and effective learning and enable students with different learning styles and needs to study without time or place restrictions.

4. Diversity in teaching methods: Open admissions and the varied student population inevitably results in diversity in learning skills and learning styles. To answer the different needs of students with different learning styles – those who prefer to read vis a vis those who prefer to listen; those who prefer printed materials vis a vis those who prefer reading on the computer; those who prefer directed, linear learning vis a vis those who prefer modular, independent learning – the Open University provides materials in multiple formats to enable students to choose the format that suits them.

1.3 The organizational structure of the Open University

According to the OUI organizational structure, the President is the academic and administrative head of the University, with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director General reporting to him. All OUI units, except the Resource and Public Relations Unit and the Research Authority, report to the Director General or to the Vice President who oversee the activities of the units. The major Open University bodies are:

The **Council** is the supreme authority of the University. The Council, headed by the Chancellor, determines University policy, supervises the implementation of its decisions and administers the affairs and assets of the University.

The **Executive Committee** is appointed by the Council and is responsible for ongoing planning, implementation, direction, and supervision.

The **Academic Committee**, headed by the President of the University, consists of professors from universities throughout Israel and Open University faculty. It is the academic authority of the University and is responsible for designing academic

programs and maintaining the University's high standards of academic activity. The Accreditation Committee and the Study Programs Approval Committee operate within the framework of the Academic Committee.

Disciplinary subcommittees operate within the framework of the Academic Committee in various disciplines: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics and computer science, and engineering. They approve new programs of study and the development of new courses.

The **Faculty Council** is composed of all appointed senior faculty as well as representatives of the academic teaching staff. The Faculty Council examines and discusses academic issues and affairs of the University.

An inter-disciplinary committee, the **Study Programs Approval Committee**, reviews each student's record of studies to determine whether degree requirements have been met. The Open University does not confer a Bachelor's degree without the Committee's approval.

The **Committee for Accreditation of Prior Studies** considers requests for accreditation from students who previously studied at an institution of higher education in Israel or abroad.

Disciplinary measures are taken in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. **The Disciplinary Committee** may impose a sanction of dismissal from a course, revocation of a diploma, suspension, expulsion or fine on students who commit disciplinary offenses. Students are entitled to appeal the decision of the Disciplinary Committee to the Appeals Board. After receiving the written decision of the Appeals Board, the student is entitled to submit a request in writing to the President of the University for a pardon.

The Ethics Committee deals with the following issues: (a) Determining a timetable for distributing questionnaires in classes, by mail or e-mail for both research and administrative purposes. (b) Examining the research plan or format of empirical studies, examining and approving questionnaires or unique experiment processes. (c) Approving in advance all laboratory experiments that involve animals or that reveal students' personal information. (d) Examining all the University's registration questionnaires to ensure that they do not request irrelevant or unnecessary information.

University bodies that support the work of the academic departments

The seven academic departments at the Open University work in close coordination with the following University bodies:

The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies: The departments act within the guidelines formulated by the Dean of Academic Studies. The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies is responsible for university-wide and inter-departmental issues related to studies and teaching at the Open University, including the following:

- Formulating ongoing teaching policy which all departments must follow
- Formulating guidelines, rules and regulations which students must observe
- Monitoring and regulation of teaching
- Training of teaching staff
- Coordinating academic counseling and study guidance activities
- Managing the central Open University library and libraries in the study centers and colleges

- Formulating guidelines for collaborating with colleges and institutions in which OUI courses are taught and maintaining ongoing contact with these institutions
- Supervising all Open University study centers

The Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies supports students throughout their studies by providing general and field-specific counseling, and imparting learning skills through workshops or individual guidance. The academic support system functions on the main OUI campus in Raanana and in study centers throughout the country.

The Academic Training department in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies focuses on three areas:

- **Developing training programs** for different groups with the aim of providing them with the resources they need to function effectively in line with OUI goals. To this end, the department identifies (among others, through the evaluation process) resources required by the teaching staff.
- **Guidance and training for managers** in the academic sector – ongoing guidance is offered to academic managers (course coordinators and department heads). A specific program was also developed for course coordinators to enhance management skills, reinforce a managerial outlook, strengthen communication between coordinators in different academic fields and foster and fortify organizational values.
- **Accompanying organization-wide projects** in which the behavioral aspect of employees is vital for success (for example, employee assessment).

The Evaluation Department: The Evaluation Department is responsible for developing and conducting studies and surveys with the aim of assessing OUI academic activities and providing information to decision-makers. In addition to ongoing surveys of the teaching process, the department also evaluates programs of study, courses and pilot projects in order to improve existing activities and processes and provide input for setting policy. The Evaluation Department investigates and evaluates issues on the level of the system, the department, and specific courses. The initiative to conduct an evaluation may come from OUI management, a specific department, faculty members, or the departmental assessment team. The work of the department takes two major directions:

1. Evaluation and examination of system-wide issues and projects
 - Integration of technology in teaching
 - Evaluation of organizational aspects
 - OUI students: Perseverance in studies and drop-outs
2. Evaluation within the academic departments in accordance with the unique characteristics of the various disciplines

***Shoham* (The Center for Technology in Distance Education)**

Shoham was established in April 1995 as a professional organization focusing on the informed integration of information technologies into the Open University teaching paradigm. The Center deals with the development, evaluation, research and integration of technology-based integrative pedagogical solutions to meet the various needs of academic courses offered by the University, enabling it to provide a higher quality and more effective and enjoyable learning experience to its varied and dispersed student body. To this end, *Shoham* is involved in the following areas:

- The development of an Internet-based learning environment, ‘Opus’, that serves as the infrastructure for the University’s course websites. The websites enable virtual teaching and learning processes, access to study materials and communication between students and tutors and among the students themselves
- Locating, examining and testing new technologies and their integration into the teaching and learning system
- The development of alternative distance learning methodologies and models and the assessment of the use of technological and pedagogical alternatives for tutorial sessions
- The development and production of a variety of study materials rich in images, sound and motion to supplement the written study materials
- Training and support of teaching staff who integrate technology in their teaching

Shoham’s staff includes pedagogical experts, multimedia and video specialists, and computer and technology professionals involved in the specification and analysis of teaching needs as well as the development, study and evaluation of infrastructures, systems, applications and methodologies aimed at improved teaching.

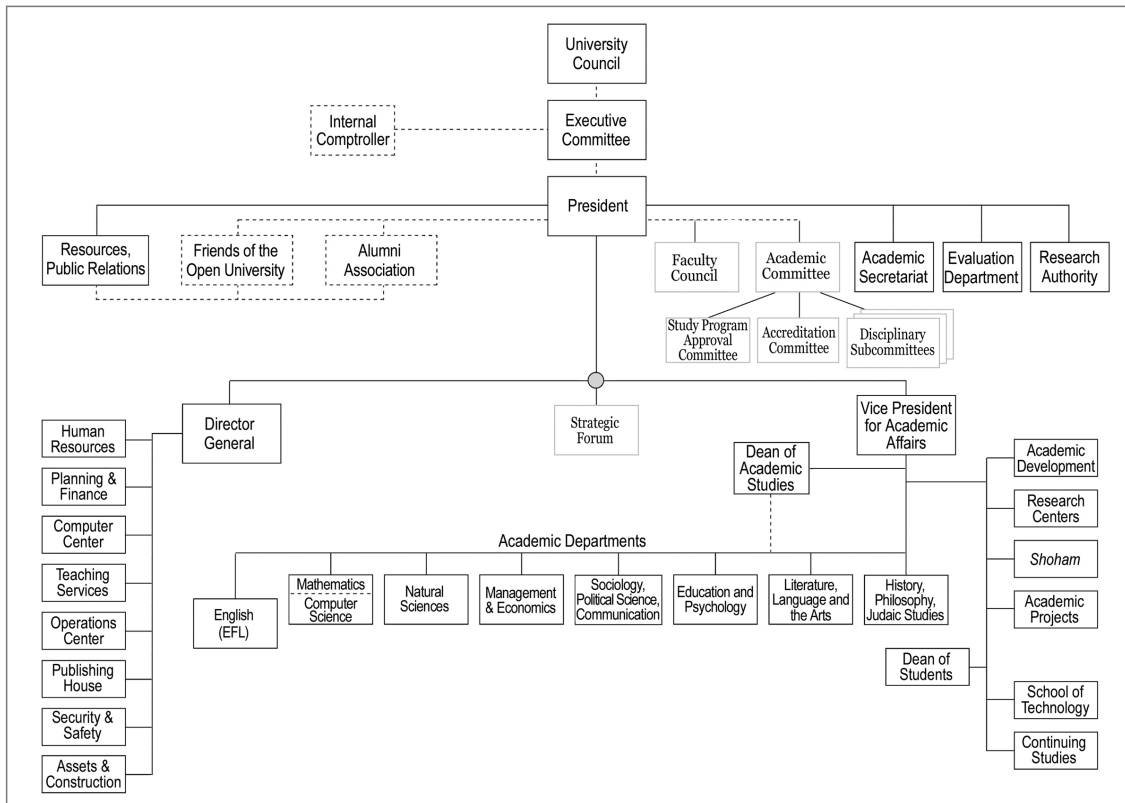
The Center works in close cooperation with the academic departments on pedagogical issues and with the administrative units in the areas of logistics, administration, communication and computers.

The Dean of Students: The Dean of Students initiates and coordinates areas that relate to students' welfare. The Dean of students also serves as the student ombudsman.

The Research Authority: The Open University Research Authority encourages research among faculty members by helping them find external sources of funding and submitting applications to these funds. The Authority collects and disseminates information on sources of funding, and is responsible for financial and administrative monitoring of research proposals submitted via the Authority that received funding. In addition, the Authority supports faculty research through grants, scholarships and enrichment courses from the internal research fund.

The Chais Research Center for the Integration of Technology in Education: The Chais Center is a research body whose purpose is to examine the integration of technology into teaching processes. It promotes theoretical and practical research among Open University faculty, with the aim of improving the integration of these technologies into their courses. The Chais Center provides a platform for cooperation among faculty from various departments at the Open University, supports the research performed by its members, and awards scholarships to outstanding graduate students. In addition, the Center holds symposia and workshops as well as an annual conference on research on instructional technologies, “Learning in the Technological Era.”

The Academic Development Administration: The Academic Development Administration coordinates all activities related to writing, monitoring, and producing academic courses and programs of study, including, among others, receiving the professional opinion of consultants with regard to proposed courses and study materials; drafting contracts with course writers and translators of books, and managing payment to all involved; coordinating schedules; updating databases on courses; coordinating the activities of the disciplinary subcommittees. In addition, it is responsible for editing the study materials, coordination with the Open University publishing house, and handling copyright issues.

The organizational structure of the Open University, as of September 2006:**1.4 Senior academic and administrative officeholders**

Chancellor – The Rt. Hon. the Lord Woolf. The Chancellor is the head of the University and Chairman of the Council.

Deputy Chancellor – The Rt. Hon. the Lord Rothschild. Replaces the Chancellor in his absence.

Vice-Chancellor – Prof. Abraham Ginzburg. Replaces the Chancellor and the Deputy Chancellor in their absence.

Chairman of the Executive Committee – Mr. Zeev Abeles.

President of the Open University – Prof. Gershon Ben-Shakhar. The academic and administrative head of the University; Chairman of the Academic Committee, Chairman of the Faculty Council.

Vice President for Academic Affairs – Prof. Ora Limor. Responsible for all the academic aspects of the activities of the University; replaces the President in his absence.

Dean of Academic Studies – Prof. Tamar S. Hermann. Deals with university-wide and inter-departmental issues related to studies at the Open University, including teaching policy and monitoring, academic counseling, and supervision of the library.

Dean of Students – Dr. Haim Saadoun. Initiates and coordinates activities that relate to students' welfare, including financial aid.

Director General – Mr. David Klibanski. Responsible for the administrative and financial affairs of the University.

Senior Faculty, Academic Teaching Staff and Administrative Staff – Personnel and Positions (December 2006)

Department	Senior faculty		Development consultants		Visiting faculty, academic teaching staff and administrative staff		Total staff	
	Personnel	Positions *	Personnel	Positions *	Personnel	Positions*	Personnel	Positions*
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science:								
Mathematics Division	2	2	-	-	15	11.2	17	13.2
Computer Science Division	7	7	4	1.7	34	21.3	45	30
Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication	6	6	1	.2	39	27	46	33.2
Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	8	8	1	1	33	21.3	42	30.3
Department of Literature, Language and the Arts	6	5	1	.5	34	20.3	41	25.8
Department of Education and Psychology	8	8	-	-	49	33.2	57	41.2
Department of Management and Economics	6	6	3	1.5	74	46.3	83	53.8
Department of Natural Sciences	10	10	-	-	36	24.1	46	34.1
English Unit	-	-	-	-	19	13.9	19	13.9
In-Service Teacher Training Unit	-	-	-	-	5	3.6	5	3.6
Center for Information Technology in Distance Education - <i>Shoham</i>	1	1	-	-	35	28.8	36	29.8
Chais Research Center	1	1	-	-	2	1	3	2
Supporting Units: Academic Development Administration; Office of the Dean of Academic Studies; Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center; Research Authority; Library; Dean of Students; President's Office	1	1	-	-	127	98.6	128	99.6
Total	56	55	10	4.9	502	349.1*	568	410.5*

* The number of positions is smaller than the number of personnel because some of the faculty and staff do not hold full-time positions.

The table does not include tutors who are hired per semester in accordance with enrollment figures, nor does it include all the university's administrative units, such as the Computer Center, Planning and Finance Administration, Human Resources Administration, etc. It also does not include staff in the School of Technology and the Continuing Studies Center.

Chapter 2

The Department of Management and Economics

2.1 Organizational framework

The programs of study assessed here are offered by the **Department of Management and Economics**. The University offered the first courses in Management and Economics in its first year of operation in 1976. The course offering in these fields has increased over the last three decades and the Department of Management and Economics has become the department whose courses are in highest demand by OUI students. Graduates of the department can be found in the private and public sectors as well as in advanced degree programs in academic institutions in Israel and abroad.

Historical Milestones

Until 1993, the OUI was authorized to award only a general BA degree in Social Sciences.

- 1993** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Bachelor's degree in Management and Economics.
- 2001** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer its first Engineering program – a B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and Management.
- 2001** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Bachelor's degree in Accounting with a division of studies in Economics.
- 2002** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Bachelor's degree in Management with a division of studies in an additional field.
- 2002** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Bachelor's degree in Economics and in Economics with a division of studies in an additional field.
- 2003** – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA).

The programs offered by the Management and Economics Department at the OUI are similar in content to those offered by other academic institutions, enabling students who wish to do so, to transfer to other universities after beginning their studies at the OUI. The department is engaged in developing new courses offered to students each semester. At the same time, it is important to note that new course development at the OUI involves a more complex process than at other universities, because the OUI must develop a course suited to distance learning – in other words, write a course textbook designated for self-study. As a result, course development is demanding in terms of time and financial resources.

The Department of Management and Economics offers over 50 programs of study (listed in section 2.5 below) and dozens of courses in Economics, Management, Accounting and Industrial Engineering. The courses were developed by OUI faculty and leading scholars in their fields affiliated with other universities. The textbooks they wrote are in great demand by faculty and students at other Israeli universities. A large number of academic teaching staff joined the department over the years – some holding PhDs as well as doctoral candidates, accountants and lawyers, who, together with senior faculty members, are involved in developing and operating the courses offered by the department.

The founding group responsible for the development of Economics courses at the OUI included Prof. Menachem Yaari who, as president of the Open University, designed the

master plan for Economics and Management studies, Prof. Shmuel Nitzan, Prof. Yaakov Rosenberg, Prof. Yossi Zeira, Prof. Gideon Yaniv and Prof. Joel Haitovski. Today, there are two senior academic faculty members in Economics: Dr. Mordechai Schwarz (joined the department in 2002) and Prof. Aviad Heifetz (joined in 2003), who work closely on course development with consultants from other Israeli universities.

Management courses were developed by Dr. Aviad Bar-Haim, Dr. Aviva Geva, Prof. Yaakov Hornik (who has since left), Dr. Nitza Geri, Dr. Arie Nachmias, Prof. Peretz Shoval, Prof. Avi Feigenbaum, Prof. Ruth Ben-Israel, Prof. Uri Ben-Zion, Dr. Hadara Bar-Mor, Prof. Amira Galin, Dr. Orly Yehezkel, Prof. Amnon Caspi, Prof. Yehoshua Liberman, Prof. Zeev Neuman and Prof. Oded Shenkar.

Accounting courses were written by Prof. Yossi Aharoni, Yaakov Samet (CPA), Prof. Yehoshua Livnat, Eili Peterman (CPA), Nissim Cohen (CPA), Rami Yules (Adv.), Dr. Hadara Bar Mor, Prof. Herzl Fatal, Dr. Yaakov Kamin, Dr. Yair Behar, Dr. Arie Nachmias, Dr. David Ravia, Dr. Nitza Geri, Prof. Yoram Eden, Prof. Boaz Ronen, Yehuda Aurbach (CPA) and Shmuel Gleisner.

Industrial Engineering courses were written by Prof. Avraham Shtub, Prof. Moshe Polatchek, Prof. Shraga Shoval, Prof. Yael Edan, Prof. Issachar Gilad, Prof. Mordecai Avrieli, Prof. Ezey Dar-El, Prof. Alan Stulman, Dr. David Sinreich, Dr. Yuval Cohen, Dr. Baruch Keren and Dr. Lior Rokach.

2.2 The mission and goals of the department

The rationale and goals of the Department of Management and Economics stem from the goals of the University, as delineated in Chapter 1 above, and its continuous striving for excellence and focus on high quality scholarly and scientific activities.

The goal of the undergraduate programs is to qualify graduates in Management and Economics, in Accounting and in Industrial Engineering and Management and to provide them with a broad and in-depth background in both theoretical and applied aspects. The department strives to produce bachelors with the ability to study independently, armed with the qualifications to pursue advanced degrees in any academic institution in Israel or abroad, and who will be able to find employment in the field.

The aim of the graduate program in Business Administration is to qualify students for middle and senior management positions in business, service and industrial organizations as well as in public sector and government institutions. It aims to impart professional knowledge, skills and qualifications in key areas of management and business administration, enabling its students to specialize in functional areas including business policy and strategic management, marketing, accounting, finance, operations management, human resource management, international management, industrial and business economics, ethics and law, behavioral management, decision-making, quantitative methods for management and managing information systems. The Open University offers an integrative program that underscores regional and international aspects with implications for the Israeli economy. The program is based on the conception that managers in the 21st century operate in a dynamic environment in which the emphasis on the interface between management, information systems and production technologies will play a key role in increasing the success of the organizations they manage.

This unique program provides a response to the increased demand for graduate studies in management, a field whose importance is mounting in institutions of higher

education in Israel. It offers an opportunity to the many applicants who work and therefore cannot take traditional MBA programs and to those who prefer the OUI study method. It also enables those who, due to lack of space or not having taken the GMAT (for financial or other reasons), are not accepted by existing Management faculties, in spite of the fact that their qualifications and undergraduate GPA are suitable.

To date, there is no graduate program in Economics, but the department intends to develop an MA program in Economics as soon as the number of senior faculty members in Economics is adequate for the task. This is compatible with the OUI's desire to develop higher degree programs in all fields, including PhD degrees.

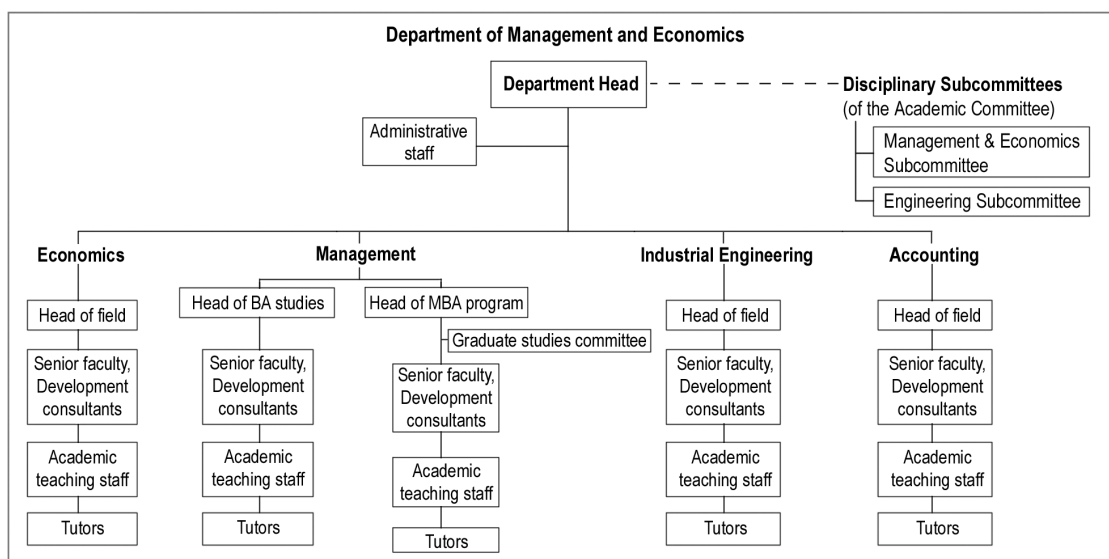
2.3 Internal organizational structure

Broad organizational framework

The Department of Management and Economics is one of seven academic departments at the Open University. It has complete autonomy over research issues and is free to initiate the development of new courses, to refresh and update the contents of existing courses, to update study materials and learning aids or to remove courses from the course offering. Every proposed change is submitted for discussion and approval to the disciplinary subcommittee and then to the Academic Committee. The department seeks, but does not appoint, candidates for senior faculty positions; and recruits (and dismisses) academic teaching staff. The department is free to function within the framework of the budget determined in collaboration with University management (specifically, the Vice President for Academic Affairs).

The Department of Management and Economics is organized as follows:

- Head of the department, appointed by the President
- Heads of fields: Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering, Accounting
- Senior academic faculty and course development consultants
- Academic teaching staff
- Tutors
- Administrative staff



The academic teaching staff includes the course coordinators. Course coordinators are responsible for planning all teaching aspects of academic courses and for implementing and monitoring these aspects. They are also responsible for the administrative aspects of the teaching.

The scope of the positions of course coordinators is determined by University regulations based on the number of students enrolled in each course. Tutors are employed under contract and are not faculty members of the department. They are hired each semester based on a contract drawn up according to the number of students in the groups they tutor.

In collaboration with the Dean of Academic Studies and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the department recruits (and dismisses) teaching staff (course coordinators or tutors) who have the requisite academic degree as determined by the Dean of Academic Studies. With respect to the teaching process, the level and weight of assignments, the number of tutorial hours, etc., the department is autonomous, subject to University regulations as specified in the procedures of the Dean of Academic Studies.

The department's administrative staff provides administrative services to the head of the department, faculty members, teaching staff and students. The administrative staff is responsible for the following aspects of the courses, including:

- Responding to student inquiries by phone, handling the inquiries or referring them to the appropriate entity
- Handling correspondence of course coordinators and students via mail, fax and e-mail
- Receiving and disseminating correspondence regarding the course
- Providing administrative assistance to course coordinators
- Administration of seminar papers
- Providing administrative support in preparing study materials

The following permanent forums operate within the department: The Economics forum, the Management forum, the Accounting forum and the Industrial Engineering and Management forum. All senior faculty and teaching staff, by discipline, are members of these forums. The forums initiate new courses and discuss updating existing courses, updating study materials and learning aids, and decisions to discontinue courses. Changes recommended by a forum are submitted to the Management and Economics Subcommittee or to the Engineering Subcommittee for approval and then to the Academic Committee.

Periodic meetings are also held by the department to discuss issues pertaining to all department disciplines. All members of the department are invited to attend these meetings – senior faculty, teaching staff and administrative personnel.

2.4 Names of holders of senior academic and administrative positions

Department Chair and Head of the Economics program: Prof. Aviad Heifetz

Head, B.A. in Management: Dr. Nitza Geri

Head, MBA program: Dr. Arie Nachmias

Head, B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering & Management: Dr. Yuval Cohen

Head, B.A. in Accounting: Dr. David Ravia, CPA

Statistical advisor: Dr. Shaul Tzionit

Administrative Staff

Department Secretary and Coordinator of the B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering & Management: Smadar Baum

Student queries and coordinator of the Economics program: Nira Abadi

Coordinator of the Management undergraduate program: Hedva Koren

Coordinator of the MBA program: Rinat Mizrahi

Coordinator of the Accounting program: Yifat Lichtenstein

Coordinator of development, student queries and management courses: Rakefet Amit

2.5 Programs of study

The following is a list of the programs of study offered by the department:

Undergraduate programs of study

B.A. in Economics – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה

B.A. in Management – בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול

B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and Management – וניהול – בוגר אוניברסיטה בהנדסת תעשייה וניהול

B.A. in Accounting with a Division of Studies in Economics –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בחשבונאות עם חטיבה בכלכלה

B.A. in Social Sciences: Emphasis on Management –
בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החברה בהדגשת ניהול

Degrees with a division of studies in an additional field

B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Management, Accounting, Sociology, Communication, Political Science, Education, Psychology, the Arts, Music, Social Sciences, Literature, Judaic Studies, History, Philosophy, and Mathematics –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה עם לימודי חטיבה

B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Economics, Logistics, Sociology, Communication, Political Science, Education, Psychology, the Arts, Music, Literature, Judaic Studies, History, and Philosophy –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול עם לימודי חטיבה

Dual-disciplinary degrees

B.A. in Economics and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובחינוך (במגמת תכניות לימודים ושיטות הוראה)

B.A. in Economics and History – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובהיסטוריה

B.A. in Economics and Political Science – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובמדע המדינה

B.A. in Economics and Sociology – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובסוציולוגיה

B.A. in Management and Economics – בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובכלכלה

B.A. in Management and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובחינוך (במגמת תכניות לימודים ושיטות הוראה)

B.A. in Management and History – בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובהיסטוריה

B.A. in Management and Political Science – בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובמדע המדינה

B.A. in Management and Sociology – בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובסוציולוגיה

B.A. in Psychology and Economics – בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה ובכלכלה

B.A. in Psychology and Management – בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה ובניהול

Interdisciplinary degrees

B.A. in Economics and Computer Science - Systems and Applications –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובמדעי המחשב - מערכות ויישומים

B.A. in Economics and Mathematics – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה ובמתמטיקה

B.A. in Life Sciences and Economics – בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החיים ובכלכלה

B.A. in Life Sciences and Management – בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החיים ובניהול

B.A. in Management and Computer Science - Systems and Applications –
 בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול ובמדעי המחשב - מערכות ויישומים
 B.A. in Chemistry and Economics – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכימיה ובכלכלה
 B.A. in Chemistry and Management – בוגר אוניברסיטה בכימיה ובניהול

Graduate degree

Master of Business Administration – תואר מוסמך אוניברסיטה (M.B.A.) במינהל עסקים

Teaching certificate

Teaching certificate in Social Sciences – תעודת הוראה במדעי החברה

Transfer options (see “Bridges to other universities” in Chapter 1) between the Department of Management and Economics and other universities are currently available to the following departments:

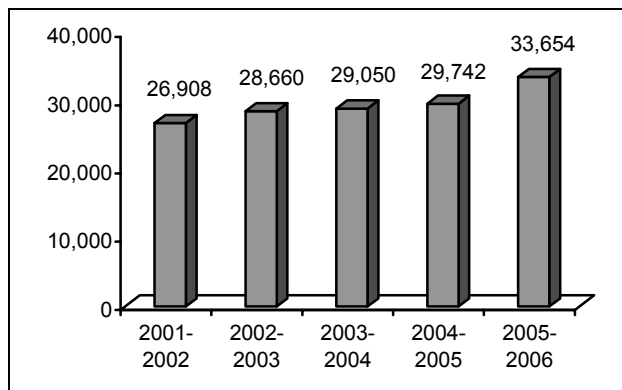
- Transfer option in Economics to the School of Economics at Tel Aviv University
- Transfer option in Economics to the Department of Economics at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Transfer option in Economics to the Department of Economics at Bar-Ilan University
- Transfer option in Economics to the Department of Economics at the University of Haifa

Number of Students

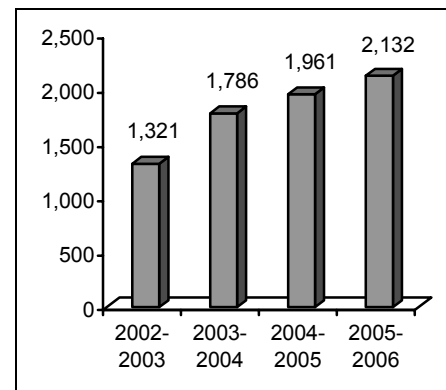
The number of enrollments in undergraduate courses in the Department of Management and Economics has grown over the years, as is evident in the figures below. In 2006, the number of enrollments reached 33,654, which represents over 30% of all undergraduate course enrollments in the OUI. As noted in Chapter 1 above, students at the Open University are not required to enroll in a department, but register for specific courses.

Enrollment in the MBA program is different, as prospective students must comply with admission requirements in order to enter the program. The MBA program was first offered in 2002-2003.

Enrollment data are as follows:



Enrollments in undergraduate courses



Students in the MBA program

There are currently no doctoral programs at the OUI.

2.6 Graduates

The table below relates to all students granted degrees in programs offered by the department over the past five years:

	Undergraduate programs	MBA
2001-2002	541	Not offered
2002-2003	568	Program first offered
2003-2004	598	29
2004-2005	615	63
2005-2006	672	137

2.7 Deciding upon the rationale, mission and goals

The rationale, goals and objectives of the programs of study are determined by the senior faculty of the department and are reviewed and approved by the Management and Economics subcommittee, by the Faculty Council, and the Academic Committee (in that order). Each new course also undergoes an approval process.

The goals and objectives are discussed at regular meetings conducted by these bodies, at department meetings, ad-hoc meetings convened for a specific purpose and in informal conversations. The goals and objectives are discussed on an ongoing basis, examined and, if necessary, modified.

The goals, objectives and changes are communicated via the President's Report, in protocols of meetings, the newsletter and the department website, and are announced at meetings of the various entities mentioned above.

Chapter 3

The Evaluated Study Program

3.1 The goals and structure of the study program

3.1.1 The name of the study program and a brief summary describing its development since its establishment

The first program of study in Economics, a Bachelor's degree in Management and Economics was approved by the Council of Higher Education in 1993. In 2002, the Open University was authorized to offer a Bachelor's degree in Economics and in Economics with a division of studies in an additional field. Today, the Open University offers dual-disciplinary degrees in Economics and Education, History, Political Science, Sociology, Management and Psychology. Interdisciplinary degrees are offered in Economics and Computer Science, Mathematics, Life Sciences and Chemistry.

In 2002, when we began to offer the study program in Economics, the unique Open University textbooks for several courses were not yet complete. As a result, for several years, these courses were taught by means of face-to-face, live lectures given by professors from Israeli universities, and broadcast simultaneously through the *Ofek* system to multiple study centers in Israel. Today, the textbook development for almost all the courses has been completed and the books now serve as the basis for distance studies, thus eliminating the need for broadcasting live lectures.

The textbook for the course “The Economy of Israel,” by Prof. Benjamin Bental and Dr. Ami Barnea, has been taught since the spring 2006 semester. The textbook for “Labor Economics,” by Prof. Yoram Weiss, has been taught since the summer 2006 semester. “Public Economics” is the last course in the program still broadcast live to students – the lectures are given by Prof. Uri Spiegel.¹ Concurrently, a textbook for this course is being written by Dr. Mordechai Schwarz of the Open University, some parts of which jointly with Prof. Eitan Sheshinsky. The new course should be ready in 2008-2009.

Furthermore, the development of two advanced elective courses was completed in the last two years: “Intergenerational Economics,” by Dr. Schwarz, and “Social Preference and Choice,” by Prof. Shmuel Nitzan. “Intergenerational Economics,” is now being offered in the program. “Social Preference and Choice,” is being offered in 2007 and another new course, “Strategic Thinking – Game Theory with Economics and Business Applications,” by Prof. Aviad Heifetz, will be offered in 2008. These new courses are included in all the study programs in Economics (dual-disciplinary and interdisciplinary), as required courses or electives.

The department is working to develop additional advanced electives in Economics. A course proposal in “Economic History” is at an advanced stage. The development team will be headed by Prof. Joel Mokyr. The department also intends to develop a course in “Industrial Organization” to replace the old course, “Industrial Economics,” which will no longer be offered after 2008-2009. Further new courses being considered are in Information Economics and Behavioral Economics.

Thus, the program has reached an advanced stage, and offers students a rich selection of elective courses beyond the required courses.

Graduate program: There is no Master's degree offered in Economics. The OUI intends to develop MA programs in various disciplines, and Economics will probably be among them. Our vision also includes developing Ph.D. programs in the future.

¹ At the same time, distance learning technologies like video-conferencing, are being used more and more for tutoring sessions conducted by the academic teaching staff of the Open University (rather than for lectures by professors from other universities).

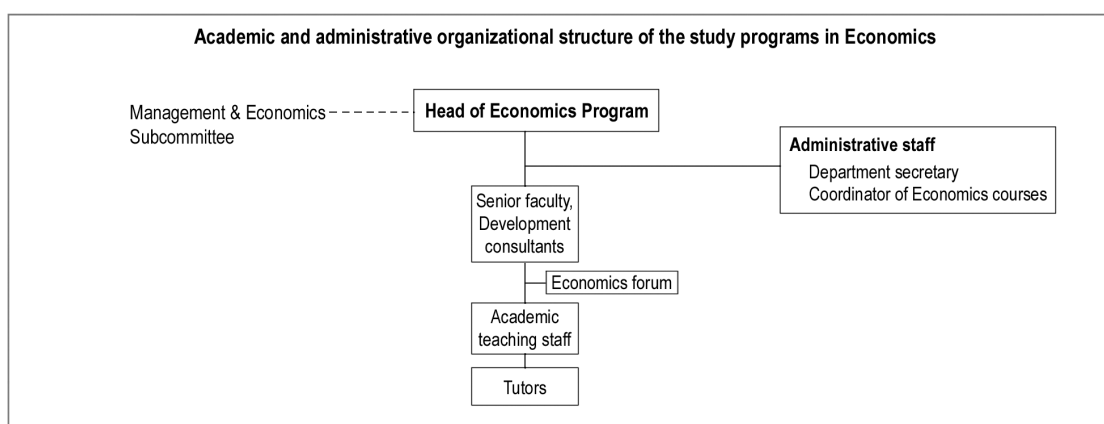
3.1.2 Mission statement of the study program, its aims and goals

The goal of the undergraduate programs in Economics is to qualify graduates in Economics or in Economics and other fields, in the dual-disciplinary or interdisciplinary programs. The Economics program is intended to provide its graduates with a broad and in-depth background in both theoretical and applied aspects. The program aims to equip students with the scientific and intellectual methods essential for critical evaluation of economic phenomena, ideas and policy proposals. These methods are required for the analysis of micro- and macro-economic issues, private and public economics, individual and collective decision-making, non-strategic and strategic economic decisions and, finally, local and international economic interactions. The department strives to produce bachelors who are able to study independently the complex issues encountered in the economic environment. Furthermore, the program provides graduates with the qualifications necessary to pursue advanced degrees in economics in any academic institution in Israel or in any top-level university abroad. These qualifications also enable the program graduates to find employment in the field of economics and in related fields in the private as well as the public sectors.

Yet another goal of the program is to offer introductory courses in Economics to students of other disciplines. Such courses may be required or electives in those disciplines. In the latter case, the introductory courses in Economics enable Open University students to broaden and enrich their education by selecting courses on varied subjects. This type of voluntary enrichment is of great importance to students whose intellectual interest has not yet become specialized.

Finally, the high-quality study materials developed for the Economics program at the Open University clearly involves positive externalities for students of economics in all Israeli universities and colleges. This has already proven to be the case for books developed in the early stages of the program. It is expected that such externalities will be even stronger in the future, once the Israeli economics student population has a chance to be exposed to the new advanced courses that have recently been published or are under development.

3.1.3 Description and chart of the academic and administrative organizational structure of the study program (including relevant committees)



3.1.4 Names of holders of senior academic and administrative positions

Head of the department and of the program: Prof. Aviad Heifetz

Senior academic faculty: Prof. Aviad Heifetz, Dr. Mordecai Schwarz

Development consultants: Prof. Shmuel Nitzan; Prof. Uri Ben-Zion

Academic teaching staff (PhDs): Dr. Ronen Bar-El, Dr. Drora Karotkin, Dr. Irit Malka

Administrative staff:

Department secretary: Smadar Baum

Coordinator of Economics courses: Nira Abadi

3.2 The study program: Contents, structure and scope

3.2.1 All programs of study at the OUI are based on distance learning and therefore the university, as opposed to other academic institutions, does not require that students come to a central campus. Studies take place in various study centers dispersed throughout the country. Study groups in a specific course are opened each semester based on the number of students enrolled in the course in a given geographical area. The homogeneous academic level of the studies in all campuses and study centers is preserved since all students in all campuses and study centers use the same textbooks and exercise booklets, and all take the same examination at the end of the semester. In addition, the course coordinators supervise the tutors and visit the study centers regularly.

The undergraduate programs in Economics:

Name of program	Date first offered
B.A. in Economics	Spring 2003
B.A. in Accounting with a Division of Studies in Economics	2002-2003
Degrees in Economics with a division of studies in an additional field	
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Management	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Political Science	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Communication	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Sociology	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Education	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Psychology	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Social Sciences	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Mathematics	2004-2005
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Judaic Studies	2004-2005
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in History	2005-2006
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Philosophy	2005-2006
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in the Arts	2005-2006
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Literature	2005-2006
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Music	2005-2006
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Accounting	2005-2006
Dual-disciplinary degrees	
B.A. in Management and Economics	1993-1994
B.A. in Economics and Political Science	2001-2002
B.A. in Economics and Sociology	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Economics	2001-2002
B.A. in Economics and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)	2001-2002
B.A. in Economics and History	2005-2006
Interdisciplinary degrees	
B.A. in Economics and Computer Science – Systems and Applications	2001-2002
B.A. in Life Sciences and Economics	2002-2003
B.A. in Economics and Mathematics	2003-2004
B.A. in Chemistry and Economics	2004-2005

3.2.2 Description of the undergraduate programs in Economics

The Bachelor's degree program in Economics offers three main options: a single-disciplinary track in Economics, a dual-disciplinary track, and a degree in Economics with a division of studies in an additional field (see list of programs above). A large selection of courses in

Economics is offered with the aim of giving students a broad and in-depth background in the field. The program imparts professional knowledge, skills and capabilities in key areas of economics and enables students to specialize in wide range of economic thought, applied economics and research. These areas include microeconomics, macroeconomics, game theory, international trade, public economics and public finance, public choice, econometrics and supplementary studies in management and other related fields. See the separate booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics,” for the structure of the programs and list of courses.

B.A. in Economics: The contents of the program correspond to single-disciplinary undergraduate programs in Economics at other universities in Israel and throughout the world. The program has several levels. The first level lays a broad and in-depth foundation in Mathematics, Statistics and introductory Economics. The second level includes theoretical required topics that comprise the core courses in economics. The third level consists of a variety of theoretical and applied elective courses. See separate booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics,” for a list of courses required to complete a B.A. in Economics.

B.A. in Economics with a division of studies in an additional field: The programs enable students to enrich their knowledge by selecting courses from another field. The program offers flexibility in the choice of courses from among a wide range of fields in the Humanities, Social Science and the Sciences, such as Psychology, Communication, Education, Philosophy, Literature, the Arts, Music, History, Judaic Studies, Management, Accounting, Political Science, Psychology, Social Sciences, Sociology and Mathematics. (For details on the structure of the programs, see the separate booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics”).

Dual-disciplinary programs in Economics and a discipline in the Social Sciences: The following combinations are offered within this framework: Economics with Management, Education, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Each combination includes a wide range of courses in Economics and in an additional discipline, enabling graduates to pursue advanced degrees in each of the disciplines. See separate booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics” for a list of programs and courses.

Inter-disciplinary programs: These programs combine Economics studies with a discipline in the sciences. The programs include a foundation suitable for both disciplines, required core courses in each discipline, and intermediate and advanced elective courses in each discipline. Graduates of these programs can pursue advanced degrees in each discipline. The programs offered are combined with: Computer Science – Systems and Applications, Mathematics, Life Sciences, and Chemistry. See separate booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics” for a list of programs and courses.

B.A. in Accounting with a Division of Studies in Economics: This program enables students to acquire the foundations of economic thought together with a B.A. degree in Accounting. In order to receive a Certified Public Accountant's license, students have to complete a specialization and pass the examinations conducted by the Council of Accountants. Students who complete their studies towards a Bachelor's degree in Accounting, based on a decision of the Council, may begin the specialization required. In accordance with the decision of the Council, these students are exempt from several of the examinations.

Courses offered to students of other disciplines

There are several courses in Economics taken by students of other disciplines, including introductory courses in Economics and Finance, required for Accounting, Management and Industrial Engineering as well as other disciplines. These courses are taken by thousands of students.

3.2.3 To what extent do the structure, scope and contents properly reflect the main goals of the study programs?

The programs offer a wide selection of required and advanced courses in Economics that enables the students to continue their studies toward higher degrees in any academic institution in Israel or abroad. They are offered through distance learning and utilize technologies that support distance learning. The programs are flexible in terms of time and place: students may enroll in courses according to their personal schedule constraints, and indeed, many students work full time during their studies. These aspects reflect the goals of the department and the University of expanding access to higher education, flexibility and high academic standards.

3.2.4 Planning and managing the study programs

Designing and changing study programs

New programs of study at the OUI are usually developed by OUI faculty members in consultation with scholars from other universities and consultants who submit written evaluations of the programs. New programs are initiated by the department head or by a senior faculty member in the department. In most cases the initiator also heads the program and is responsible for its operation. Program changes or updates are initiated by senior faculty members. Every new program and every change (including changes in required and elective courses, and the development of new courses) undergoes the following stages before it is approved (for the detailed procedure, see Rules and Procedures, “Program Approval,” in Hebrew):

1. The program is submitted to experts in other universities for evaluation.
2. The Management and Economics subcommittee discusses the program.
3. The Faculty Council discusses the program.
4. The Academic Committee discusses the program and decides whether to approve it.
5. New programs (if approved) are submitted to the Council for Higher Education.

The Academic Committee is the highest academic authority with respect to study programs. Its members include all OUI professors, seven of the OUI’s senior lecturers, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, 17 professors from other universities in Israel representing a broad range of scientific fields, and is chaired by the President of the OUI.

The Committee considers the recommendations of the Faculty Council concerning academic issues (approving new study programs, changes to existing programs, approval and development of new courses, etc.). Though the Academic Committee approves most of the Faculty Council recommendations, the Committee does not automatically give its stamp of approval. If one Committee member opposes a decision or maintains that it was not sufficiently substantiated (for example, if individuals recognized as leading experts in the relevant field in Israel were not involved in the decision), the recommendation is returned to the relevant academic department.

Members of the department in the field of Economics, who design the programs and initiate and edit updates to them, are those involved in evaluating the programs (the Academic Committee only considers recommendations submitted to the Committee and does not initiate changes in study programs). The department continuously compares them to corresponding programs at other universities, and evaluates and updates the programs as needed.

There is also an evaluation mechanism for courses that have not been updated for several years. Every such course is submitted to the responsible academic unit for evaluation. Courses are updated on an ongoing basis; teaching of outdated courses is discontinued and new courses are developed. Such updates are usually conducted following a direct initiative of the department.

Updating courses: Most economics courses are based on material written specifically for the course as well as textbooks in Hebrew and English accompanied by a study guide. Courses are updated on a regular basis in accordance with new editions of the books and developments in the field and changes in study programs in Israel and abroad. Course credits are updated and adjusted to both the updated contents and the study program. For example:

- The course “Introduction to Macroeconomics” has been rewritten. The department is engaged in efforts to revise and update the course “Introduction to Microeconomics.”
- Courses that are outdated or do not fit into the program are discontinued. For example, the course “Industrial Economics” is about to be archived and the Management course “Social Responsibility in Management” was discontinued and replaced by the course “Business Ethics,” which is also taken by Economics students.
- The “Macroeconomics” courses, I and II, are outdated and have to be updated or replaced with a new designated textbook. The department is searching for a senior macroeconomics faculty member who will write a new macroeconomics course.

Development of new courses in Economics: New courses that were developed in the last five years include:

- Intergenerational Economics
- Labor Economics
- Social Preference and Choice

In addition, the completion of two advanced elective courses is expected in the near future:

- Strategic Thinking – Game Theory with Economics and Business Applications.
- Public Economics

In addition to developing these courses, extensive resources have been invested in recent years in computer-mediated communication and in integrating technology into undergraduate courses.

3.2.5 Examining course contents

OUI courses are approved in accordance with the procedure specified above. Senior academic faculty members routinely evaluate course contents and courses are rewritten or updated as necessary, as described in section 3.2.4. Examinations and assignments are written by the course coordinators and submitted for evaluation and approval to the senior academic faculty member responsible for the academic aspects of the course.

The Evaluation Department conducts routine feedback surveys in every course at the end of each semester, in which students answer questions pertaining to the courses they took during the semester (detailed in section 3.3.2). Survey results are submitted to the course coordinator and the department head. Measures are taken to implement improvements based on the survey findings. The department also initiates feedback surveys asking students to express their opinion about their studies, including course-specific issues.

Additional feedback surveys are conducted among all those who completed their degree studies in order to learn how their studies prepared them for work in the field or for continued academic studies, and whether their studies had an effect on their life or outlook. Feedback results are used to examine study program contents and adapt them to student needs.

3.2.6 Summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the study program

The department is satisfied with the results of its many years of effort and activities reflected in the development of the Economics program and the many and varied study programs that

combine Economics studies with other disciplines. These programs are very successful, and their strengths and weaknesses are specified below:

Strengths

- The Economics programs offer a rich and high-quality selection of courses based on textbooks written especially for self-study by scholars who are experts in the fields.
- The study programs are specifically designed for the target population that is composed mainly of individuals holding jobs who require maximum flexibility in managing their time during their studies.
- The undergraduate programs correspond to the goals of the department as specified in Section 3.2.1.
- Teaching is continuously and independently monitored (by an entity external to the department – The Evaluation Department).
- High quality of learning materials as a result of the OUI's course development process from the pedagogical model in which the textbook serves as the expert and the quality and quantity of the materials do not depend on the skills of a specific lecturer.
- Scholars from all academic institutions in Israel and abroad contribute to course development. This is an advantage because development of new courses and study programs does not depend on the areas of specialization of a faculty member, but rather on the requirements of the various content fields.
- The high academic level of the courses is recognized by Economics departments in other Israeli universities, and is the basis for transfer tracks that enable our students to continue to second year studies without the need for qualifying courses (see "Bridges to other universities," p. 4).
- Uniform examinations given throughout the country are written before each semester and exam questions relate only to the written materials of the course, irrespective of what was covered by tutors in individual tutorial sessions.
- The uniform examination system makes personal biases on the part of tutors toward specific students irrelevant.

Weaknesses

- The number of senior faculty members in the area of Economics is relatively small. The problem is particularly acute with respect to updating courses and with respect to the responsibility of the faculty in monitoring the academic quality of ongoing activities.

3.2.7 Additional non-academic bodies' involvement in the activities of the department and the program

No additional non-academic bodies are involved in the running and activities of the department and the program, beyond those described in Chapter 1.

3.2.8 Directions for further development

The department is striving to expand its senior faculty to correspond with its responsibilities with respect to course development and to teaching and supervising seminar papers.

This expansion is needed particularly in view of the need to develop new courses and to update existing courses. The senior faculty members of the department continuously check which parts of existing courses need to be updated. Currently, the Macroeconomics course is in need of update, and hence the department is engaged in recruiting a senior faculty member in macroeconomics, one of whose tasks will be to renew this course. The department plans to add new units or replace specific outdated units in other core courses as well, such as "Introduction to Microeconomics" and "Price Theory III."

The department also wishes to establish an MA program in Economics, once all required and elective courses are sufficiently updated and a sufficient number of senior faculty is recruited. Another important direction for further development, once there are enough faculty members who are engaged in research, is to conduct more group seminars and symposia that will enable brainstorming by faculty and students, and also enable students to meet more frequently and become better acquainted with faculty members.

3.3 Teaching and learning

3.3.1 Teaching and learning methods

The aim of the distance teaching method developed by the OUI, and all its varied aspects, combined with the University's open admissions policy is to open the world of higher education to all individuals, irrespective of their place of residence, occupation, age or sex, and to enable all to realize their academic potential. The OUI's teaching and study conception combines distance teaching with components of face-to-face teaching (blended learning). The distance teaching and self-study method is not time or place dependent; it is not based on a central campus with teachers and students or on a fixed and uniform class schedule. The emphasis is on active self-study that enables students to choose the tutorial framework most suited to their needs (see details in section 3.3.4 below). This method enables individuals with work, family and military service constraints to organize their studies according to their personal needs. The method is congruent with the OUI's goals (section 1.2) and the goals of the academic Economics programs. The independent study that characterizes the method prepares students for continuing self-study.

3.3.1.1 Learning materials

OUI courses are fundamentally different from courses at other universities. An OUI course is first and foremost a scholarly or scientific work in print: one or more volumes written and produced expressly for OUI students. The written courses are specifically suited for self-study: they are usually divided into study units, each unit dealing with a defined topic and designed to be studied within a set period of time; the study material is explained with the utmost clarity and combined with guiding questions, answers to questions or exercises, and in many cases also self-assessment questions. The latter enable students to assess their progress vis à vis the study material and to examine the extent to which they understood the study material up to that point and whether they need to review any of the material.

The course book: The course book is the main source of self-study. Many Economics courses are based on course books written and produced by the OUI (for details on course development, see Rules and Procedures, "Course Development," in Hebrew), and are used by students in corresponding courses in most academic institutions in Israel.

Reader: Some courses have readers that include articles or case studies on the course topics or that expand knowledge about key topics in the course.

Study guide: When the course is not based on a textbook written especially for the OUI, or when it includes a reader in addition to the textbook, the course is accompanied by a detailed study guide that contains the self-study tools characteristic of OUI course books. The study guide is intended to guide students and to facilitate their learning. It directs students to specific topics when reading the textbook or reader and also includes review questions, exercises and activities used to illustrate the material, sample questions and answers, references to articles and relevant websites and explanations aimed at facilitating the understanding of particularly difficult topics.

Course booklet: Printed course materials are mailed to students' homes, accompanied by a course booklet that describes in detail the course format and process. The booklet includes the course topics, assignments and timetable (dates of tutorial sessions and topics of discussion, as well as deadlines for submitting assignments).

3.3.1.2 Tutorial sessions at the study centers

Every course has a group tutorial component conducted in a classroom or via video conference; however, this component is not the core of the course and is not mandatory. Students who wish to make their home a private campus can do so successfully based on the

OUI distance teaching method. The aim of the tutorial is to guide and support the study process.

3.3.2 Evaluating and improving teaching

Teaching at the Open University is based on two fundamental elements: course development and tutoring. The unique structure of the University distinguishes between course development and teaching, and each will be dealt with separately.

3.3.2.1 Course development

Courses are developed by senior faculty members from the OUI and other academic institutions, often in cooperation with the academic teaching staff. Academic course development is performed through a system that includes monitoring by external evaluators who are leading experts in their field, and scrutiny by various internal academic committees. Every new course proposal is approved by the disciplinary subcommittee and then by the Academic Committee. The course proposal and study units are sent to external reviewers and their comments and suggestions are taken into consideration during the development process. These steps relate to courses developed by OUI faculty, as well as those developed by external experts (for details on course development, see Rules and Procedures, “Course Development,” in Hebrew).

3.3.2.2 Teaching

Every course in the OUI is supervised by a senior academic faculty member appointed by the head of the department as the academic responsible for the course. The faculty member approves every assignment and exam questionnaire, and initiates updating the course material if required. However, due to the small number of faculty members (relative to the number of courses), each faculty member is responsible for many courses, not all of them exactly matching his/her expertise.

Teaching tasks are divided between tutors and course coordinators. The course coordinators are members of the academic teaching staff, and have Master’s degrees or PhDs. See section 3.5.1.2 for the descriptions of the positions of course coordinators and tutors.

Training the academic teaching staff

The OUI’s unique study method requires a system for training all personnel involved in teaching, even those who have prior teaching experience from other frameworks. The Training Department in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies is responsible for training the academic teaching staff and provides training activities for course coordinators and tutors. In addition, course coordinators train the tutors in the courses they coordinate.

Course coordinator training: Course coordinators are responsible for the planning and implementation of teaching in the course. All course coordinators hired by the OUI are required to participate in a four-day training workshop, in which they learn to plan a good exam or assignment, to adapt exam items to the structure of the exam and the target audience, to formulate criteria for grading, and to analyze exam results in order to improve and revise the exam. The workshop also deals with formulating clear and understandable questions, and ensuring that students’ responses are evaluated based on their understanding of the material without biases that can affect exam validity. The workshop focuses on evaluating exams and assignments based on the degree to which they meet reliability and validity standards. Experienced course coordinators can participate in a management development program, offered once a year.

Tutor training: New tutors at the OUI are required to participate in a three-day training program, offered twice a year, that deals in the nature of the position, the first tutorial session,

checking assignments and examinations, and tutoring skills. Correcting assignments is one of the main components of the tutor's job. Therefore, the training process emphasizes the development of skills for formulating grading criteria, as well as improving reliability and providing effective feedback to students. New tutors also receive individual training from the course coordinator. A wide variety of workshops are also offered to experienced tutors to improve their skills. The University also conducts symposia and training for all tutors in a department or for tutors of a specific course.

The training program for new tutors

Session 1 (about 5 hours): Acquaintance with the OUI and preparing for the first tutorial session

During the first part of this training session tutors are acquainted with the OUI, its values and work style (known as "the OUI spirit") and with the University's employment terms. Group workshops are conducted in the second part of the session (15-20 tutors in every group, 3-5 groups) addressing the first tutorial session – acquaintance, clarifying goals, etc.

Session 2 (about 5.5 hours): Assignments as a means of two-way communication – checking assignments and providing feedback

Assignments play a key role in the OUI teaching process and feedback on assignments is primarily for learning purposes. In this session, tutors practice checking assignments and providing effective feedback. Tutors learn how students perceive their message as transmitted in the assignment feedback, and how the dialog between tutor and student reinforces learning. The session also deals in grading dilemmas and in preparing students for writing assignments. The topics discussed in the session are determined by the subject of the courses.

Session 3 (about 5 hours): Tutoring skills

In this small group workshop, tutors learn and practice the use of a wide range of tutoring skills (even if they have prior didactic experience) through simulations and constructive feedback from colleagues and experienced tutors. Tutors also have the opportunity to practice a short tutorial session. Session activities are accompanied by a closed-circuit television.

In 2005-2006, 54 tutors in the department participated in workshops for new tutors.

New tutor training by course coordinators

Every course coordinator is responsible for training new tutors on the course topics. The training is conducted by various means:

A. In all courses, at least one meeting is held between the new tutor and the course coordinator to:

- Explain the course goals and the means of study
- Review the study topics and various emphases (for example, topics in which students encounter difficulty), as well as the tutorial schedule (if relevant to the course)
- Explain the importance of assignments in general and in the course in particular
- Provide exercises that the tutors can, or must, use

In some courses, these guidelines are given to the tutor in writing.

B. Ongoing contact throughout the semester between the course coordinator and the new tutor.

C. The course coordinator visits tutorial sessions and provides written and/or verbal feedback to the tutor.

D. The course coordinator samples assignments checked by the tutor and provides feedback.

E. In some courses, the new tutor is asked to observe tutorial sessions conducted by an experienced tutor, and in some cases, the course coordinator appoints the tutor a coach from among the experienced tutors.

Training and activities for experienced tutors

A. **Workshop – The online assignment system** (3.5 hours): A tool for submitting assignments and feedback through the Internet between students and tutors.

B. **Workshop – Tutors as leaders of study groups** (8 hours): To help tutors develop tutorial skills that increase student involvement and commitment. The workshop is conducted within the framework of the Leadership and Management Development Center and takes place at Neot Kedumim (learning and training activities in an experiential and unique setting based on the “outdoor training” method are held on this site).

C. **Workshop – Feedback and Criticism** (8 hours): The aim of the workshop is to enhance tutors’ skills in giving and receiving feedback. The workshop examines the nature of criticism and attempts to understand its positive and negative power, the feelings it engenders, and behavioral reactions.

D. **Workshop – Pygmalion Tutoring** (7 hours): The workshop aims to teach tutors how to improve students’ achievements by raising their expectations about themselves. The workshop presents theory and research, focusing on an applied model that is easy for tutors to implement in order to influence student learning behavior and achievements.

E. **Workshop –Tutors Together** (4 sessions, 1 hour each): Tutors from different disciplines contend with similar dilemmas and professional and organizational issues. They examine their extensive, relevant and valuable knowledge and experience concerning these dilemmas and issues. The aim of the workshop is to share this knowledge and to create new knowledge.

F. **University-wide activities**, including symposia, lectures, guided concerts, exhibitions, tours and workshops on a variety of topics.

Demand is high for most of the activities offered. As the number of participants per activity is limited, in quite a few cases tutors’ requests to participate cannot be met. In 2005-2006, 64 tutors and course coordinators in the department participated in activities and workshops for experienced tutors.

Meetings of tutors: Meetings of tutors are held when a course has more than two tutors. In most courses, these meetings are held every semester, usually before the beginning of the semester or after the semester ends, and in a few courses – once a year.

The main issues discussed are:

- Summary of the preceding semester as well as notifications (usually administrative), guidelines and updates concerning preparations for the upcoming semester
- A discussion of various topics concerning course contents
- Sharing information about study and drilling methods for different topics
- Enrichment and in-depth examination of various topics related to course contents and to study and tutoring issues

The meetings also have an important social function in consolidating the group, deepening involvement and reinforcing tutors’ feelings that they are not working on their own.

Course websites: Every course offered by the Department of Management and Economics has a course website (see section 3.3.3). Every course with more than four tutors has a forum for tutors (and the course coordinator). In the forum, tutors discuss and consult each other

about issues relating to topics, assignments, tutoring methods, recommendations for tutorial exercises, etc.

3.3.2.3 Evaluation of teaching

Evaluation of teaching activities and tutors: Course coordinators continuously monitor the quality of the tutors' work by conducting frequent visits to study centers throughout the country, observing tutorial sessions and talking with students. After conducting the observation, the course coordinator summarizes his/her conclusions in a report that also addresses the quality of the tutor's feedback on assignments. The report is submitted to the department head and used by the course coordinator to track changes in tutoring quality

Course coordinators also sample assignments checked by tutors and provide feedback on the quality of the assessment. At the beginning of the semester the coordinator decides which tutors will be sampled, how many assignments and which assignments. The sampled assignments are photocopied and sent to the course coordinator. Assignments checked by new tutors are sampled more often than those checked by experienced tutors.

Exams are also sampled and coordinators are required to check a number of exams in each exam sitting in order to get a sense of the students' responses. Course coordinators maintain ongoing contact with tutors during the semester and help them as needed with tutoring issues. Students can contact course coordinators directly during their telephone office hours or by e-mail, regular mail and messages in the course website – enabling coordinators to identify issues that need to be addressed or improved.

Teaching survey

One of the important tools for evaluating and examining teaching quality is the survey of teaching conducted in every course each semester, through which course coordinators and faculty members responsible for the course receive feedback from students about various aspects of teaching and learning in the course. The survey helps course coordinators monitor tutors' performance and the efficacy of the variety of teaching tools and methods used in the course. The survey is conducted by the Evaluation Department via the internet through the course website. In the past, questionnaires were administered to students at one of the tutorial sessions towards the end of the semester.

Students are asked to evaluate the course with respect to:

- Overall satisfaction
- Assignments
- The tutor and tutorial sessions
- The course website
- General questions (difficulty of course and expected grade) and background questions (credits accumulated, participation in tutorials)

A summary of the results is sent to the head of the department, the course coordinator and the tutors.

The continued employment of tutors, hired each time for one semester, is based on the quality of their work as evaluated by the course coordinator through observations of tutorial sessions, sampling assignments and exams, and the teaching survey results.

Evaluation of course coordinators

The OUI conducts periodic evaluations of course coordinators to examine various components of their performance. The evaluation is conducted by a faculty member and the department head. Course coordinators who do not meet the requirements are replaced. Due to

the abilities and quality of those selected to act as course coordinators, and the ongoing training and accompaniment by the senior faculty, these cases are rare.

3.3.3 Use of information technology in teaching and learning

To improve distance teaching, the OUI integrates advanced technologies that enable ongoing communication with the academic teaching staff and with other students in the course. Every course has a website that contains, among other things, supplementary information, links to databases and websites related to the course material, and multimedia materials. All digital materials are indexed, thus enabling students to navigate among topics. In several courses, online tutoring replaces or supplements some of the tutorial sessions. Materials in some courses include videoclips, courseware and multimedia titles that enrich the course with interactive audio-visual material. It is important to note that these technologies do not replace the written study materials that are the backbone of teaching at the OUI, but rather expand and enrich them, and are fully adapted to the written study materials.

The information technology used to support teaching and learning includes three components:

1. An Internet learning environment that includes the Open University website, the department websites, and individual course websites.
2. An online assignment system
3. *Sheilta* - Interactive services to students (see section 3.4.2 below).

3.3.3.1 Course websites

Every course offered by the department has a website that enables the department to improve service to students, enhance teaching quality, address varied target groups, bridge geographic distance and supply easy communication and continuous availability. The websites provide two types of communication channels – an administrative channel and an academic channel.

The screenshot shows a web interface for the course 'Intergenerational Economics - 10574'. At the top, there are navigation links: 'Mapa | Library | Sheilta | Support | Help | Help with formula tool | Display preferences | Personal notebook'. Below this is a header with 'Telem' and 'OUI' logos. The main content area is titled 'Intergenerational Economics - 10574' and includes links for 'Chat', 'Ofek', and 'Online Assignment System'. The course coordinator is listed as 'Dr. Ronen Bar-EI'. A 'Messages' section contains two messages from 10/6/2006. The first message states: 'I've added another sample exam. We will solve it during the Ofek lesson.' The second message states: 'There are three new links to [websites](#) on which you can watch videotaped lectures by renowned experts on pension reform.' On the left, a vertical menu lists various course resources. On the right, a sidebar offers additional services like 'Workshop: Writing papers' and 'Statistical advice'. A 'LOGIN' button is located at the bottom right of the sidebar. The footer contains the text: 'Telem Online distance learning © All rights reserved The Open University of Israel. כל הזכויות שמורות לאוניברסיטת הפתוחה.'

Administrative channel

All administrative details pertaining to the course are found on the website; for example, course description, course schedule, information about the teaching team and list of students in the course by study group.

Academic channel

Message board: Every website has a message board with notices posted by the course coordinator throughout the semester about the study material (clarifications, emphases, guidance, etc.) and about administrative issues (schedule changes, tutorial session changes, etc.).

Discussion forum: Every website has a discussion forum that is one of the key components of an online course. Forums provide a unique collaborative learning environment through asynchronous discussion among members of the group (students and teaching team) who are geographically distant from each other. Through the forum, students can ask questions about the study material, request clarifications, discuss assignment questions and receive help from their fellow students and from the teaching team. Thus, the forum becomes a virtual classroom and enables ongoing interaction. For many students who do not attend tutorials (for example, students living abroad), the course website enables them to maintain contact with the teaching team and with their fellow students, to more easily keep up with the appropriate pace of study and to feel a part of a large study group, thus reducing feelings of isolation that can arise when studies are based exclusively on books and regular mail.

Some courses also offer a separate forum for course tutors (in which access is denied to students) where they can discuss problems that arise in tutorial sessions, discuss questions posed by students in the study groups that may interest all course tutors and share relevant interesting material.

Personal journal: This tool for organizing the information on the website enables students to gather and organize selected information from course websites and to add their personal comments. This personal tool accompanies students throughout their studies at the OUI in all courses.

Chat room: Every website has a chat room that the students and tutors are authorized to enter with a personal password. The chat enables synchronous group communication using text messages. The chat serves as a social and learning meeting place for students, for seminar paper tutoring for a small group of students, to converse with students abroad or with tutors, to answer questions in preparing for an exam, etc.

Online tutorial sessions: In some courses, tutorial sessions are conducted through advanced technologies:

- The **Ofek** system enables the broadcast of live lectures (in real time) from a studio on the Raanana campus to all receiving classes dispersed throughout the country and simultaneously on the Internet to personal computers at home. The system is based on broadband video communication.
- The **InterWise** system enables transmission of live lessons on an Internet platform to students' homes from the lecturer's computer, so that students hear the lecturer's voice while viewing the study material: demonstration of a presentation or a website, using a design table, shared applications and interactive exams.
- The **Video Conference** system, in which a tutorial is conducted by the course coordinator or a visiting lecturer and broadcast from a main studio to classrooms throughout the country as well as to the course website. The system was used for the first time by the Department of Management and Economics in the course "Price Theory" in Spring 2005.

Online assignment system: The online assignment system is offered through the course websites. During the semester, students must submit a number of assignments that include exercises or various tasks. Whereas in the past assignments were submitted by mail, assignments in most courses can now also be submitted through the Internet-based online assignment system.

Enrichment: Various types of learning materials are integrated into course websites: supplementary information on study units, exercises and exams for self-evaluation, sample exams, weekly briefings, feedback on assignments, videotapes and recorded lectures, demonstrations, presentations, students' papers, references to current topics, links to databases and websites, etc. However, the enrichment capacity of the websites is limited due to copyright limitations.

All technological teaching tools are assessed and monitored, and feedback is provided by students and tutors.

The department website (www.openu.ac.il/academic/economics)

The website of the Department of Management and Economics consolidates a great deal of information – administrative and academic – pertaining to the department:

- **About:** A description of the department, its history, study programs offered, information about the faculty.
- **Statistics consulting services:** The Department of Management and Economics offers consulting services for statistics computer applications that focus primarily on training in the use of statistics software products and on statistical inference based on computerized processing of statistical data.
- **Seminar papers:** This section of the website provides information about writing seminar papers, and includes FAQs on seminar papers, selected sample seminar papers and a link to a guide for writing a seminar paper (appended in Hebrew in “Extras,” Seminar Paper Guide).
- **Academic counseling:** The Department of Management and Economics enables students to receive academic counseling from a team of departmental academic advisors, faculty members and course coordinators who are familiar with the department's study programs and courses. This section offers information about the academic counseling services provided by the department, for example: FAQs and a list of departmental academic advisors.
- **Contact:** Contact information of the department administrative staff, including names of the secretaries and their responsibility areas, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses.
- **Message board:** Notices about departmental activities and greetings at the beginning of a semester or on holidays are posted on the message board.

Computerization data and trends

The scope of computerization and the use of course websites in general at the Open University and in Department courses has expanded significantly over the last few years. Activity in course website forums has increased for students, course coordinators and tutors. The most prominent trend is the enormous growth in the number of messages posted by students in course forums. This indicates that students realize that it is an important and effective means of interacting with the teaching team. The increased volume of forum activity among students also points to a growing tendency among students to help each other rather than relying only on the course coordinator or the tutors.

3.3.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of computerization

Strengths

From the students' perspective, computerization has significant advantages. A course website provides ongoing synchronous and asynchronous contact with the teaching team throughout the semester and provides them, without time and place limitations, with a wide-range of

materials for expanding, clarifying and enriching the study material. In particular, the course website forum is an excellent means of interaction between students and the teaching team and among students, for asking questions and sharing information related to the study material, and as such is used extensively.

From the course coordinators' perspective, the website is an effective means of expanding and supplementing the course material beyond the tutorial sessions and study units, as well as for various types of exercises. The new Opus version gives the website manager almost complete autonomy with respect to all parts of the website, in most cases through an easy and user-friendly interface. Since the tutorial sessions are limited in number, tutors are unable to address all topics that are important and/or difficult to understand, the ability to add exercises and to supplement the study material or expand on certain topics through the website is an important supplement to the tutorial sessions. Furthermore, the website in general and the forum in particular are effective means of enriching students in varied ways about topics relevant to the course, and could be even more so were copyright laws and regulations less restrictive.

Weaknesses

- The extensive activities in the course website place a heavy workload on the course coordinators who devote a significant amount of time answering students' queries in the forum. There is concern that the time they invest in this work, important as it is, in certain cases may be at the expense of other professional/academic activities.
- It appears that for some students, course websites are a substitute for independent study. The availability of coordinators in the forums to answer students' questions encourages students to choose the easy way and to ask about anything they do not understand instead of delving into the literature and contending with the study material on their own.
- The abundant material available on the websites may reduce the attractiveness of tutorial sessions that, while not mandatory, have added value.
- Technically, despite significant improvements in the new Opus version, there are still time-consuming bugs that cause problems for the coordinators.

3.3.4 Policy regarding lecture attendance

The OUI study method does not require students to participate in tutorial sessions in the traditional format customary in universities. In our system, all the study material is found in textbooks and study guides, and the interaction between students and the academic teaching staff is intended to clarify and discuss problems encountered by students during their self-study, as well as for enrichment and in-depth examination of the study material. Students are offered several tutorial formats and choose the most suitable to them from among the following:

- **Regular tutorials:** A 2-3-hour session once every 2-3 weeks, 5-8 tutorial sessions over a semester. Beginning in 2007, there will be a "reduced" tutorial option – a single tutorial per semester.
- **Intensive tutorials:** Usually between 7 and 14 tutorials per semester conducted weekly or biweekly.
- **Online tutorials:** The Economics faculty use a variety of tools and methods for virtual tutorials conducted through course websites (see section 3.3.3 above).
- **Telephone tutorials:** All course coordinators and tutors have weekly telephone tutorial hours during which students can call them to discuss academic and administrative issues.
- **Tutoring via e-mail:** In addition to telephone tutoring that is usually limited to specific hours during the week (although there are tutors that agree to answer calls outside their

formal tutoring hours), students can send an e-mail to the teaching staff at any time and receive a speedy response. With respect to topics relevant to all the students in the course, the course team makes an effort to offer tutoring within the framework of the course website forum.

Evaluation

In the OUI study method, students do not participate in tutorial sessions because attendance is mandatory, but rather because they assume that participation in these sessions will benefit their studies. The same holds true for the other tutorial options described above. There are students who are unable to attend tutorial sessions, and for whom studies at the OUI are the only option available for pursuing academic studies, for example, soldiers, students abroad, residents of the periphery, prisoners and individuals who are ill or have limited mobility. These students are supported by distant tutoring options: course websites, telephone and e-mail.

Students enjoy the flexibility and the ability to take advantage of the various tutoring options based on changing circumstances, for example intensive tutoring in a difficult course and regular tutoring in other courses, or distance study of a course, without attending face-to-face tutorials due to work or family constraints such as living abroad for a period of time. Students also have flexibility within the course itself: they often choose not to attend tutorials that deal with study material they believe they can manage on their own. Consequently, tutorial sessions are effective, and because they are voluntary, there is an atmosphere of study that is reinforced by students' desire to gain from their participation in the tutorial.

3.3.5 Methods for measuring student achievements

Student achievements at the OUI are evaluated through assignments and exams (see details in sections 3.3.6 and 3.3.7). The aim of evaluating student achievements is to test knowledge they acquired during the course and their entitlement to academic credits. The OUI has open admissions in undergraduate studies and does not have information about students' prior scholastic achievements. In this context, it is important to underscore that the principle of open admissions does not contradict upholding standards of excellence with respect to the academic level of OUI courses or the methods used to evaluate students' academic achievements. The overall course success rate is about 70%.

Assignments: Students are required to submit assignments during the semester on pre-determined dates by mail or through the Internet. Assignments are checked, graded, corrected and returned to students. In addition to the grade, students receive written feedback on their assignments from the tutor.

Examinations: In all courses, there is a final exam at the end of the semester. The exam is written by the course coordinator and is approved by a senior faculty member or a member of the academic teaching staff with a PhD. Exams taken by students are checked by the course coordinator and the tutors, based on criteria set by the former. Appeals by students regarding exam grades are handled by an individual who did not initially check the exam and the decision pertaining to the appeal rests with the course coordinator.

Calculating the final grade: The final grade in the course is calculated as a weighted average of the assignments submitted and of the exam. The assignments usually constitute 15%-30% of the course grade. A student who fails the final exam cannot pass the course even if the weighted grade (thanks to high grades on assignments) is a pass.

3.3.6 Examinations

3.3.6.1 Method of examinations, their character and organization

Written final examinations are conducted at the end of all courses. Examinations take place simultaneously in examination centers throughout the country (students abroad take the exams at Israeli embassies or consulates) and students may take the exam at a center of their choice.

Undergraduate students are entitled to take each exam twice. The OUI usually holds three exam dates in every semester for every course: two regular exam dates (sitting 1) and one repeat exam date (sitting 2). Exam questionnaires are different on every exam date. The exam is three hours long. A time extension is often approved for students for a variety of reasons (primarily students with physical or learning disabilities). Students may not take an oral exam, a take-home exam or write a paper in lieu of a written exam.

During the exam, the course coordinators (who wrote the exams) are available at the telephone center on the OUI campus to answer students' questions referred to them. Tutors are not present at the examination centers during the examination.

The department conducts three types of examinations:

1. Examinations with only open-ended questions
2. Examinations with only multiple-choice questions
3. Examinations that combine open-ended and multiple-choice questions

Most exams are of the first type (open-ended questions). In 25% of the courses, the examinations include multiple-choice questions which comprise up to half of the exam. In only one course does the exam consist solely of multiple-choice questions. In about half the courses, there is some choice on the exam (for example, 4 out of 5, or 5 out of 6 questions).

To ensure that all students have an equal chance to succeed, the examination questions reflect only the written study materials, irrespective of what topics arise in tutorial sessions.

The relative weight of an examination in the student's final grade varies in accordance with the number of assignments submitted during the semester. In most courses, the examination accounts for 70%-85% of the final grade, with the remainder determined by assignment grades. The breakdown of weights in course grades can be found in the syllabus of each course appended to this report.

In about 50% of the courses, students are permitted to use any study material during the examination (open-book exams). In some courses, students are only allowed to use course materials (course textbook + study guide); in some, students can refer to a defined number of sheets of paper (between 1 and 4 sheets of paper, size A4) that they are allowed to prepare in advance and bring to the examination; while in some courses, no material is allowed.

The examination process at the OUI

The examination process at the OUI, which is a complex logistical process, is organized as follows:

1. **Dates** of the final exams

Exams are held at the end of each semester. Students are entitled to take the exams in the semester that they studied or in the consecutive semester after coordinating this in advance.

All exams are 3 hours long. Students whose native language is not Hebrew are entitled to an extension of 30 minutes on their final exams in the first five courses in which they are tested at the Open University. Students with learning disabilities who have been diagnosed as such or students with physical difficulties are also entitled to an extension of between 30 to 90 minutes.

2. Geographical distribution

Exams are held simultaneously at dozens of centers throughout the country. The Examination Department tries to enable all students to take the exams as close to their residence as possible.

3. Exam questionnaires

All the questionnaires are prepared by the course coordinator and approved by a senior faculty member, undergo professional editing and proof reading, and are duplicated about one month before the date of the exam.

4. Organization

The “Proctor Coordinator” is responsible for the management of the examination center and works with a local team. Examinations for different courses are held in the same classroom.

During the examination, the students ask questions, which are transmitted to the course coordinators via the proctors. The course coordinators, who are at the control center at the OUI campus in Raanana, respond to the questions by phone.

At the end of the examination, the examination notebooks are transferred to the campus in Raanana and given to the course coordinator for checking.

3.3.6.2 Grading

Grades are on a scale of 0-100. The passing grade is 60. To receive a “pass” in a course, students must meet all course assignment requirements and receive at least 60 on the final examination. Grades are not influenced by statistical considerations, in other words, grades are not factored in order to achieve a desired grade distribution.

3.3.6.3 Average grades of graduates

The average grade of graduates over the past three years in the various undergraduate programs is 79.45. To receive a B.A. in the various study programs, students must pass about 23 courses. The final grade in a single course may not accurately reflect the student’s knowledge in Economics, however in the case of 23 courses, discrepancies would offset one another and therefore the final grade average serves as a reliable estimate of the student’s academic level. Moreover, the OUI’s open admission policy combined with its high academic requirements results in a relatively high dropout rate in the student’s first courses at the OUI. Students who are able to graduate are usually highly motivated and have high intellectual abilities so that we would expect them to complete their studies with a high overall grade average.

3.3.7 Written assignments

3.3.7.1 Types of written assignments, their contents and scope

Assignments: Written assignments are a vital component of teaching and learning that aim to help students assimilate the material, underscore important course contents, provide feedback to students and, through the students’ answers, provide feedback to the teaching team on how well students understood the study material or what difficulties they encountered. Assignments are submitted during the semester on pre-determined dates by mail or through the Internet and sometimes serve as the only means of communication between students and tutors. The assignments usually constitute 15%-30% of the final grade. There are two types of assignments:

- A **tutor assignment** is composed of open questions, enabling students to answer freely and demonstrate their writing, analysis and synthesis skills with respect to the topics

studied. There are usually 5-6 assignments in a course, making up 15%-30% of the course grade. In most courses, students must submit at least four assignments.

- A **computer assignment** is a multiple-choice questionnaire which students answer using the course website or a computer form. The process of checking and calculating the grade is entirely computerized.

Seminar papers: Undergraduate students in Economics are required to write two seminar papers in Economics. Students studying toward dual-disciplinary degrees have to write one seminar paper in Economics and one in the second discipline. After successfully completing an advanced course, students are entitled to choose to write a seminar paper in the course. The paper topic is approved by the course coordinator and the student is referred to a supervisor, holding at least a PhD degree, who meets with the student prior to writing the paper and once again after its completion in order to provide feedback and to evaluate the paper. The department website includes a link to a guide for writing a seminar paper (appended in Hebrew in “Extras,” Seminar Paper Guide).

Seminar papers are based on up-to-date articles from academic journals. The nature of seminar papers varies; some are theoretical and include a detailed summary and an analysis of current research and references, while others are empirical. Some of the seminar papers also address applied aspects of theory. Students are required to add their personal perspective of the topic; for example, comparisons, additional examples and critical assessment.

The seminar coordinator prepares up-to-date literature to assist students in choosing a seminar topic, monitors the process of researching and writing the paper within the framework of the chosen topic, allocates time for consultation in addition to the meetings as is customary at the Open University and evaluates the paper.

Seminar papers vary in scope and level. These depend on the student and to a certain degree also on the advisor. Some seminar papers are more in-depth than others. Some are based on few articles and others on a large number of articles. In terms of length, seminar papers typically range from 25 to 100 pages.

3.3.7.2 Evaluation of written assignments and projects

Students’ seminar paper supervisors have a PhD in Economics or in a related field and are usually senior lecturers or above and supervise students on topics in their field of expertise. Some of the advisors are OUI faculty members and others are external advisors (faculty members at other universities).

Supervisors meet with students at least twice. At the first meeting, the student presents the preliminary research proposal and receives feedback. Supervisors also approve the outline of the paper which are sent them before the students begin to write the paper. The supervisor reads the first draft and provides feedback. The student then revises the paper accordingly. In some cases, the student is asked to submit additional drafts. The second meeting takes place after the supervisor has read the final draft, prior to assigning the final grade. The student is summoned to a meeting with the advisor to demonstrate knowledge and proficiency on the topic. Following this meeting, the advisor writes an evaluation report and the evaluated paper, along with a seminar paper evaluation form, is sent to the course coordinator. Additional meetings may take place at the student’s initiative or at the supervisor’s request.

The course coordinator examines the evaluated paper to assess the evaluation procedure and the grade and approves the evaluation form. The seminar paper is then submitted to the department head for approval. Should the department head find incongruence between the grade and evaluation of the seminar paper on one hand, and the comments in the paper and on the evaluation form, s/he will examine the matter with the coordinator and the supervisor.

The seminar grade is based on the following criteria: the academic significance of the topic, clarity of presentation, description of theoretical background, literature review, the relation of the theoretical background to the topic, accuracy and updatedness, logical structure, discussion of conclusions, writing ability and correct use of scientific reporting procedures. The evaluation, assessment and feedback level are satisfactory in most cases (also in comparison to examinations).

3.3.7.3 Average grades of papers, theses and projects

The average final grade in undergraduate seminar courses, over the last three years, was 86.

3.3.8 Other methods applied to measure achievements of the students used by the institution

No other methods are applied within the Economics program.

3.3.9 Summary – Strengths and weaknesses of methods of evaluating students' achievements

Validity and reliability of measuring achievement - exams and assignments

The validity and reliability of evaluation processes are also related to the design of evaluation tools as well as the application of these tools (for example, checking and assessing students' answers). The assignments and exams prepared by the course coordinators each semester are checked by faculty members or academic teaching staff with a PhD whose field of expertise includes the course topics.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the student evaluation processes, the Evaluation and Training Departments use several methods:

- The academic teaching staff is trained in writing exams and assignments and checking and grading exams and assignments (see section 3.3.2).
- Statistical reports are generated in order to analyze and learn from the results of the tools: item analyses for all assignments and exams are consolidated in a general OUI database from which reports are generated and used by course coordinators to track students' achievements:
 - Students' achievements – for every student in the course, the report shows the student's assignments grades, the final exam grade and the final course grade.
 - Consolidated results of multiple choice questions – the difficulty level, item discrimination, the proportion of students who chose each of the distractors, the correlation between each of the distractors and the overall exam grade.
 - Consolidation of grades of open-ended questions – the average grade for every item, the SD, and the percentage of examinees who chose to answer the question. The report also shows the distribution of the exam grades.
 - Statistical data (averages and standard deviations) on the assignment grades, the final exam grade and the correlation between the assignment grades and the exam grade, reliability coefficients.

These reports can be generated very easily after the items are entered into the OUI database. The reports present information about the difficulty level of the items (the percentage of students who answered multiple-choice items correctly, the average and standard deviation for open questions), item discrimination (correlation between each item and the total exam grade), an analysis of the distractors (for multiple-choice items), the percentage of examinees who chose each question (when they can choose to answer certain questions and not others), and the distribution of exam grades.

These data can contribute to the validity and reliability of the exams. They enable course coordinators to identify ‘bad’ items that could have affected students’ success on the exam and to remove them from the grade calculation, and to improve future exams.

The statistical data enable course coordinators to oversee several aspects pertaining to teaching the course and evaluating students’ achievements:

- Comparing the assignment and exam grades in the various study groups can show the level of students in the group and the quality the tutor’s grading of assignments.
- Comparing assignment grades to the final exam grade and checking the correlation between the two indicators can, in combination with additional information, show the degree to which the assignments prepare students for the final exam.

In summary – the OUI maintains an organized and structured system for examining ways to evaluate student achievements. Thousands of students are enrolled each semester in some Economics courses, and the statistical tools described above enable course coordinators to independently evaluate the quality of the assignments and exams they wrote and also to oversee tutoring quality (in addition to the mechanisms for overseeing the tutors’ work, described in section 3.3.2). The detailed information also helps course coordinators to identify difficult topics in the course contents and examine whether the measures they took to help students deal with these difficulties (for example: preparing a video explaining the topic that students can view through the course website, additional exercises, answers to questions, etc.) achieved their goal.

Seminar paper supervision: The **advantages** of the supervision system: By participating in a supervised seminar, students benefit from exposure to current scientific material, guidance in understanding the seminar topic and learning from original scientific sources, training in writing a scientific/academic paper. Seminar supervisors expose students to a range of issues in different knowledge fields enabling them to select a seminar paper topic on their own. The supervisor assesses the topic in terms of content, level and relevance. Students write the seminar paper on their own. As part of the individual tutorial process, students are supervised through progress reports submitted by the students, face-to-face meetings and telephone and e-mail consultations.

The **weaknesses** of the supervision system: It is difficult to recruit suitable seminar supervisors in certain fields. The level of supervisors is not uniform. The only guideline pertains to the minimal number of meetings required between student and supervisor: to meet with the student at the beginning of the process and to conduct a final meeting at the end of the process. Supervision can only be monitored through reports submitted by students and supervisors. The time required by some supervisors to evaluate seminar papers is inordinately long. An examination of supervision conducted by the department showed that the University incurs high costs in referring each student separately to a supervisor and that the process is not always efficient. Some supervisors do not devote sufficient attention to students, or are inaccessible; we have to rely on one external supervisor with specific expertise to supervise many students. We are considering a fundamental change in the existing practice, from individual supervision to a group tutorial process like that customary at other universities.

3.3.10 **Summary: Strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning at the Open University**

The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in Economics programs are similar to those in the OUI in general, as the pedagogical model is identical. Nonetheless, several characteristics unique to the Economics programs and not necessarily evident in other disciplines affect the strengths and weaknesses:

- Economics programs do not require the use of laboratories or fieldtrips and as such facilitate distance teaching and learning.
- There is high demand for introductory Economics courses and thousands of students are enrolled in these courses.

Strengths

The high quality study material of the OUI is a result of the University's unique course development process that combines collaboration with leading external scholars in their field in writing courses, evaluation and as consultants.

The organized and structured evaluation and training system ensures the high quality of teaching and learning, providing the feedback to the academic teaching staff that enables them to continuously improve the process.

Accumulated institutional experience over 30 years of distance teaching enables the OUI to effectively take advantage of learning technologies that in recent years are accessible to most students, and, indeed, the OUI is a leader in the development and implementation of technological tools for distance teaching and learning.

The OUI offers students a broad range of elective courses that do not depend on the availability of senior faculty members, and does not limit the number of students that can enroll in a course. All individuals are accepted, enabling them to realize their intellectual abilities. The OUI teaching approach is characterized by flexibility and accessibility while ensuring academic quality and excellence.

Finally, self-study that characterizes all studies at the OUI, qualifies students for a continued self-study process that is vital for all those seeking for higher academic degrees or for working in research.

Weaknesses and measures to improve them

Self-study demands a high level of self-discipline from students who perceive this component as more difficult than group study through face-to-face lectures. Moreover, most of the assignments are prepared alone and not through teamwork. This mode of learning is ideal for highly self-disciplined individuals, such as those with a Yeshiva background, but many students find it difficult to contend with these elements and they often cause them to discontinue their studies. Educational technologies are the primary tool for dealing with these difficulties. Course websites offer students a variety of ways to interact with their fellow students for collaborative study. Course coordinators invest considerable thought and effort in activities on the course website to encourage teamwork and create a classroom atmosphere.

The extensive options available to students, beginning with the choice of a study program among more than 50 undergraduate programs, through a varied course offering, and enabling students to choose their preferred learning mode and tutoring method, offers students maximum flexibility. Nonetheless, not all students choose the option most suitable for them. The OUI aims to help students in this process by closely accompanying them from their initial interest in studies at the OUI and until they receive their degree. The OUI Academic Counseling and Study Guidance System, within the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, accompanies students throughout their studies at the OUI through academic counseling, cultivating learning skills and personal tutoring (see section 3.4.5).

3.4 Students

3.4.1 Selection and admission procedures

One of the unique aspects of the Open University is open admissions to its undergraduate programs. The University provides an opportunity for higher education to all and has no selection or admissions process. Hence, corrective discrimination in admission neither exists nor needed. The Open University does not have an affirmative action policy.

The OUI has no criteria for accepting students with special needs. The policy is to accept all students. Students who for medical, physical or other reasons require special study conditions contact the Dean of Students for assistance (see below section 3.6.4.2)

Unlike other academic institutions, OUI students do not enroll in an academic year, but register for individual courses. Hence, there are no criteria for advancement from year to year, as in regular universities. Instead, there are prerequisites for each course, beyond introductory level courses, which have no prerequisites. Registration for an intermediate or advanced course is conditional upon meeting all prerequisites specified for each course. In addition, before students can enroll in an advanced course, they must fulfill all English language (EFL) requirements, and take bibliographic training in the Library (see also section 3.6.4.1).

Number of Students: Due to the special structure of studies at the OUI, students are only required to submit their study program for approval at a relatively advanced stage of their studies. Thus, the definition of an “Economics student” is not trivial. For the purpose of this report, we use the following definition: An “Economics student” is a student who has taken and passed at least two of the following courses: Price Theory I (10627), Macroeconomics I (10457), or Econometrics (10284). The following table shows the number of Economics students in various Economics programs, as well as those with no approved study program, in the last five years.

Program	Management and Economics	Economics	Economics with a Division of Studies in Another Field	Accounting with a Division of Studies in Economics	No approved study program *	Total
Year						
2002	679	3	67	1	173	923
2003	685	8	75	5	223	996
2004	689	20	94	22	360	1,185
2005	632	25	90	50	495	1,292
2006	529	30	88	63	661	1,371

* Because students are required to submit their study program for approval at a relatively advanced stage of their studies, a large proportion of students have no approved program among Economics students.

Accreditation of prior studies: Students who previously studied at an institution of higher education in Israel or abroad, are entitled to request accreditation of these studies at the Open University before commencing their studies. The Committee for the Accreditation of Prior Studies is an inter-disciplinary committee composed of representatives of the fields of study available at the OUI. The Committee includes several members of the Department of Management and Economics.

Students cannot accumulate credits toward a degree in Open University courses whose content is similar to that of courses in other universities for which they received credit. The Accreditation Committee informs the student which courses will not be recognized for credit among the courses offered by the Open University at the time the decision is made.

A request for accreditation of courses that were completed many years earlier may be denied by the Committee due to the outdated nature of the studies. The Committee considers the merits of each request.

Degree entitlement: In order to earn a Bachelor's degree from the Open University, students need to accumulate at least 108 credits (not including English language courses and seminar papers). However, the credit requirements are not identical for all programs of study. In interdisciplinary programs involving Economics, students need to accumulate up to 118 credits. Beyond the general requirements mentioned above, students must fulfill the specific requirements for the degree toward which they are studying. In the case of Economics programs, these are delineated in the attached booklet, “Programs of Study – Economics.”

3.4.2 Publishing information about courses

The OUI course catalog, provided free of charge to all interested individuals and students, contains very detailed information about all teaching components, including detailed course descriptions. The information can also be found in Hebrew and English on the OUI website. A primary source of detailed information is the course website (see section 3.3.3, above). OUI academic advisors and representatives of the department academic teaching staff are available at all OUI study centers to provide updated information. Students can also contact the OUI telephone inquiry center that refers callers to authorized personnel to answer their inquiries.

Students also have access to the *Sheilta* system (Interactive services to students). *Sheilta* is a computerized system developed by the Open University to offer students on-line administrative services via the Internet and other advanced electronic channels of communication (e-mail, SMS). *Sheilta* enables students to receive services and up-to-date information on three levels: general information, information on courses in which they are enrolled, including tutorial session dates, grades and more, and personal information. The range of information and services offered by the system is continuously being expanded.

3.4.3 The drop-out rate

The term “drop-out” at the OUI differs from that at other universities. Students register for individual courses, not for an academic year. Students can discontinue their studies for a certain period of time and resume them after one or two years, or even more, so that discontinuation of studies for one year does not necessarily indicate what is usually considered “dropping out”. At the moment, there is no statute of limitations on credits accumulated at the OUI, thus students who discontinue their studies are entitled to return to the University to complete their studies at any time. Some “drop-outs” declare that the break is only temporary, and some do resume their studies and graduate from the Open University.

The University's open admissions policy enables students to enroll in OUI courses even if they have no matriculation certificate, psychometric test score, or prior academic experience. The first course or courses they take therefore serve as a self-test. The OUI recommends certain courses as “first courses” to provide a “soft landing” for new students, however, some students are unable to continue due to lack of suitability.

Furthermore, we encourage soldiers and others to enroll in one or several courses, not necessarily in the aim of pursuing a degree, but to enrich their knowledge, to create an

additional challenge in their ongoing activities or to keep abreast of their profession while continuing their work. Some students are referred to the OUI by other universities in order to complete certain course requirements prior to their acceptance to graduate studies at these institutions. After completing several courses, these students discontinue their studies at the OUI. They are considered “dropouts” although they completed exactly what they set out to accomplish.

We almost “encourage” students to drop out (while maintaining our goal of expanding access to higher education), as we invite students to take courses at the OUI that are the equivalent of one academic year and then, if they wish, to transfer to another university (see “Bridges to Other Universities,” in Chapter 1). Students choosing to do so are considered OUI “drop-outs” although they continued their studies at another university.

According to our definition (see section 3.4.1), an “Economics student” is a student who has taken and passed at least two of the following courses: Price Theory I, Macroeconomics I or Econometrics. The following table pertains only to students who successfully completed two of three required courses prior to the year in the column on the left, who in that year were enrolled in at least one academic course, and who took at least one Economics course between 2002 and 2006. A “drop-out” in Economics is defined as a student who did not earn a Bachelor’s degree and did not enroll in any Economics course in the three consecutive semesters after the year in question.

Dropouts in Economics – 2002-2006

Year	Number of Economics students	Continued studying Economics	Continued studying another discipline	Submitted a seminar paper in Economics	Submitted a seminar paper in another discipline	Graduated after 2002	Dropped out of the OUI	Dropped out but returned to studies
2002	923	282 (31%)	22 (2%)	14 (2%)	4 (0%)	543 (59%)	42 (5%)	16 (2%)
2003	996	408 (41%)	28 (3%)	18 (2%)	10 (1%)	467 (47%)	48 (5%)	17 (2%)
2004	1,185	685 (58%)	36 (3%)	23 (2%)	12 (1%)	353 (30%)	67 (6%)	9 (1%)
2005	1,292	864 (67%)	47 (4%)	49 (4%)	46 (4%)	190 (15%)	86 (7%)	10 (1%)
2006	1,371	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table does not include students who began their studies at the Open University, but did not continue after taking their first course. A large percentage of students who enroll in a first course at the Open University do not continue their studies, either because they did not plan to study toward a degree at the University in the first place, or after they fail the course and discover that they are not suited to academic studies.

To understand the reasons for student dropout, and to try to reduce the rate as much as possible, the Evaluation Department conducts a survey every two years (on average) among all students who did not enroll in courses over three semesters. The questionnaire is mailed prior to the registration period for the following semester, along with registration forms. The students are asked if they would be interested in receiving academic counseling in preparation for their possible return to studies.

3.4.4 Student participation in research conducted by faculty

Faculty members serve as advisors to students writing seminar papers as part of the advanced courses they take. The topics of these papers are often related to the research fields of the faculty members and as such seminar papers contribute indirectly to the latter's scientific research. However, there is currently no graduate program in Economics, and undergraduate students do not take part in senior faculty members' research projects.

3.4.5 Counseling systems

3.4.5.1 Counseling to students before and during their studies

The OUI Academic Counseling and Study Guidance center supplements the teaching system and accompanies students throughout their studies. Academic counseling is provided by Open University faculty and departmental advisors (**field-specific counseling**), and by general advisors (**general counseling**) at the Open University campus in Raanana and at the Open University's study centers throughout the country.

General counseling

General counseling mainly provides information about study tracks and the OUI method of study as well as individual counseling and guidance in choosing a study program.

Field-specific counseling in Economics

Academic counseling for Economics courses is provided by academic teaching staff and senior faculty members as well as by a limited number of general academic advisors with the appropriate background who were trained to provide counseling in the field. Academic counseling includes:

- Guidance in choosing a study track
- Counseling regarding accreditation of previous studies and referral to the Committee for the Accreditation of Prior Studies
- Choosing the first courses in the selected study track
- Transferring from one study track to another
- Selecting courses during the course of studies
- Designing a study program to be submitted to the Study Program Approval Committee

A counseling coordinator in the Department of Management and Economics coordinates counseling offered by the department, updates and guides the department advisors and the general advisors on an ongoing basis. Once a year, towards the publication of the new course catalog, a meeting is held with all advisors to inform them about updates appearing in the new catalog such as new courses, updated courses, new study programs, updated procedures, etc.

Advisors from the department visit the large OUI study centers in Jerusalem, Beer Sheba and Haifa on a regular basis and conduct field-specific counseling meetings on the various Economics programs.

Study guidance: Acquiring appropriate learning skills at the outset of university studies enables students to cope with the academic requirements of the Open University. The Study Guidance Unit offers training in improving learning skills. The training contributes to the ability to getting organized for learning, effective reading of academic material, summarizing and processing information verbally or with the help of charts and tables, analyzing questions and formulating answers and preparing for an exam. Learning skills training along with help in the resolution of personal problems relating to learning are available to all OUI students, and are offered in workshops and individually at most study centers. The Unit also offers

guidance in writing seminar papers. The Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center also offers information get-togethers for prospective students.

Approval of programs of study: After accumulating 48 credits, students can propose a program for completing their studies, in accordance with the degree requirements. An interdisciplinary committee, the Study Programs Approval Committee, examines the program and returns it with comments and guidelines, or approves it as a program of study leading to a degree. The Committee reviews each student's record of studies to determine whether degree requirements have been met.

Approval of a study program is valid for a period of five years from the approval date. Students continuing their studies for a period exceeding five years after the program is approved, during which time changes are instituted in the degree requirements, are required to reapply to the Committee for approval of their study program.

The Study Programs Approval Committee is authorized to enforce additional limitations on programs of students who have been granted more than 36 credits on the basis of prior studies, as well as on inter-disciplinary programs, which include combinations of courses different from the distribution described in the degree requirements. These programs may deviate from the minimum number of credits required for a degree.

Special needs students: The OUI does not have criteria for accepting students with special needs. The policy is to accept all students. Students who for medical, physical or other reasons require special study conditions contact the Dean of Students for assistance. Requests are handled individually and discretely. Some assistance is provided through other institutions and involves a fee. The OUI provides all students with access to studies according to their specific needs: audio tapes, audio recordings of exams or a larger-print exam form for the visually impaired; an exam in a separate room with a designated monitor, dictating or rewriting an exam, reading the exam aloud, writing the exam on a computer rather than by hand, etc.

OUI study materials and facilities throughout the country are accessible to disabled individuals. At exam centers without elevators, the OUI ensures that disabled students are assigned to a room on the ground floor along with an accompanying individual. The OUI offers tens of different exam conditions. Students confined to their homes are entitled to a personal tutor that comes to their home. Visually impaired students do not pay tuition.

Counseling for special needs students: Special services are provided to students with special needs by the Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center. Students with special needs, with physical disabilities or with diagnosed learning disabilities receive guidance with respect to studies, additional drilling of the study material individually or in small groups, and guidance for reducing exam anxiety.

3.4.5.2 **Counseling and guidance in choosing future career paths**

The Guidance and Placement Unit in the office of the Dean of Students, also known as *Opjob*, serves as a coordinating body between Open University students and organizations providing academic and career counseling services as well as employment placement services.

The Unit coordinates these services and ensures their operation on the Open University campus and at the study centers. The Career Guidance and Placement Unit offers the following services:

Guidance – provides counseling and guidance services to students who are undecided as to their choice of career path and/or academic field, through:

- Individual counseling which includes tests and/or counseling sessions
- Workshops to help students select a career path and an academic field of study. The workshop offers a partially guided experiential group session in which the participants examine the major factors involved in career decisions – professional inclinations, abilities, style of working with others and career goals
- Use of databases including a library with descriptions of academic disciplines, application criteria and study opportunities
- Use of software packages for planning a personal career path

Placement – assistance to students in finding employment through:

- Relations with external employment agencies
- Job search workshops addressing topics such as writing a resume, contacting potential employers and preparing for a job interview, taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the Open University student
- Employment fairs - employment fairs are held on the Open University campus with the participation of employers and placement agencies offering employment opportunities in various fields. Students and graduates may apply to the various companies.
- Employment offers at the Open University and those received directly from employers are posted on the *Opjob* website.
- *OpJob* now also conducts a virtual job fair, *Opportunity*, in which employers contact students online through a dedicated website.

Information published by the Guidance and Placement Unit can be found:

- on the Dean of Students website
- on bulletin boards at the study centers
- in special leaflets accompanying study materials

Counseling in choosing future career paths are also provided through:

1. A career choice workshop – a workshop for OUI students led by the staff of the counseling services of Tel Aviv University. Students are informed of the workshop by e-mail, posters at the learning institutions and leaflets distributed at study centers. Students pay NIS 350 for a workshop of 5 three-hour meetings. The workshop is limited to ten participants.
2. Individual counseling – 3 sessions provided by Tel-Aviv University at a discount for OUI students.

The assistance described above affords students as easy a transition as possible from studies to work.

3.4.6 Student inquiries and complaints

The Department of Management and Economics, like all OUI academic departments, appointed an individual responsible for handling student inquiries and complaints. Most inquiries pertain to the following matters:

- Requests to take an exam after the entitlement date
- Requests to take an exam for the third time
- Requests to submit a course assignment after the specified date
- Requests to enroll in a course for the third time
- Complaints about tutoring
- Complaints about the exam

The advantage of appointing a departmental representative to coordinate all inquiries is that the representative can adopt a broad organizational perspective that addresses all courses and study programs. Considerations applied in making decisions are identical and therefore do not discriminate between students. In addition, students have one contact person in the department.

Students who wish to appeal the decisions of the student inquiry representative can approach the Dean of Students who functions as the student ombudsman. The Dean handles complaints of students who maintain that their inquiry was handled inappropriately by the department, and his decision may take into consideration financial and personal aspects.

3.4.7 Identifying and rewarding outstanding students

Outstanding students who meet predetermined criteria receive a certificate of academic excellence. The list of outstanding students is published once a year by the Dean of Students (students do not submit their candidacy). Certificates on two levels are awarded:

President's list (magna cum laude) – weighted grade average of 95 and above and **Dean's list** (cum laude) – weighted grade average of 90-94. On both levels, students receive a certificate with a list of the courses for which they were awarded the certificate. President's list students receive a scholarship for the amount of tuition for one course which can be used for studies at the Open University.

Taking into account the nature of studies at the OUI, criteria were also defined for outstanding young students, for soldiers and for students who study at a slow rate (two-year outstanding students) and students in these groups are also awarded certificates.

3.4.8 Maintaining contact with graduates and employers

Maintaining contact with OUI graduates: The OUI has more than 20,000 graduates. The OUI Alumni Association publishes a newsletter for graduates twice a year and conducts monthly activities including trips, lectures, plays, musical evening, performances, etc. The Association also has an Economics club that holds varied activities and whose members participate in events held by the OUI MBA program. The OUI Alumni Association contributes scholarships to students every year.

Maintaining contact with employers and the employment market: The OUI invests extensive efforts and funds to maintain ongoing contact with employers. *Opjob*, the OUI Guidance and Placement Unit, links the University with the professional job market, publishes employment openings in the OUI website and at study centers and liaises between students and graduates on one hand and employers offering jobs on the other (see section 3.4.5.2 above). Dozens of employers maintain contact with *Opjob* and offer employment opportunities to students and graduates. Students are informed of particularly attractive employment opportunities by e-mail. It is important to note that most OUI students combine their studies with employment, so that after gaining practical experience, they enter the job market with professional experience.

Studies towards advanced degrees: The OUI does not have accurate data, however to the best of our knowledge about 30%-40% of the University's graduates pursue a Master's degree at the OUI or other universities.

3.4.9 Summary – Strengths and weaknesses

The goal of the OUI is to expand access to higher education to all individuals who have suitable intellectual abilities. To ensure that this goal does not remain only on paper, the OUI places the student at the center of its endeavor. Therefore, the distance education method is

supported extensively by counseling and guidance for self-study as well as innovative and friendly learning technologies aimed at compensating for the distance from tutors and the other students, financial assistance through scholarships, encouraging and rewarding outstanding students, support and intensive individual assistance to individuals with disabilities and by helping graduates find employment after completing their studies.

The Open University contends with the “weakness” of open admissions by strictly maintaining a high academic level of studies. The study material and assignments are prepared in advance and based only on academic considerations. Examinations are also based only on academic criteria. They are not written by the tutors who meet with the students, but by course coordinators and approved by senior faculty to ensure that they take into account the knowledge students must demonstrate and not only what the students have covered at tutorial sessions. Furthermore, the OUI strictly enforces discipline measures during exams. In addition, to maintain students’ dignity, the OUI established committees and mechanisms to ensure full confidentiality.

The OUI method is based on individual study. Though advantageous in its flexibility and in developing students’ independence, the method does not enable students to enjoy group study and to experience teamwork. In recent years, the OUI has encouraged group study, mainly using distance learning technologies and the course website forums as a tool for communication among students. Nonetheless, course assignments are individual assignments.

The learning materials and the course development process aim to provide graduates with academic knowledge that will enable them to pursue advanced degrees. The nature of studies at the OUI requires students to invest considerable effort in their studies and assignments and demands a large degree of self-discipline, so students who succeed and receive a degree are qualified to continue their studies.

3.5 Human Resources

3.5.1 Teaching staff

3.5.1.1 Profile of the teaching staff

There are three main categories of faculty members in the Economics programs:

There are currently two **senior academic faculty members** and two part-time **development consultants**, who are senior faculty members in other universities (see details in Table 2A).

The senior faculty members carry out scientific research, write and develop designated Open University textbooks, supervise the academic teaching staff, and are involved in administrative tasks on the department and university level.

Current senior faculty members specialize in public economics, game theory and economic theory, political economy and finance. The department is in the process of recruiting a senior faculty member in macroeconomics.

For writing the Open University textbooks, which constitute the authoritative academic material for the students, in the past the department relied on scholars from other universities with expertise in international trade, labor economics, macroeconomics and econometrics. The department continues to rely on scholars from other universities in its current attempts to further enrich the Economics program with new elective courses, e.g. in industrial organization and economic history. This facilitates the dynamism and renewal required for the program.

The **academic teaching staff** includes 15 course coordinators, some of whom are also tutors (see details in Table 2B). Each of them is a specialist in the field of the course that s/he coordinates.

There are approximately 85 **tutors** in the Economics programs (the exact number changes seasonally based on the number of study groups opened). Most tutors hold a Master's degree and 5 hold a PhD. Most of the tutors who have only a Bachelor's degree are lawyers and accountants. Each of them specializes in the topic of the course that s/he is tutoring.

Data concerning **senior faculty** are presented in Table 2A, appended below. The legend and explanations regarding the table are as follows:

1. The original table included the columns "Part of full time job in Institution" and "Part of full time job in Program." At the OUI, the distinction between the two is often irrelevant. The "Part of full time job" column in Table 2A indicates the percentage of the position in the department (part-time position in terms of hrs/week is irrelevant at the OUI).
2. The column "Planned Courses" in the original table is irrelevant for senior OUI faculty members, as they engage in course development and not in ongoing teaching.
3. The part of full time job under "Additional Employment" is shown as a percentage of a full-time position or as weekly hours for each individual case.
4. The "No. of Students Receiving Guidance" column is irrelevant because at present the OUI does not offer a thesis track or a doctorate.

Data concerning the **academic teaching staff** are presented in Table 2B, appended below. The legend and explanations regarding the table are as follows:

1. "Part of full time job in Institution" and "Part of full time job in Program". The "Part of full time job in Economics" indicates the percentage of the position in the department (part-time position in terms of hrs/week is irrelevant at the OUI).
2. The part of full time job under "Additional Employment" is shown as a percentage of a full-time position or as weekly hours for each individual case.
3. At the OUI the employment status of all course coordinators is non-tenured junior faculty.

Tutors represent the external teaching staff at the OUI. The tutors are hired for the semester in which they are required.

3.5.1.2 Specializations and skills

Senior faculty members are expected to invest their efforts in scientific research on an internationally recognized level, demonstrated by publications in respected academic journals. Maintaining a high research level is essential for high-quality supervision of the academic teaching staff and guidance of seminar papers in advanced courses. At the same time, senior faculty members are expected to have excellent pedagogical writing skills, as required for Open University textbooks aimed at self-study. They are also required to be acquainted with scholars in Economics from other universities, so as to approach them for developing new courses for the program in areas outside of the direct expertise of the small senior faculty within the University. When a course development project takes place, senior faculty members monitor the writing through reviews and comments, in order to ensure that the result is in line with the style of Open University textbooks. Finally, senior faculty members need to have the managerial skills and inter-personal traits that allow them to carry out administrative roles in the department and the university. Due to the very small number of senior faculty members (less than 60 in the entire university, in all fields together), they carry a heavy managerial load and most faculty members have a management role at the OUI.

The expertise of the senior faculty members is reflected in part in the choice of elective courses offered to the students. Several courses written by senior faculty members, like “Social Preference and Choice” (written by Prof. Shmuel Nitzan) or “Intergenerational Economics” (written by Dr. Mordechai Schwarz) directly represent these faculty members’ interests and research. Other courses written by senior faculty members in their areas of expertise, like “Price Theory” (written by Prof. Shmuel Nitzan), “Public Economics” (currently being written by Dr. Mordechai Schwarz) or “Strategic Thinking – Game Theory with Economics and Business Applications” (currently being written by Prof. Aviad Heifetz), are found in most B.A. Economics programs. Other essential courses, for example, in Econometrics, Labor Economics, International Trade, etc., were written for the Open University by scholars from other universities.

The course coordinators (academic teaching staff) carry the primary load of distance teaching. As such, they must demonstrate the following skills:

- Expertise in the topic of the course. Course coordinators write the assignments and the examinations, help tutors prepare lesson plans and help students who have difficulties with the materials and come to them for guidance.
- Good interpersonal skills – coordinators work with both students and tutors and must occasionally handle student complaints about tutors or vice versa.
- Computer skills – course coordinators are responsible for maintaining the course website that is in most cases a dynamic site enabling students to ask questions, receive answers, conduct discussions, get answers to exercises, view lesson plans, etc.
- Management skills – this is particularly important in large courses with many study groups and tutors throughout the country. Coordinators handle logistical issues concerning classrooms, equipment, study materials, etc.

Role description of the **course coordinator**: The position of course coordinator at the OUI is a professional position. It is unique to the OUI and is difficult to compare to positions at other universities. It has two main components, academic and administrative. Course coordinators acquire their academic education prior to their appointment. Managerial skills are, for the most part, acquired during their training and on the job. Even in cases where course coordinators have prior managerial experience, they also need on the job training due to the

uniqueness of the course coordinator position at the OUI. The components of the course coordinators' role are detailed below.

The academic component:

- Write examinations and assignments
- Formulate criteria for assessment of examinations and assignments
- Prepare learning aids (in hard copy and/or on the course website)
- Write the course booklet
- In advanced courses, approve seminar paper topics, refer students to a supervisor, and monitor seminar papers.
- Check a sample of the assignments corrected by tutors and seminar papers evaluated by supervisors, and assess the quality of the evaluation
- Check examinations
- Check appeals concerning examination and seminar paper grades
- Recruit and train new tutors
- Recruit and advise seminar paper supervisors
- Carry out continuing training of tutors
- Monitor tutors (visit tutorial sessions; sample assignment evaluations, exercises, etc.)
- Supervise tutors (for example, if problems arise in a study group)
- Provide feedback to tutors (for example, in the website forum) and clarifications to their questions
- Handle academic issues pertaining to students (answer their questions, identify difficulties, etc.)
- Develop the contents on the course website
- Set up a timetable for studying units and submitting assignments
- Provide individual academic counseling to students

The managerial component:

- Manage the tutors: recruitment policy (how many, from where), assignment to study groups.
- Manage interaction with OUI entities and study centers
- Handle student inquiries: special requests pertaining to examinations, submitting different/additional assignments, changing study groups, participation in tutorial sessions, etc.
- Handle administrative aspects of seminar papers

Tutors meet with students face-to-face in tutorial sessions. Tutors must be proficient in the relevant knowledge area and must demonstrate appropriate teaching abilities. They are required to have received pedagogic training prior to their employment at the Open University. In addition to their teaching skills, tutors are also selected on the basis of geographic constraints. In general, the Open University employs tutors that live in the area in which they tutor.

3.5.1.3 Steps to ensure that staff members are updated

Senior faculty members are updated in their area of expertise by virtue of their on-going scientific research, which involves participation in and organization of seminars and conferences in Israel and abroad, collaboration with colleagues from other universities, reading relevant new literature, etc.

Several of the **course coordinators**, most notably those among them who are studying towards a PhD or already have a PhD, are also active in research, and are similarly updated

professionally. Moreover, each course coordinator is subject to the professional supervision of one of the senior faculty members, who is responsible for periodically updating the course contents, with recent articles in the reading list, new resources to be put at the course website, etc. These updates are carried out by the course coordinator under the supervision of the senior faculty member, and through this process, the course coordinator is updated on relevant material.

Concerning managerial skills, this year the university held workshops for department heads and a few members of the senior faculty, conducted by external specialists. A similar workshop was offered to some of the course coordinators. In addition, the Open University Training Department conducts managerial skills workshops for course coordinators. The course coordinators must participate in such a workshop when they join the Open University, and are invited to take part in workshops for experienced course coordinators during their employment at the Open University.

The Open University Training Department also conducts obligatory workshops for new **tutors**. These workshops focus on tutoring skills and techniques. Moreover, before the beginning of each semester, the course coordinator meets with all tutors in her/his course, in order to brief and update them regarding the course materials and content, and to enrich them with suggestions on teaching skills and activities. During the semester, the course coordinator visits tutorial sessions, provides the tutor with feedback regarding good points and drawbacks found in tutoring, and helps the tutor to improve the latter.

3.5.1.4 Rules, criteria, and procedures for appointments

Department head: The President appoints department heads. The appointment is (usually) for three years. Criteria are ability, seniority and rank.

Appointment procedures: The President, in collaboration and consultation with the VP for Academic Affairs, the serving department head and additional entities select, in most cases, one of the senior faculty members to serve as department head. The candidate is invited to a personal meeting with the President who asks her/him to fill the position. Past experience shows that the response is in most cases positive.

Senior faculty: For details on the appointment procedure of senior faculty members and their advancement in rank, see Rules and Procedures, “Appointments” (in Hebrew). The advancement procedure for senior faculty is similar to that at other universities. The research element is crucial in the promotion of senior faculty members.

Academic teaching staff (course coordinators): After consultation with the senior faculty member responsible for the course, the department head appoints the course coordinator, subject to the approval of the Dean of Academic Studies and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Tutors: The tutors for each course are recruited by the course coordinator.

3.5.1.5 Credentials required of the head of the department

The head of the department, in most cases a senior faculty member at the OUI, is also responsible for the departmental study programs. The department head is involved in the following:

1. Preparing the annual work plan and its approval by OUI management.
2. Development:
 - Monitoring the entire process of new course development: contacting writers, setting timetables, submitting the course proposal for departmental review and to the subcommittee for discussion, transmitting written material to reviewers for feedback,

submitting the material to the Faculty Council and the Academic Committee for approval. To this end, the Academic Development Administration staff assists the department head.

- Monitoring course revision and initiating updating of outdated courses. The latter is similar to the new course development process.
 - Initiating the development of study programs.
3. Teaching:
- Assigning course coordinators to courses and determining their position scope (according to number of students)
 - Approving attributes of special assignments
 - Ensuring that assignments and exams are returned to students within a reasonable time
 - Preparing annual evaluation reports on the performance of course coordinators.
4. Department personnel:
- Recruiting new faculty members
 - Performing annual evaluations and participation in salary discussions with the Human Resources department
5. Participating in various forums:
- Disciplinary Subcommittee
 - Faculty Council
 - Academic Committee
 - Meetings of department heads with the Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - Department meetings
6. On-going matters:
- Assigning rooms to staff members
 - Preparing updates, additions and corrections to the printed Catalog
 - Assisting in recruiting tutors
 - Handling student inquiries
 - Approving special requests of students
7. Departmental appointments:
- Faculty members responsible for the various study programs (Economics, Management, MBA, Industrial Engineering and Management, Accounting)
 - Academic teaching staff member responsible for student inquiries
 - Academic teaching staff member responsible for computer-mediated communication and the department website
 - Academic teaching staff member who coordinates student counseling

Accordingly, the department head serves as both the academic and the administrative head of the department and requires managerial abilities, interpersonal skills, in-depth understanding of the structure of the institution and the department as well as the accepted modes of action in the institution, a comprehensive and broad perspective of the varied needs of the institution, department, faculty members and students.

3.5.1.6 **Definition of employment**

The pedagogical component of **senior faculty members'** role typically involves the writing and development of new courses and not frontal teaching. Hence, "number of teaching hours" is irrelevant to the definition of their employment.

Until recently, the employment conditions of the **course coordinators** were determined within the framework of overall University limitations and changed every semester based on the number of students enrolled in their courses. They did not have an advancement track and their employment terms were negotiated in collaboration with the department head, the Dean of Academic Studies and the HR department.

A committee, headed by the President, was established to examine the status of the course coordinators. One of the conclusions was the need to define clear criteria for employing and promoting course coordinators so that their employment terms will not be subject to negotiation. The recommendations of this committee have recently been adopted, and they apply to new course coordinators, as well as to old course coordinators who opt to switch to the newly established system of remuneration. This system has four ranks, with promotion from one rank to the next depending on education, research and contribution to course development. For the Committee's recommendations and a description of their positions, see Extras, "Course Coordinators."

Tutors are employed at the Open University on a per-semester basis, and their remuneration depends on the number of tutoring hours and further specific responsibilities (e.g., the number of exercises and exams that they check). There is no advancement track for tutors.

3.5.1.7 **Thesis and dissertation advisers**

Senior faculty members serve as seminar paper advisers, according to their area of expertise. Currently, there is no graduate program in Economics at the Open University. Nevertheless, senior faculty members can and do serve as co-advisors to graduate students who study in other universities.

3.5.1.8 **Recruiting and absorbing teaching staff**

Senior faculty: Planned future recruitment and absorption of senior faculty members is discussed in the President's five-year plan.

Academic teaching staff: The academic teaching staff is recruited according to teaching needs in the various courses. They are appointed by the department head with the approval of the Dean of Academic Studies and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The scope of their position is based on the number of courses they coordinate and the number of students in each course. Efforts are made to allow each member of the academic teaching staff to coordinate more than one course, in order to avoid salary changes due to fluctuations in the number of students, or in cases when some courses are not offered in some semesters. Coordinating more than one course also results in more involvement of the academic teaching staff in the life of the department and the university.

3.5.2 **Technical and administrative staff**

The department has six administrative secretaries. They are in charge of helping and supporting the course coordinators and the senior faculty to ensure the smooth operation of teaching. This involves:

- 1) Preparation of the course booklets
- 2) Sending course materials to students and tutors
- 3) Receiving inquiries and messages from students by mail, email, telephone and fax, and re-routing them to those concerned – course coordinators, the individual responsible for student appeals or the head of the department, etc., and relaying the reply to the students

- 4) Coordination of work vis a vis other units in the university – the Registration Center, the Warehouse and Distribution Center, the Examination Center, the Registrar, the Teaching Services Center, the Dean of Academic Studies and the Dean of Students.

3.5.3 Summary – Strengths and weaknesses of the human resources

The **senior faculty members** oversee a remarkably high-leveraged operation. Two senior academic faculty members in Economics, with the assistance of the head of the MBA program and two part-time external development consultants, supervise courses in Economics programs with around 1,350 students, and an additional 6,000 students in related fields who study basic Economics courses. In all five major programs (Economics, Management, MBA, Industrial Engineering and Management, Accounting) the department has more than 13,000 students altogether.

While the operation does run smoothly, there is an urgent need to increase the number of senior faculty members, in order to ensure the continuous updating of the courses and to share this large responsibility. Recruiting senior faculty members is not simple, though, for two reasons:

- Senior faculty members not only have to be good researchers and possess inter-personal traits for administrative tasks, as in other universities; they also have to be able to write in the unique pedagogical style of the Open University textbooks, aimed for self-study. This combination seems to be rare.
- The Open University does not have a critical mass of researchers in any particular field or sub-field, since the entire senior faculty is very small (less than 60 in the entire university). This makes it hard for the university to develop a reputation as an institution excelling in research, even though the output of senior faculty members is in fact, by and large, remarkable.

Academic teaching staff members are devoted to their task, and carry out their professional and managerial duties with devotion and skill. At the same time, they suffer from lack of stability in the scope of their employment. The new system of remuneration, with 4 ranks, offers a horizon for promotion and more stability in employment terms. Nevertheless, even this new system does not completely alleviate the problems. A complete solution is apparently not feasible at the moment, since more than 70% of the university's budget comes from tuition payments, and is thus highly sensitive to fluctuations – even if temporary and random – in enrollment rates.

Tutors are hired on a per-semester basis, even though some of them actually work as tutors for many years. They are selected, trained, and then reveal high academic standards in tutoring. Though not an inherent organ of the university – due to the temporary nature of their employment – they are the ones who maintain direct contact with the students. This tension, which is not likely to be resolved in the foreseeable future, causes dissatisfaction among tutors.

Appendix to Section 3.5 – Profile of the teaching staff

Table 2A: Senior Faculty

Name of Teacher		Employment Status	Part of Full Time Job		Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Additional Tasks in Institution
			Per Cent	Name of Employer	Name of Employer	Weekly Hours		
First	Title							
Aviad	Heifetz Prof.	Assoc. Prof.	100%				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Theory ▪ Game theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of Department ▪ Head of: Economics program ▪ Member, Academic Committee
Mordechai	Schwarz Dr.	Lecturer	100%	Bar-Ilan Univ.	4 hrs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Economics 	
Shmuel	Nitzan Prof.	Professor	50%	Bar-Ilan Univ.	100%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political Economy ▪ Social Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Member, Academic Committee
Uri	Ben-Zion Prof.	Professor	50%	Ben Gurion Univ.	100% (sabbatical)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managerial economics ▪ Capital markets ▪ Behavioral Finance 	
Aviad	Bar-Haim Dr.	Senior lecturer	100%				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human resource management ▪ Organizational behavior ▪ Industrial relations 	
Aviva	Geva Dr.	Senior lecturer	100%				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business ethics ▪ Consumer behavior 	
Niza	Gerl Dr., CPA	Lecturer	100%	Tel Aviv Univ.	4 (fall); 2 (spring)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information systems management ▪ Managerial accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of field: Management (undergraduate program)
Yuval	Cohen Dr.	Lecturer	100%	Holon Academic Inst.	50%		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Industrial Engineering and Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of Industrial Engineering and Management program

Name of Teacher		Employment Status	Part of Full Time Job		Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Additional Tasks in Institution
			Per Cent	Name of Employer	Name of Employer	Weekly Hours		
Joseph	Aharoni	Professor	50%	Tel Aviv University	100%	Accounting		
Haim	Falk	Professor	50%	The College of Judea and Samaria	100%	Accounting		
Arie	Nachmias	Head of MBA program	100%	Netanya College	3 hrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corporate finance ▪ Financial markets & institutions ▪ Mergers and acquisitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of MBA program 	
Zachary	Sheaffer	Responsible for courses in Strategy & Int'l Management	100%			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy 		
David	Ravia	Head of field: Accounting	50%	KMPG, Tax Dept.	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accounting ▪ Transfer pricing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of Accounting program 	

Table 2B: Academic Teaching Staff

Name of Coordinator		Part of Full Time Job in Institution		Part of Full Time Job in Economics		Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Courses coordinated (tutored)	Additional Tasks in Institution
First	Family	Degree	Per Cent	Per Cent	Name of Employer	Part of Full Time Job (%)				
Sarit	Buchris	BA (completing MA)	93%	93%				Macroeconomics	Price Theory II Price Theory III	
Ronen	Bar-El	PhD	93%	93%				Macroeconomics	Price Theory I Intergenerational Economics	
Yaffa	Cahana-Zarfati	MA, LL.B.	50%	50%				Business ethics Public policy Law	Business Ethics	
Chen	Cohen	MA (completing PhD)	38%	38%				Game theory	Social Preference and Choice	
Drota	Karotkin	PhD	55%	55%	Bar-Ilan University	100%		Econometrics Statistics Game theory Group decision making	Econometrics	
Irit	Malka	PhD	50%	50%	Ashkelon Academic College	100%		Macroeconomics	The Economy of Israel International Monetary Economics	
Galya	Ofer	MA	100%	100%	Tel-Aviv University	50%		Macroeconomics	Introduction to Macroeconomics	

Name of Coordinator		Part of Full Time Job in Institution		Part of Full Time Job in Economics	Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Courses coordinated (tutored)	Additional Tasks in Institution
		Family	Degree		Name of Employer	Part of Full Time Job (%)			
Arik	Pupko	MA	55%	55%	Partner	80%	Macroeconomics IO Network	Macroeconomics I Public Economics	Academic advisor Playing piano with the University music group
Mosi	Rosenboim	MA (PhD candidate)	70%	33%			Economics Finance	International Economics	
Sharon	Shafran	MBA	100%	100%			Finance	Financial Theory: Financial Management of Business Firms	Academic advisor
Adi	Tamir	MA	100%	100%			Microeconomics Insurance in incomplete markets Economic aspects of game theory	Introduction to Microeconomics	Academic advisor for the MBA program
Avi	Tillman	Direct PhD candidate	38%	38%	Tel-Aviv University	50%	Labor Economics	Labor Economics	
Ronit	Tivon	MA	55%	55%			Macroeconomics	Macroeconomics II	
Eliyahu	Yeret	MA (PhD candidate)	38%	38%	LEV Institution	25%	International Economics Public Economics	International Economics (The Economy of Israel)	
Ilan	Zuzut	MA	38%	38%			Macroeconomics	Industrial Economics	

3.6 Infrastructure

3.6.1 Administration

3.6.1.1 Location of the department

The Department of Economics and Management is located in 40 offices and one departmental meeting room on the 3rd and 4th floors of the Technologies building on the Raanana Campus (see campus map below). Faculty members who live in Jerusalem and its vicinity were allocated several rooms at the OUI's center in Jerusalem and additional rooms were allocated in the Haifa center.

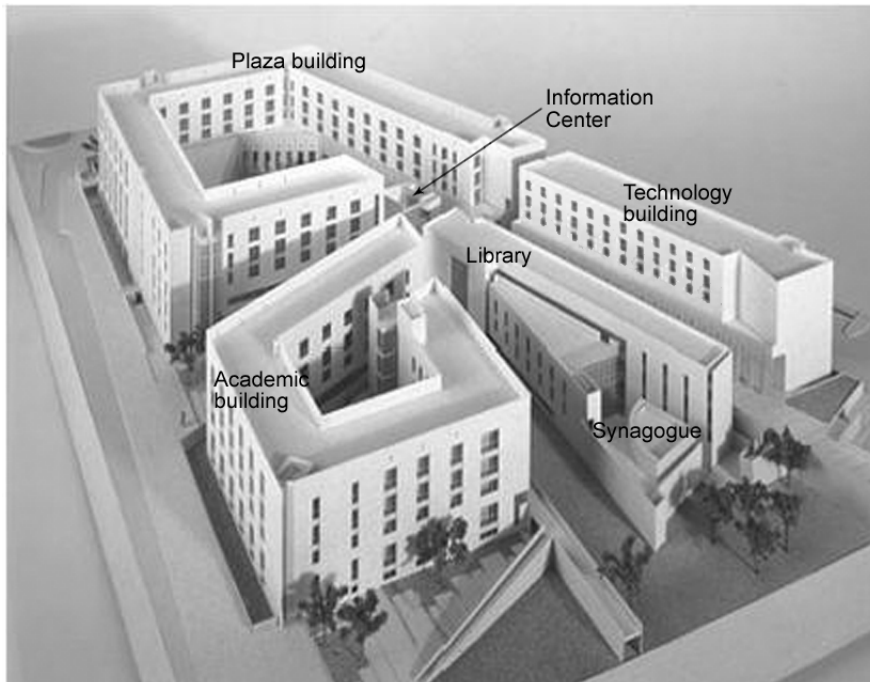
3.6.1.2 The department office

The department office is located on the 3rd floor of the Technology Building, (room 310), close to the office of the head of the department (room 311) and the offices of other faculty members. The departmental secretariat serves all programs offered by the department, with special secretaries appointed to each field.

3.6.1.3 Academic staff offices

Offices are allocated as follows: senior faculty members have their own offices; academic staff members share offices (one office for two staff members). The standard furniture in every office includes a desk, wall cabinets, bookshelves and a computer. On every floor, there is a technical services room with a network printer, photocopier and an outgoing mailbox; and a kitchenette with a coffee machine and a sink that also serves as a shelter.

The Open University Campus, Raanana



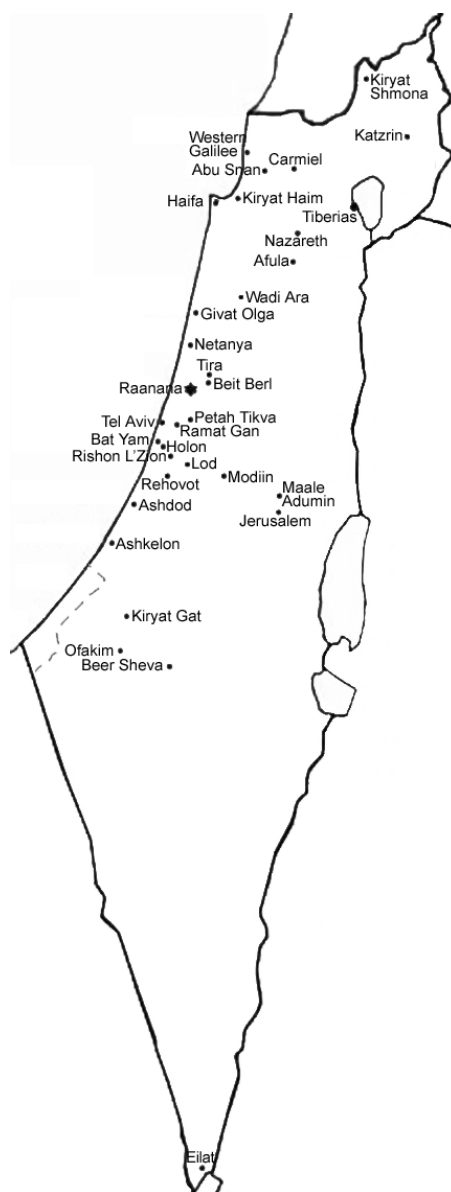
3.6.2 Classes

3.6.2.1 Classrooms, seats and equipment

Face-to-face study activities (tutorial sessions) in Economics courses are held in study centers throughout the country (see tables and map below). A limited number of study activities take place in ten classrooms on the Raanana campus. Note: Not all study centers are opened every semester; study centers are opened each semester in response to the number of students enrolled in each course in each area. In most cases, classrooms are furnished with desks for two and sometimes with chair-desks, most without access to electric outlets or to the Internet. All study centers have a cafeteria and restrooms. All classrooms are used for all OUI courses, allocated according to the nation-wide dispersion of students at the OUI.

Study centers

The Open University functions in 52 study centers throughout the country:



In the Fall 2005 semester, tutorial sessions in Economics courses (for all OUI students who took Economics courses) were held at 28 study centers and abroad (see tables below). In that semester, 7,091 OUI students (including 54 students living abroad) took 20 different courses (8,044 course enrollments) in Economics.

Study centers offering economics courses, Fall 2005

Study Center	# of Courses	# of Groups	# of Enrollments *	# of Students **
Carmiel, The Open University	3	3	49	48
Kiryat Haim - Eshkol Payis	2	3	87	87
Haifa, Beit Biram	11	21	615	538
The College of Management - Haifa and the North	2	4	125	71
Tiberias, The Open University	1	1	16	16
Afula, The Open University	2	2	43	43
Hadera, Electric Company, Hefziba	1	1	35	35
Netanya	2	2	57	55
Ra'anana College	10	19	487	445
Petah Tiqva College	7	13	375	352
Ramat Hasharon, Hakfar Hayarok	11	16	401	366
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibbutzim	3	5	209	203
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	14	27	836	781
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	10	10	316	299
Ramat Gan College	16	70	2,269	1,870
Bat Yam College	10	15	341	310
Rishon Le'Zion, Avrutzky College	2	3	68	66
Nes Ziona	2	2	24	24
Lod Campus	1	1	21	21
Modi'in	1	1	23	23
Rehovot College	8	10	234	205
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	10	19	565	481
Jerusalem, Haredi College	1	1	11	11
Ashdod College	6	8	188	173
Ofakim, The Open University	1	1	13	13
Beer Sheva, Beit Yatziv	7	10	220	191
Beer Sheva, Technical College	1	2	69	69
Eilat, The Open University	1	1	16	16
<i>Ofek</i> (distance studies by satellite)	2	17	254	216
Special	6	6	10	9
Abroad	16	1	67	54
Total		295	8,044	7,091

* Each group is registered for one course but in some study centers, there is more than one group for a specific course.

** "Students" here are not what we defined in this report as "Economics students," but rather all OUI students who took Economics courses in Fall 2005.

The table below shows the difference in the number of groups opened for the different categories of courses: the largest number of groups is opened in introductory and intermediate courses and fewer are opened in advanced, in which there is naturally a smaller number of students.

Distribution of economics courses by study centers and groups, Fall 2005

Level	Course (credits)	# of Study Centers	# of Groups	Enrollments
Introductory	Introduction to Microeconomics (3)	27	83	2,942
	Introduction to Macroeconomics (4)	18	37	1,020
	Calculus for Students of Economics and Management (3)	16	32	741
Intermediate	Financial Theory: Financial Management of Business Firms (6)	17	34	881
	Econometrics (6)	7	8	159
	Cost and Managerial Accounting (6)	8	9	127
	Industrial Economics (3)	4	5	61
	Macroeconomics I (2)	10	13	294
	Macroeconomics II (4)	11	13	273
	Price Theory I (3)	14	16	383
	Price Theory II (3)	5	6	132
	Price Theory III (3)	8	9	120
	The Economy of Israel (3)	2 (<i>Ofek</i>)	2 (<i>Ofek</i>)	154
	Fundamentals of Decision Theory and Operations Research (3)	3	3	50
Advanced	International Economics (3)	2	2	19
	International Monetary Economics (3)	2	2	29
	Labor Economics (3)	1 (<i>Ofek</i>)	1 (<i>Ofek</i>)	101
	Business Ethics (6)	10	15	443
	Intergenerational Economics (3)	2	2	50
	Judgment and Evaluation under Conditions of Uncertainty for Students of Management and Economics (6)	3	4	65
Total	20 courses		296	8,044

3.6.2.2 Computer layout

Students in the Department of Economics and Management use personal computers. The OUI provides software to students according to the requirements of the various courses. The software programs are licensed and downloaded from the Internet. The academic teaching staff provides support on content issues. The OUI Support Department provides general computer support.

The institutional computer system

Communication: A three-layer Local-Area-Network (LAN) (backbone bandwidth rates of 2-4 giga bits/second) spread over the buildings on the campus: edge switches (at layer II) on the users' floors, aggregation switches (at layer III) at the building level and core switches (also at layer III) at the campus level. Fast Ethernet links (100 megabits/second) connect end-users'

workstations. A Wide-Area-Network (WAN) (1/4-2 megabits/second) to the area activity centers. The OUI is connected to the Israel Academic Network (ILAN) and through this network to the Internet via two 34 Mbps lines. The OUI provides remote access secure private communication (VPN – virtual private network) to all employees that need such communication. The OUI is in the process of installing a local wireless network (WLAN) that will provide authorized users access to specific computer services through a personal computer with a wireless adapter. The wireless coverage is limited and focuses on public areas such as the library, classrooms, laboratories and lecture halls.

Security: The network is secured using several layers of firewalls and similar security devices.

Computer services: Intra-organizational e-mail, online schedule management and shared activities, based on MS-Exchange servers; Internet e-mail; access to Internet sites and services; file servers for central and backed-up storage of personal and departmental documents; printing services for the variety of printers on campus; a secure system for remote access (VPN) to organizational computer services and to all the OUI information system services.

3.6.2.3 Additional facilities

The OUI campus has two lecture halls (70-150 seats), one large auditorium (350 seats) and 26 conference rooms (seating 12-20) allocated to the department as needed. The conference rooms (for the use of committees, seminars, demonstrations, etc.) have an infrastructure for audio-visual equipment and for a connection to the Internet, as well as a coffee corner. Rooms must be reserved in advance and equipment for each activity must be specified ahead of time. There are also facilities for different types of meetings at the large OUI study centers in Haifa, Jerusalem, Beer Sheba, and Givat Haviva.

3.6.3 Laboratories

Economics studies at the OUI require no laboratories.

3.6.4 The library

3.6.4.1 Description

The Open University's central library offers reference, loan and information services to students and to academic faculty and administrative staff. The library holds all OUI publications (study units, video and audio cassettes); collections of books, journals and CDs; a digital collection of 25 bibliographic databases, 19,557 electronic journals, 20 digital collections, 40 full text databases, digital books, an exam database, a course reader database, a database of sample chapters from OUI course books, etc.

Location: The library is located in a four-storey building on the OUI campus in Raanana, spanning with a total area of 2,000 sq./meters. The library has reading halls (54 seats and 17 computer stations), a training classroom (15 computer stations), a multimedia room, multimedia storerooms and staff offices.

Library hours: Three days a week from 09:00-16:30, twice a week from 09:00-19:30 and on Fridays from 09:00-13:00.

Library staff: 17 librarians with academic degrees in library and information studies; most also hold graduate degrees.

Training: In light of the special character of the studies at the Open University, in the early stages of their studies students do not need bibliographic training because the study material

and textbooks are sent to them. However before the students take advanced courses they are required to participate in bibliographic training. This training focuses on the general use of the library and on searches for material when writing seminar papers. The training includes use of all library components and emphasizes searching in catalogs and electronic databases. It is offered in two formats – face-to-face training (at the OUI campus and at large study centers throughout the country) and training at home through courseware developed by the library. The courseware includes tests on the material and calculates the student's grade and updates the student's record for purposes of tracking and recording student participation.

Assistance: Librarians offer advisory services and assistance in searching for information using electronic resources to students and faculty during all library hours. Distance services (online and telephone) that support students and faculty in searching for information are provided 45 hours a week.

Acquisitions policy: Acquisitions can be initiated by a faculty member or the library staff, subject to the approval of the relevant department head or the Dean of Academic Studies. The OUI policy for developing the library collection states that the library will purchase books, periodicals and databases that are relevant to OUI development and teaching fields.

The library and faculty members are updated on new books and periodicals through bibliographic publications and tools for critiquing and selecting books, as well as through publishers and suppliers.

Updated information about information databases is received from publishers and suppliers through MALMAD – Israel Center for Digital Information Services (the Israeli University Libraries' Consortium). New databases are usually received for a trial period during which the librarians and faculty members examine their quality and suitability to the unique needs of the OUI. They are acquired only if the librarians and faculty members recommend them.

The Library Committee, composed of the Director of the Library and senior faculty members representing the fields studied at the OUI, provides assistance in all issues pertaining to acquisition policy, updating the library and development of the library collection.

The collection available for economics students:

- 1581 print books (maximum number of copies per title – 3)
- 109 multi-volume Open University course books in the field of economics (maximum copies per title – 6)
- 14 print journal subscriptions (2006)
- 10 electronic books
- 10 special economics databases
- Access to 376 electronic journals in the field of economics
- 7 multi-disciplinary databases that include material in the field of economics

Economics faculty and student use of the library facilities over the past year (searches)

- E-books: 15 searches
- E-journals: 15,174 searches in different economics journals
- Print books: 390 economics books and 683 Open University course books in economics were loaned
- 262 print journals were loaned
- Databases: 54,345 searches (EconLit +: 10,735; Business Source Premiere: 43,610)

3.6.4.2 Access

Regional libraries: There are regional libraries at the large study centers with OUI course books and additional material – books and multimedia resources, corresponding to the courses studied in the study centers in the region.

Information databases are accessible to students and faculty who have a password, from any computer connected to the Internet.

3.6.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the physical infrastructure

The Open University's central control over study centers and computer services provides operational flexibility and the ability to offer tutorial sessions (throughout the country) and computer services, based on need – with significant financial savings. All rooms on campus are large – with new furniture and modern equipment. OUI computer services meet the needs.

With respect to the library, the main difficulties is the limited research literature available, and the lack of agreements for reference and loan services for OUI students with the Tel Aviv University libraries, similar to the agreements formed with other universities. The main recommendation is to enrich the economics materials in the library by expanding the collection of books and electronic journals.

Chapter 4

Research

Research in the department is carried out by the members of the senior faculty; by the development consultants who hold academic positions in other Israeli universities; and by members of the academic teaching staff, most notably by those among them who hold a PhD. This is a small group of researchers, which nevertheless gives rise to cooperation and synergies, and produces remarkable output in terms of publications, grants, and of organization and participation in international conferences and departmental symposia.

4.1 Research output

Currently, there are two senior academic faculty members in Economics: Prof. Aviad Heifetz, associate professor, who specializes in game theory and economic theory, and Dr. Mordechai Schwartz, lecturer, who specializes in public economics.

Both publish in leading journals in Economics including *Econometrica*, *European Economic Review*, *Journal of Economic Theory*, *Games and Economic Behavior*, *Economic Journal*, as well as in good field journals like *Economic Theory*, *Journal of Public Economic Theory*, *International Journal of Game Theory*, *Journal of Mathematical Economics*, *Mathematical Social Sciences*, *public choice* and in Encyclopedic collections like *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, *the Handbook of Game Theory with Economic Applications*.

The part-time development consultants in Economics, Prof. Shmuel Nitzan and Prof. Uri Ben Zion are also very active researchers, who publish in leading journals such as *European Economic Review*, *Economic Journal*, *American Political Science Review*, and in good field journals like *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *Economic Theory*, *Social Choice and Welfare*, *Journal of Public Economic Theory*, *Mathematical Social Sciences*, *Public Choice*, *Journal of Economic Psychology*.

Beyond international publications, the Open University undergraduate textbooks that these faculty members write also have a research aspect, in terms of analysis of up-to-date research and knowledge. By and large, these textbooks have an excellent reputation for high academic standards.

Several members of the academic teaching staff in the department are also engaged and active in research in Economics (see the staff CVs appended to this document). A few also cooperate in research together with senior faculty and development consultants. Prominent among these are Dr. Ronen Bar-El (specializes in public economics), and Avi Tilman (specializes in labor economics).

4.2 Conferences and workshops

Faculty members and development consultants travel regularly to present their work at international conferences, and take part in the organization of international conferences as members of the scientific committees of these conferences. These are detailed in the faculty CVs (see faculty CVs appended to this document).

Several members of the academic teaching staff also present their research at international conferences. The Open University Research Authority provides competitive grants aimed at supporting conference participation.

Conferences and workshops in Economics are also organized at the Open University itself. Recent examples include:

1. *The 2nd Israeli Game Theory conference* in honor of Nobel laureate Prof. Israel Aumann (January 2006)

2. *Real Money in a Virtual World: Influence on Business and Individuals*, workshop organized jointly by the Chais Research Center for the Integration of Technology in Education and the Department of Management and Economics (January 2006)
3. *Enforcement of Employees' Rights* (April 2006)
4. *The 2007 Budget: Growth or Deeper Poverty?*, in honor of the Israel Prize laureate Prof. Ruth Ben-Israel, upon the publication of her book, *Social Security* (December 2006)

In 2007, workshops were held on Negative Income Tax (*Negative Income Tax and its Influence on Labor Relations*) and Intergenerational Economics (*"Here and Now" Public Policy: Implications for Future Generations*). The department also holds periodic research workshops at which faculty members and invited speakers present their recent research work.

4.3 Service to the professional community

Prof. Aviad Heifetz serves on the editorial board of *Mathematical Social Sciences*. Senior faculty members referee papers in peer-reviewed journals.

4.4 Grants

Faculty members and development consultants in Economics have received grants from the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) and the European Union (FP5), as well as from the Sapir and Hammer funds. This year, faculty members in Economics applied for grants from the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) and from the Israel Science Foundation. One of these applications also involves Dr. Ronen Bar-El of the academic teaching staff.

4.5 Cooperation with other research institutions

Both the senior faculty members and the development consultants cooperate extensively with researchers from other universities, in Israel and abroad. Cooperation is maintained by mutual visits. In particular, the Open University researchers travel abroad to meet and work with their colleagues, and these colleagues reciprocate with visits to the Open University. This cooperation gives rise to many joint publications.

4.6 Advising undergraduate seminar papers

As yet, there is no graduate program in Economics at the Open University, and as a result there are no research students in the department. Senior faculty members advise our undergraduate students on seminar papers in advanced courses and graduate students at other universities.

4.7 Evaluation: Strengths and weaknesses

4.7.1 Publications

The research output of the senior faculty members in Economics is *at least* comparable to that of scholars holding the same ranks at other Israeli universities. Indeed, research output is a prominent factor in promotion decisions, as the scientific committees for promotion consist mainly of scholars from outside the Open University, who apply the same criteria for promotion as in other universities.

Research output is less impressive among the academic teaching staff. Historically, this is due to the fact that research was not defined as part of the duties of course

coordinators, and there were no explicit incentives for carrying out research. In order to improve this situation, two major steps were recently taken.

1. A new scale was set for the academic teaching staff at the Open University. It has four ranks, and research output is an important criterion for promotion from one rank to the next. The highest of these ranks is comparable to a lecturer position in the senior academic faculty (see Extras, “Course Coordinators”).
2. When recruiting new course coordinators, preference is given to candidates holding a PhD (or about to complete a PhD) and active in research.

4.7.2 Grants

While faculty members won competitive grants in the past, it is desirable to increase the scope of grant-financed research in the department. To this effect, several measures are being taken.

1. The Open University Research Authority is very active in providing information to researchers on the availability of competitive grants, by notifying them by email about calls for proposals and applications, and by organizing information days regarding the various funding resources. The Research Authority also organizes an annual research day, aimed at celebrating, through lectures and by artistic means, the research carried out at the Open University.
2. The Open University has an internal research fund, which aims to encourage and enable research among the academic teaching staff, and to initiate research of senior faculty. Large grants are awarded only to research proposals that received very good reviews when submitted to external, competitive funds, but were not funded due to budget constraints.
3. Research output, and in particular winning grants, is one of the criteria for the merit-based component of remuneration of senior faculty members. In contrast with other universities, this merit-based component at the Open University is competitive among the senior faculty, so higher achievements in research, and in particular winning grants, increases the researcher's chances of receiving larger monetary compensation.
4. When winning external competitive grants, the senior faculty at the Open University are entitled to the same salary increments as in other Israeli universities.

Chapter 5

The Self-Evaluation Process Summary and Conclusions

5.1 Routine self-evaluation at the Open University

Evaluation is routinely conducted by the Open University on several levels.

5.1.1 Evaluation of student satisfaction

As described in section 3.3.2, the Open University Evaluation Department conducts an ongoing teaching survey among students at the end of every semester. The survey is conducted electronically via the course website. It includes questions about all teaching components of the course (study material, assignments, the tutor, tutoring, the course website and all other course activities). Students can also add comments as they see fit. The Evaluation Department submits the results of the teaching survey to the course coordinators and the department heads. Survey data analyses provide information on each course as well as a comparison of department and University mean scores on each aspect surveyed.

While the course coordinators' evaluation of tutors focuses mainly on each group's teaching survey, and on observations of tutorial sessions, the department heads, who receive a consolidated report, per course, focus on findings from the survey with respect to assignments, study material and any unusual findings. The survey results may lead to changes in the structure of assignments, serve as the basis for feedback discussions with tutors, and sometimes even lead to discontinuing employment of tutors who received unsatisfactory evaluations. In addition to the ongoing teaching survey, the University also conducts surveys among students on an ad-hoc basis to examine specific components of the teaching process or study materials.

Along with the surveys among active students, the University also conducts feedback surveys among recent graduates, among veteran graduates and among drop-outs (as described in section 3.4.3).

5.1.2 Evaluation of the quality of teaching materials

Towards the beginning of every semester, the course coordinators write the assignments that students submit during the course. They also write three versions of the course final exams (two for the first exam sitting and one for the second exam sitting), and update the course website.

A senior faculty member, or a member of the academic teaching staff holding a PhD, examines and approves exam questionnaires and assignments every semester, even when the course coordinator has a PhD. Thus, every OUI exam is examined by an expert in the field who did not write the exam. This is a unique quality control procedure compared to other universities. The assignments and other course contents are also examined once a year by the department head or by a senior faculty member.

In addition to the advance review of assignments and exams, these materials are also examined after the fact on the basis of responses to the teaching survey and the item analysis performed on all assignments and exams. The average grades of assignments and exams, from the item level to the study group level are analyzed each semester (see section 3.3.9). The main parameters examined in this analysis are unusually high or low grades on specific items, large differences between the mean exam grades and the mean assignment grades, and unexplained variation in grades among the different study groups. The course coordinator and the department head receive results of the analysis.

The course website contents are updated continuously by the course coordinators, and routinely evaluated as part of the teaching survey. Student comments in the discussion

forums are another source of changes and additions to the site that contribute to students' learning.

5.1.3 Evaluation of course coordinators

All course coordinators are evaluated periodically by the department head and the senior faculty member responsible for the field. The evaluation relates to several parameters: the quality of assignments written by the course coordinator in the past year, the course website, student satisfaction as reflected in the teaching survey, and the distribution of grades on assignments and exams over the past year. The evaluation also touches on the course coordinator's administrative functioning and contribution to the department. The importance of this evaluation to the institution is reflected in the fact that the President of the OUI recently set up a committee, headed by Dr. Relly Brikner of the Evaluation Department, to formulate assessment tools for evaluating the performance of course coordinators

5.1.4 Quality of new study programs, new course proposals and updates of existing courses

Every new study program, new course proposal, course update or revision (irrespective of whether it is part of a new or of an existing study program) is initially sent to senior academics in relevant fields for external review. After receiving their comments and the response of the initiator of the program or course, the issue is discussed by the appropriate disciplinary subcommittee. Following approval of the subcommittee, discussions are held in two additional OUI forums (the Faculty Council and the Academic Committee). Only after approval by the Academic Committee are new study programs submitted to the Council for Higher Education.

Approved course proposals are submitted to the OUI President who authorizes the development of the course. Every unit written is sent to senior faculty members at the OUI and at other universities for evaluation. The study program approval procedure is attached in Rules and Procedures, "Program Approval" (in Hebrew); course development is described in section 3.3.2 and attached in Rules and Procedures, "Course Development" (in Hebrew). This exacting process ensures the high level of programs of study and written course materials. Accordingly, quality control at the OUI with respect to course contents and materials is stricter than quality control customary at other universities.

5.1.5 Training new and veteran tutors and course coordinators

To ensure high-quality teaching and efficient functioning of tutors and course coordinators at the OUI, as described in section 3.3.2, the OUI Training Department develops and conducts workshops that impart, consolidate and develop various teaching skills. All new tutors must participate in workshops qualifying them for the position. Continuing workshops are also conducted for veteran tutors on course materials and general didactic issues. New course coordinators also participate in workshops that qualify them for their position. Continuing workshops are also offered to veteran course coordinators. Section 3.3.2 describes additional tools used by the Department of Management and Economics in screening tutor candidates.

5.2 The staff member in charge of self-evaluation at the Open University

With the announcement by the Council of Higher Education of its intent to implement a process of quality self-evaluation in institutions of higher education, the President of the

OUI, on the recommendation of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (Prof. Ora Limor) appointed Dr. Sonia Roccas as the individual responsible for dealing with quality evaluation at the Open University. Dr. Roccas is a senior faculty member in the Department of Education and Psychology.

As the individual responsible for quality self-evaluation, Dr. Roccas's role includes:

- Collecting information pertaining to the self-evaluation process (participating in CHE symposia) and transmitting the information to relevant OUI entities (Vice President for Academic Affairs and the head of the department under evaluation).
- Activating the evaluation process, participating in the work meetings of the evaluation team and providing feedback to the department concerning the team's work methods.
- Sharing information with the Vice President for Academic Affairs about the evaluation process and on all matters pertaining to information about processes that relate to OUI policy to be included in the quality self-evaluation report.
- Formulating ways (in collaboration with the Vice President for Academic Affairs) for the various academic departments to prepare for the quality self-evaluation process they will undergo in the future in order to facilitate, when the time comes, information collection and writing the report. Furthermore, institutionalization of the preparation process with respect to teamwork of the evaluation team will serve as a catalyst for strategic thinking and critical evaluation of the routine activities of OUI academic departments.

In our opinion, the fact that a senior faculty member is responsible for quality evaluation in the University is vital to ensure that the information and experience gathered during the work of the self-evaluation teams is accumulated and consolidated in a way that will enable OUI management to implement and internalize the conclusions of the evaluation teams. Furthermore, the knowledge accumulated will serve all the academic departments that will undergo the quality self-evaluation process in the future. In addition, it is vital that the evaluation team include an individual external to the evaluated field who can provide feedback and observe the evaluation process from an independent perspective.

5.3 Conclusions of the University and the Department of Management and Economics concerning the self-evaluation

5.3.1 The self-evaluation process on the departmental level

Upon receipt of the guidelines from the Council of Higher Education for performing the self-evaluation, a meeting was convened in the office of the head of the department with the participation of the Economics faculty members. The work processes required for conducting the quality self-evaluation were formulated at this meeting. Dr. Mordechai Schwarz was assigned to write the report since he is one of the two senior faculty members of the Economics program and since he accumulated much experience in Auditing as a Senior Auditor at the State Comptroller's Office before moving to academia. Dr. Schwarz was aided by Prof. Aviad Heifetz, the head of the department; Prof. Shmuel Nitzan; five veteran course coordinators in Economics; Ms. Dafna Bar-On, a veteran member of the academic teaching staff who is in charge of student counseling in the department; Ms. Smadar Baum, the department secretary and other members of the departmental secretariat; and Ms. Adi Herkowitz, of the Evaluation department. Dr. Schwarz wrote the report based on data collected by this team from various OUI departments, and a previous report that was submitted last year by the Management program, that contained information relevant to this report as well.

After the departmental meeting, a coordination meeting was conducted with all those involved in the self-evaluation process for both fields evaluated this year: Economics and Psychology. Participants included the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Prof. Ora Limor; Prof. Aviad Heifetz and Dr. Mordechai Schwarz of the Department of Management and Economics; Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom and Dr. Ronit Bogler of the Department of Education and Psychology; Dr. Sonia Roccas, the individual responsible for quality evaluation at the OUI; Dr. Relly Brikner and Ms. Talia Swirski of the Evaluation Department, Ms. Gila Haimovic who edited the English version of the report; and Ms. Agate Krauss of the University Secretariat. At this meeting, the general strategy of the process was discussed and the timetable was set. This team conducted periodic meetings to discuss the evaluation strategy, findings and other topics that arose during the evaluation process.

Dr. Schwarz, the editor of this report, collected the data from the appropriate sources (mainly from the departmental secretariat, the Evaluation Department, and the course coordinators and tutors in Economics) and wrote most of the report, with the assistance of the head of the department. During the process, drafts were shown to the head of the department, to Dr. Roccas and to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for their comments. The drafts were also disseminated among all department faculty members, coordinators and tutors, for comments that were also incorporated into the final version of this report.

The evaluation process did not reveal much that was not known before. In fact, most of the strengths and weaknesses of the Department of Management and Economics and the Open University were known to the Department and to OUI management. The OUI in general, and the Department of Management and Economics in particular, evaluate their activities on a regular basis. The department's study programs and courses are examined frequently and updated continuously as explained above. Teaching is also evaluated by different means and reviewed continuously.

Dr. Schwarz offered to draw on his experience as senior auditor in Israel's State Comptroller's Office and to write a brief proposal for an alternative methodology for the evaluation of academic departments. His proposal follows below.

5.3.2 A proposal for an alternative procedure

This proposal represents the personal view of the editor of this report, and does not necessarily reflect the institutional position of the OUI. However, in a pluralistic society, different people may hold different views and opinions, and the opinion of an experienced former senior auditor in Israel's State Comptroller's Office should be heard and taken into account.

Every evaluation process aims to help the evaluated institution learn about its deficiencies and improve. The crucial question is, therefore, not the purpose of the process, but the efficiency of its methodology, compared to alternative methods of evaluation and auditing.

The current methodology of this process of self-evaluation is extremely time consuming, and this fact is crucial in a department with few senior faculty members, who are required to devote weeks or even months to writing an audit on behalf of external auditors, instead of concentrating on their teaching and research duties.

The better alternative is to establish a special external evaluation unit (for instance, by the Council of Higher Education) sufficiently budgeted, with professional personnel specializing in the audit and evaluation of academic institutions. In my opinion, and from my experience in auditing, there is no need for senior faculty to prepare this kind

of evaluation report. A qualified auditor with an MA degree and a specialization in evaluation of academic units, and devoted to this task, is sufficient. In addition, auditing is a profession. I therefore believe that a professional auditor would do a much more professional and efficient job than the academics involved in the preparation of this report. Moreover, I am convinced, with all due respect, that a non-professional ad-hoc auditing committee that comes for a two-day visit to the evaluated institution that has submitted the report has almost no chance of revealing actual deficiencies that the institution has decided to conceal. As mentioned above, the facts are known to the institution, and in many cases, the institution may be reluctant to acknowledge them. Hence, I believe that there is no substitute for a full external auditing and evaluation process.

From a budgetary viewpoint, one may argue that the current process is cheaper than an auditing and evaluation unit such as that proposed above. Since I have no idea what the current process costs (including bringing committee members from abroad, etc.), I cannot relate to this point. Nevertheless, taking into account the time and effort exerted by senior faculty members in preparing this report instead of concentrating on their duties (in which they probably have some comparative advantages), an examination may reveal that this format for self-evaluation is much more expensive, and, most probably, less effective.

5.4 Mechanism for continued monitoring of the handling of problematic issues

In order to deal with problematic issues that arose in this report we plan to take the following steps:

- A team from the department will prepare a document describing the approaches to handling problematic issues. These approaches will address the short and long-term. The department head, in collaboration with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, will ensure that the proposed approaches for handling problems will be integrated into annual work plans so that the required resources will be allocated.
- The department will monitor handling of the problems on an ongoing basis in accordance with the measures taken. Monitoring will be documented in a report that will be submitted at time intervals commensurate with problem type (semester, annual or five-year basis).

This document will relate to programs in both Management and Economics.

5.5 Are the evaluation findings available and accessible to the staff?

An electronic copy of the report will be posted on the University intranet site, and will be accessible to all OUI staff. Printed copies of the report will be available in the Library and in the Department office for review by faculty, administrative staff and students.