☸ THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF ISRAEL

Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

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Raanana 2006

The Open University of Israel
Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

SELF-EVALUATION
Executive Summary

The Open University of Israel

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 1978. 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, some 40,000 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses, of whom approximately 1,100 are in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies.

Teaching Method

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 registered. During the semester, optional tutorial sessions are held in the study centers. In addition, the course coordinators have regular telephone consultation hours. During the course, students are required to submit several written assignments, and at the end of the course they take a written examination held at the study centers, and the student is given a grade. 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.

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

The department, one of seven academic departments at the university, was established in 1997, when the OUI was reorganized on a departmental basis. Today, the department offers 66 courses in history, 13 different study programs (e.g., a single-disciplinary history program or a dual-disciplinary program in history and sociology) and 11 programs in other disciplines with divisions of study in history, philosophy or Judaic studies (e.g., a BA in psychology with a division of study in history). In the field of history, there are nine senior faculty members who deal with course development and research, and 25 course coordinators (academic teaching staff). In addition, there are 53 tutors who meet the students at tutorial sessions. At the OUI, students enroll in courses, not in departments or programs. For the purposes of this evaluation, we have defined a history student as one who has taken at least four courses in history. By this definition, there are now some 1,100 students in the department.

The Study of History at the Open University

History has been taught at OUI since its inception. Underlying our approach is an integrative notion of history. The curriculum is based on the idea that history, all

history, is a discipline with its own guiding principles and research tools, irrespective of the specific topics taught. Thus, the program combines courses in general history (the history of Western civilization), courses in Jewish history, and courses in the history of the Muslim world, and eliminates the division found in many academic institutions in Israel (though not elsewhere) among these different "histories." Competence acquired in the OUI history program is thus not defined by geographical or cultural area but rather by chronological period. At the same time, every student must take at least three courses in general history, one in each of three periods, in order to provide a common core of basic knowledge.

Open University Courses

The university offers courses on a high academic level. The courses are written by the OUI faculty as well as by recognized scholars at all the other universities in Israel. Courses are subject to rigorous quality control. All teaching materials are submitted to external experts for review, and edited according to established guidelines. Consequently, OUI teaching materials are highly esteemed and used by faculty and students at all the country's universities.

OUI courses are on three levels: introductory and intermediate courses, which require no prior preparation, and advanced courses, which are open only to students who have successfully completed six intermediate courses (36 credits) and demonstrated proficiency in English as a foreign language. Seminar papers can be submitted in most advanced courses.

Courses at OUI are broad in scope, analogous to lecture-and-exercise courses at other universities. Thus, in most cases, they award six credits. To qualify for an undergraduate degree, the student must earn at least 108 credits, of which 24 must be advanced credits, and write at least two seminar papers.

The teaching of each course is the responsibility of the course coordinator, an OUI staff member with at least a Master's degree. The coordinator recruits tutors who conduct the tutorial sessions.

Open University courses are stable from year to year, irrespective of the availability of individual lecturers. The OUI educational program makes superior higher education available, in Hebrew, to those living outside Israel's main population centers as well as abroad. The same courses, on the same level, can be taken in the big cities as well as in remote locations (and even in prisons). The assignments and examinations written by the course coordinators in preparation for each semester are the same for all students and do not depend on the level of either the students or the tutors. In this, and in the access to higher education afforded to all, there is an impressive egalitarianism. At the same time, such accessibility entails a different kind of interaction between teacher and student than that to be found in other universities. The carryover of a course from year to year means that, with time, its students are further and further away from the scholar who wrote it, not actively involved in the research on the basis of which the course was originally created, and enter the picture only after the course was committed to writing. Another limitation is that a course reflects the state of knowledge at the time of its writing. Although the course coordinators, in their study guides, course booklets, and websites, do make revisions on the basis of new knowledge, old courses still need to be rewritten and updated. The department is prepared to do this, but the process is complex and drawn-out.

Since the writing of new courses is a long, expensive undertaking, the department's development plans can only be realized relatively slowly, and courses in certain subject

areas are still lacking. Nevertheless, in most of these areas, courses are under development. We are making a special effort to augment our offerings in the early modern period, twentieth-century history, and non-Western history.

Study Programs and Teaching: Strengths and Weaknesses

The department offering is rich and varied, including many excellent courses. Graduates acquire broad historical knowledge, an ability to work independently, and a capacity for critical historical thinking.

Multiculturalism is at the heart of the Open University in general and forms the basis of a number of courses developed here in the field of history in particular. These courses were written out of a conviction that the lives of various population groups living alongside one another are intertwined, so that the history of minority groups cannot be understood without also studying the history of the majorities in whose midst they lived. Conversely, the history of dominant groups cannot be understood without considering the minorities that lived among them. The Open University has the advantage of being able to develop courses that rely on teamwork, in which each member contributes particular expertise, and to recruit course writers with broad, unconventional historical expertise.

While the integration of the different "histories" is the hallmark of the OUI approach, in terms of the scope of the material, the contents and particularly the methodological principles, the OUI history program resembles those of the other universities in Israel.

Many of the history program's weaknesses are reflective of the weaknesses of distance learning in general. Nevertheless, the advantages of this educational method are also evident: the variety of writers, the rigorous supervision of both course-development and instruction, the transparency of the subject matter transmitted, and the access afforded to the broader public, both here and abroad. Furthermore, the new technologies available for distance learning today help to relieve the isolation of the distant student and make possible a rapid, efficient updating of course contents.

Evaluation Procedures

All OUI courses are subject to rigorous academic quality control. The quality of teaching is routinely monitored by means of student feedback, gathered each semester; samples of assignments and examinations; visits paid to tutorial sessions by the senior faculty; and meetings between the department head and senior faculty with students.

Directions for Future Development

We are currently developing a master's program in history, to be submitted to the Council for Higher Education for approval. The Council is already considering a proposed bachelor's program in Middle Eastern studies, and a proposal for a bachelor's program in Land of Israel studies is in preparation. In addition, we are engaged in an ongoing effort to develop new courses in subject areas where our offerings are deficient and to update established courses. Both the new programs and the new courses being planned are meant to carry on and deepen the integration of histories, on the program and course levels, respectively.

Avriel Bar-Levav, Head
Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

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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, without interfering with 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.

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.

Distance Teaching: The OUI specializes in distance teaching. Textbooks, written by preeminent specialists in Israel and abroad are the primary component of the OUI method of instruction. Every course also offers tutorial sessions held at study centers throughout the country; however, participation is not mandatory. Together with its textbooks, the OUI also incorporates innovative and advanced technologies into its teaching: Internet, interactive instruction through broadband communication, multimedia, etc. Students submit assignments during the semester and take a final exam in every course.

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. Undergraduate students enroll in a course, not a specific program of studies or faculty. The OUI does not require them to complete a structured and uniform program of studies during a specific academic year. 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. 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; the intensive tutorials usually take place weekly.

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 66 structured undergraduate programs of study in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, 11 in the Sciences, 11 interdisciplinary programs, and one Engineering program. In addition, there are five 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; and M.Sc. in Computer Science. The University also offers programs toward high school teaching certificates in six areas as well as certificate studies in Computer Science.

Study Centers: In addition to the central campus in Raanana, the OUI operates study centers throughout the country. In the 2004-2005 academic year, 4,778 student groups took part in tutorial sessions held in 52 study centers. Most of the study centers provide registration, academic counseling and some library services in addition to classroom facilities.

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 2004-2005 academic year, 37,046 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses (and 2,912 students enrolled in graduate programs). 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 and high school students) 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 completes the necessary cluster of courses at the OUI as defined jointly by the academic institutions.

1.2   The Organizational Structure of the Open University

Key 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.

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

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, teaching staff and tutors – are involved in research, course development and teaching.

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.

Senior Faculty, Academic Teaching Staff and Administrative Staff – Personnel and Positions (December 2005):

Department	Senior faculty		Visiting faculty, academic teaching staff and administrative staff		Total staff	
	Personnel	Positions	Personnel	Positions*	Personnel	Positions*
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science:						
Mathematics Division	2	2	17	11.4	19	13.4
Computer Science Division	7	7	33	21.9	40	28.9
Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication	7	7	42	27.7	49	34.7
Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	10	10	38	23.2	48	33.2
Department of Literature, Language and the Arts	4	4	27	18.1	31	22.1
Department of Education and Psychology	8	8	38	24.9	46	32.9
In-Service Teacher Training Unit**	-	-	5	3.6	5	3.6
Department of Management and Economics	6	6	72	44.9	78	50.9
Department of Natural Sciences	8	8	33	23.5	42	32.5
The English Unit	-	-	18	13.6	18	13.6
The Center for Information Technology in Distance Education - *Shoham*	1	1	37	31.8	38	32.8
The 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	2	2	126	96.7	127	97.7
Total	56	56	488	342.3*	**544**	**398.3***

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

** The unit functions within the framework of the department of Education and Psychology.

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.

The Open University underwent an organizational change last year with the aim of increasing organizational efficiency in accordance with the recommendations of an internal committee. The committee's recommendations were based on two principles: the academic endeavor stands at the core of the University's activities, including all concomitant aspects – research, development and teaching; and the role of the administration is to support and serve this endeavor. The diagram below describes the new organizational structure.
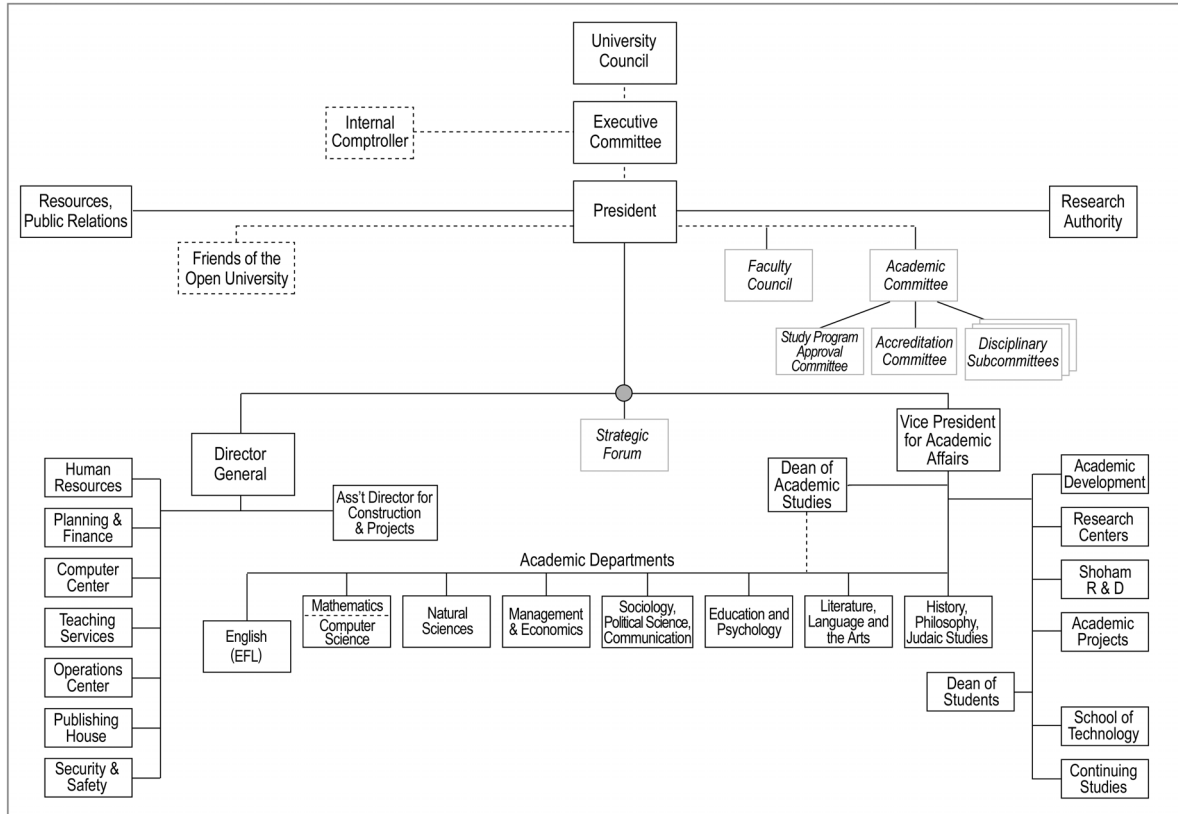
The Organizational Structure of The Open University, 2005

Chapter 2

Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies

2.1 Organizational Structure

2.1.1 Historical review

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies was established in 1997, when the Open University's organizational structure changed to a departmental organization. However, even before this change, extensive activity was carried out in the field of history, in the framework of the Humanities.

The first course offered at the OUI was in the discipline of history, "Jerusalem to Jabneh," written by Prof. Isaiah Gafni, Prof. Yaron Tzur and Israel Ronen. It was first taught in 1978. In 1997, after it had become outdated, teaching of the course was discontinued. Many courses have been written since then, such as "Jews in an Era of Transition" (1979, currently being revised), "History of Zionism: 1881-1914" (1979, rewritten in 2000), "Classical Greece" (1981, currently being revised), "Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome" (1982), "The History of Israel during the First Temple Period" (1982, currently being revised), "The Age of Revolution" (1983), "The Holocaust: Days of Reckoning" (1985), and many more.

Since the establishment of the Open University, at least one new history course has been offered each year; and usually more than one (in 1986, nine new courses were offered). History is one of the first fields developed at the Open University and it has always been one of its stronger fields in respect to the number of courses and their range and level. Open University history books are used as textbooks by all other Israeli universities. The initial courses were written according to a unique pedagogic concept: a dialog with an individual student. Later, other styles of writing were introduced.

All of the courses in history are studied in the framework of the department because, from the beginning, the OUI did not divide the discipline into different 'histories'. The various courses are thus studied under one roof, and there is an inclination to develop multi-disciplinary or comparative courses. There are also courses on topics that intersect with areas in other departments, such as art history or political science. Accreditation in history and the integration of these courses into programs of study are determined by the Humanities subcommittee.

For many years, long before the establishment of regional colleges, the OUI served as the major institution that provided academic education to students who lived far from Israel's major cities. During the 1980s, history courses were taught in the framework of the OUI through the Histradut's neighborhood renewal project – *Kalanit* – and through the Azta Seminar for Religious Teachers. Study groups were established in locations throughout the country, including Kibbutz Maayan Baruch and Kiryat Shmona in the upper Galilee. Course coordinators would travel throughout Israel to all the groups, even to the smallest.

From the beginning (as today), all the courses were developed by teams. Teamwork is reflected in the academic and pedagogic discourse that surrounds writing a course at the Open University, and characterizes the development of courses in the field of history as well.

Several years ago, as part of the process of expanding the range of disciplinary degrees granted by the University, we began to formulate a program of study toward a dual- and single-disciplinary B.A. in History. The program underwent all stages of internal approval, was submitted to the Council for Higher Education in 2003, and approved in early 2005. The uniqueness of the study program in history at the Open University is that it dispenses with the disciplinary frameworks customary at other universities.

History at the OUI includes general (world) history, history of the Jewish people, Middle-Eastern history, and the history of all other regions. We are currently preparing a graduate program in history.

2.1.2   **Programs of study**

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies offers 18 undergraduate programs of study. These are detailed in the booklet, "Programs of Study – History" enclosed with this report.

Name of the program	Date first offered
B.A. in History	2005-2006
B.A. in Humanities and Social Sciences	1976-1977
B.A. in Humanities	1976-1977
B.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities	1976-1977
B.A. in Economics and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Management and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Sociology and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on History of the Jewish People	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on Judaic Studies	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on the Middle East: Moslems, Jews and Christians	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel	1996-1997
B.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities – Focus on Political Science and World History	1999-2000

In addition, the following programs include departmental divisions of study:

Name of the program	Date first offered
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in History	1999-2000
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Philosophy	2003-2004
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Judaic Studies	2003-2004
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in History	2003-2004
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Judaic Studies	2003-2004
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Philosophy	2003-2004
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Philosophy	2005-2006
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in History	2005-2006
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Judaic Studies	2005-2006
B.A. in Sociology with a Division of Studies in History	recently approved
B.A. in Education with a Division of Studies in History	recently approved

2.1.3   **Number of students**

Notes to the table below:

1. The table below presents the number of students by year, and not by program of study, because, as noted in section 1.1 above, students at the Open University are not required to enroll in a department, but register for specific courses. At the OUI, and in particular in the History Department, students can decide on their program of study at a relatively late stage of their studies, though they may submit a study

program for approval in advance. In addition, the B.A. in History and the programs with a division of studies in history are fairly new.

2. A "history student" is defined here as a student who was enrolled in at least one history course during an academic year and had taken at least four courses in history until and including that year. Among the history students in the 2005 academic year, about 45% had submitted an approved program of study; of these, 40% were in Social Sciences and Humanities, 38% in Humanities and Social Sciences, and 22% in Humanities. These may include students who are taking one of the divisions of studies in history in programs offered by other departments. (As noted, the program in History was only approved by the Council for Higher Education in 2005.)

3. A "student of other disciplines" is defined as a student who has taken or is taking at least four courses including an advanced course, in one of the other disciplines offered by the department (Judaic Studies, Geography, Philosophy).

Students in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies (2001-2005)

	History students	**Students of other disciplines within the department**	**Total**
2000-2001	982	177	1,159
2001-2002	863	186	1,049
2002-2003	783	197	980
2003-2004	814	167	981
2004-2005	919	160	1,079

2.1.4 Graduates

Notes to the table below:

1. Included in the table are those graduates in whose program of study at least half of the required and elective courses, including at least one advanced course, were in courses offered by the department (not including basic courses, which are prerequisites to other programs in the social sciences and humanities, or EFL English).

2. The distribution of graduates does not refer to the program of study in History, which was first offered in 2005.

Graduates of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies (2001-2005)

Discipline	Focus	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total per discipline
Humanities	None	38	32	26	30	27	153
Humanities	Judaic Studies		2	1	2		5
Humanities	History of the Jewish People	11	18	8	15	12	64
Humanities	Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel			1		1	2
Humanities and Social Sciences	None	78	41	73	61	38	291
Humanities and Social Sciences	History of the Jewish People	3	3	9	9	9	33

Discipline	Focus	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total per discipline
Humanities and Social Sciences	Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel	1	2			1	4
Humanities and Social Sciences	The Middle East: Moslems, Jews and Christians		1	4	2	5	12
Social Sciences and Humanities	None	33	12	20	12	29	106
	Total per year	164	111	142	131	122	670

Distribution of final degree grades of history graduates (2001-2005)
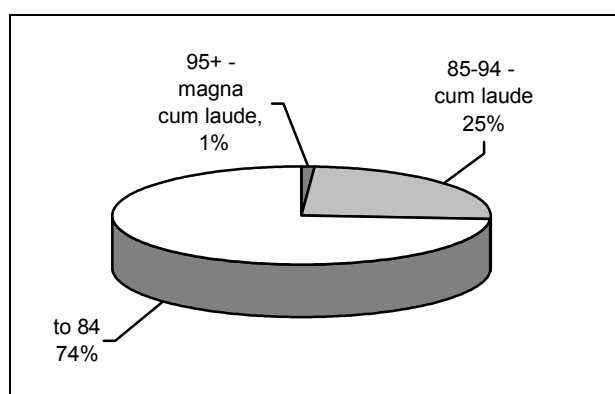
2.1.5   **Broad organizational framework**

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies is one of seven academic departments at the Open University. It acts and initiates research and teaching activities within the framework of the regulations of the Open University. The Department works in close coordination with the following University bodies:

The Research Authority
The 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 Steering Committee of the Research Authority, chaired by the Head of the Authority, is composed of five senior faculty members appointed by the President. The Steering Committee is responsible for the Authority's academic activities and the allocation of funds.

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 reviewers 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; and 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.

Office of the Dean of Academic Studies
The Department acts 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 that all departments must follow
- Formulating guidelines, rules and regulations that 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 the libraries in 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, which functions within 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 academic teaching staff. Training programs are based on an analysis of the professional profile of the position-holders, and intended to bridge the gap between the knowledge, skills and values that the tutors or course coordinators bring with them, and the professional performance level expected by the OUI. Training programs are developed and implemented to foster and reinforce resources needed by the teaching staff. For example, a comprehensive program was developed for tutors that includes orientation and basic skills for new tutors as well as a variety of workshops for veteran tutors aimed at strengthening basic skills, imparting complex skills and reinforcing the tutor's outlook in line with the spirit of the OUI.
- **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 their 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 main activities of the department are presented below.

Research
Members of the Department enjoy complete autonomy over research issues. In acquiring financial support, the faculty is aided by the Research Authority and external funds.

Development
The Department 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. Each of these initiatives are brought before the Humanities subcommittee for discussion and approval and then submitted to the Academic Committee. The course development process from initiation until approval or rejection by the President is described in section 2.2.3 below, and attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 1 (in Hebrew).

Recruiting teaching staff
In coordination 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, who is also responsible for evaluating their performance.

The scope of the positions of course coordinators is determined by University regulations based on the number of students enrolled in each course. Tutors, who are not faculty members of the department, are recruited by the course coordinators each semester and employed under contract. The contract is drawn up in accordance with the number of tutorial sessions conducted and the number of assignments checked.

When recruiting teaching staff for a course, priority is given to those with a PhD in a field of expertise applicable to the course contents. 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 Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, which is the regulatory body in regard to teaching at the OUI.

Recruiting senior faculty
The search for senior faculty is done through a tender and the selection of the candidate is imposed on an ad-hoc tender committee, which the President nominates. Senior faculty members from the Department serve on the tender committee and take part in the entire selection process. The appointment process is detailed in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 2 (in Hebrew)

Budgets
The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies is free to function within the framework of the budget determined in cooperation with University management.

Evaluation: The overall structure described above is efficient, since it allows freedom of action in the framework of the rules, which ensure a high academic level while functioning within budget constraints. One of the difficulties that stems from the procedures is the cumbersome development process, since any proposal for a new course or change to an existing course requires review and approval by numerous bodies and especially by external consultants from other universities. While this precludes speedy and immediate action, it is essential for the assurance of high quality courses.

2.1.6 **Internal organizational structure**

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies is organized as follows:

- The head of the department: Appointed by the President.
- Senior faculty: Deal mainly with the development of courses and fulfill academic administrative positions.
- Academic teaching staff: Course coordinators are responsible for planning all teaching aspects of an academic course and for implementing and monitoring these aspects and some deal with course development. Tutors are employed according to the number of students registered in the course.
- Administrative staff: Two secretaries – one manages issues relating to courses and serves as secretary to the Head of the Department, the other deals with courses.

All senior faculty members in the two Humanities departments at the university (the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies and the Department of Literature, Language and Arts) are permanent members of the Humanities and Judaism subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of the Academic Committee. Junior faculty members holding doctorates, nominated by the President based on the recommendation of the committee chairman, are also members of this subcommittee. The Committee chairman is nominated by the President.

2.1.7 **Non-academic bodies**

The following non-academic OUI bodies interact with the academic and/or administrative activities of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies. The ways in which they interact with the department are described below.

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.

Shoham 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, support and academic counseling, and evaluation and training.

Teaching Services System

The Teaching Services System is responsible for planning, organizing, coordinating and implementing all the teaching services provided to students and academic departments. It is also in charge of information and registration, distributing study materials, loaning teaching aids, organizing and coordinating activities in study centers throughout the country, administration of assignments, organization of examinations, recording information on student achievement, follow-up on students and handling their questions and requests with regard to the administrative aspects of teaching services.

The Administrative Center for Teaching Services, which is part of the Teaching Services System, provides administrative services to the academic departments and gives telephone information to students via the Information Center. It is responsible for guiding the administrative staff of the academic departments and coordinating the work of the academic departments with the Teaching Services System. The center is responsible for printing and distributing final examination questionnaires for all courses, drawing up contracts with tutors, dealing with payment to tutors, and printing supplementary written materials for courses. The Information Center provides information via telephone to students in the following areas: registration, grades, tutorial sessions, assignment to study groups, loaning learning aids, referral to academic counseling, shipment of study materials, services of the Dean of Students, computer support, and referring students to relevant entities in other matters

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

Beginning in 2006, the Evaluation Department will be directly subordinate to the President.

2.2   **Rationale, Aims and Goals**

2.2.1   **The rationale, the mission and the goals**

The goals of the programs of study in history are:

1. To maintain academic studies in history that reflect research in the field on one hand, and a commitment to humanistic and rationalistic standards on the other.

   To provide wide knowledge of history and basic concepts of historiography.

   To enable students to develop an understanding of historical processes, and to teach them basic skills and research methods widely used in historical research and accepted by universal academic standards.

   To develop critical and original thinking about the past, and through this, about the present.

   To develop empathy for different cultures and periods than our own, but at the same time, to create a distance from the problems investigated in a way that will enable rational and critical thinking.

2. To combine different "histories" in a way that will present wide and shared trends, and clarify comparative dimensions without neglecting an emphasis on uniqueness.

3. To develop courses on a high academic level, to advance research and development of innovative study materials and teaching methods.

4. To increase access to higher education through a unique teaching method that does not require ongoing attendance at a central teaching institution. Instead of the students' coming to the university, the university reaches out to students.

5. To offer a second chance to individuals who did not complete their studies, to working people, to residents of the periphery, and to anyone who does not intend to study in a regular university framework, to study either for personal enrichment or for professional training.

Specific capabilities that the program aims to impart include:
- The ability to read and analyze historical sources (the sources are included in the course materials and serve as a basis for assignments and exams)
- An understanding of historical processes
- A critical sense of, and the ability to, independently cope with research conclusions
- Openness toward and understanding of the concepts of the past
- The ability to write a synthesis of broad historical topics

The program is designed to expand the historical knowledge of students, to educate them towards independent and critical thought, to develop their ability to understand historical texts, sources and studies, their ability to generalize, their ability to express themselves in writing, to arouse their curiosity, to enable them to understand cause and effect, to enhance their sensitivity to problems of the past and to historical contexts, and their openness to distant times and other cultures.

2.2.2   **Deciding upon the rationale, the mission and the goals**

The rationale, goals and objectives of the programs of study are determined by the senior faculty of the department and they are reviewed and approved by the Humanities subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of the Academic Committee (parallel to other Universities' Senates), by the Faculty Council, and the Academic Committee (in that

order). Each new course also undergoes an approval process (excluding approval by the Faculty Council).

In addition, the Department Teaching Committee, composed of the department head and representatives of the teaching staff, holds regular meetings. The department also holds special meetings (for example, tutor meetings) and administers feedback questionnaires to tutors and students in order to understand the problems that arise in the field as well as the needs of tutors and students.

In addition to these permanent bodies, ad hoc meetings are held for special purposes, and informal discussions are held all the time. All members of the department meet at the monthly Department Forum and senior faculty meet at a monthly Senior Faculty Forum.

Numerous changes have been implemented as a result of the discussions, meetings and feedback described above. Only the main changes are listed below:

- Designing new and updated programs of study
- Changing existing programs of study
- Updating existing courses and deciding on the development of new courses
- Developing study aids
- Improving the teaching staff

The goals, objectives and changes are publicized in the President's Report, in protocols of meetings, in the University Catalog, on the department website and orally at the meetings mentioned above.

2.2.3 What is quality?

Quality means educating toward values, openness, developing independent and critical thinking, nurturing originality and creativity, and expanding knowledge.

The OUI in general and the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies in particular strive at all times to improve quality in development, teaching and research. For this purpose the department examines, updates and develops courses on an ongoing basis, designs new and updated programs of study and continuously monitors changes taking place in leading universities throughout Israel and throughout the world. Department faculty members participate in conferences in their areas of expertise. The department holds academic seminars regularly for students and the general public, with the participation of renowned researchers in Israel. In addition, the department supervises all aspects of teaching and study material: teaching surveys are conducted on a regular basis; every examination questionnaire in each course is checked by two people; faculty members observe tutorial sessions and check tutor assignments; course websites are reviewed regularly, etc. In addition to the teaching survey, ad hoc surveys are administered to students from time to time, in order to examine specific topics. Furthermore, tutor meetings are held and the Evaluation Department administers feedback questionnaires to the students. Their responses are sent to the coordinators and the department head.

The challenge to nurture critical thought in the framework of distance teaching is difficult but possible. Courses include questions for thought, specific knowledge questions as well as views of different historians on a topic that the student compares and assesses critically.

As a distance education institution, the Open University attaches particular importance to the process of developing course textbooks and study materials for students. OUI

books have maintained high academic standards and methodological clarity for many years and are widely used by students at other universities.

To ensure uncompromising quality, the course development process at the OUI is a drawn-out process, subject to rigorous monitoring at all times. Responsibility for development of a specific course is always in the hands of a senior faculty member from the Open University or from one of the seven other Israeli universities. The detailed course proposal must include a comparison between existing textbooks, a comprehensive rationale for the proposed structure and contents of the course, its purpose and scope. The course proposal is submitted to at least three reviewers who are faculty members at other universities in Israel. The proposal is then submitted for approval to the disciplinary subcommittee and then to the President and to the Academic Committee. Course books produced by the OUI undergo strict style and language editing to ensure clarity and accuracy of language. Accompanying study guides are sent to faculty members at other universities in Israel for examination and review.

The course is divided into units, each of which is sent to reviewers (academic faculty in Israel and abroad). The course writer is required to consider and implement the reviewers' feedback. Some reviewers ask to see the unit once again after it is corrected, for re-review.

This process was developed with the aim of maintaining the OUI's high academic standards in all courses, through constant updating of study materials to reflect the state-of-the-art in the field, and ensuring clarity of content and presentation. This meticulous approach to each textbook produces optimal results for OUI students who need to deal with the material through independent self-study. (Section 3.3.2 describes quality assurance of development, teaching and learning in detail).

To ensure quality in research, the Department recruits senior faculty members with proven research capabilities and defined research plans (additional details appear in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.4). The promotion of senior faculty members is mainly determined by the quality of their research, as is the case in all universities. It should be noted that the small number of senior faculty members in the Department makes it difficult to create research discourse that is essential for research dynamics, and some faculty members are forced to work alone or with colleagues in other academic institutions. The very limited number of senior faculty members is one of the most significant problems of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies.

2.2.4 Success in achieving the mission and goals

The B.A. program in History is new and therefore we cannot yet assess its success. In a more individualistic manner, we can assess students' success based on the work they submit and their exams; we examine the correspondence between their grades on assignments and the grade on exams, and the degree of satisfaction of the students with their study materials (examined on the basis of feedback questionnaires administered at the end of each course). We examine the satisfaction of the students with the course tutors in the same way.

2.2.5 Lines of future development

The planned directions of future development, as determined at departmental meetings and meetings of other University bodies, include:

1. Developing new programs and submitting them for internal and CHE approval
   - M.A. program in History

- B.A. program in Middle-Eastern Studies (this program has already been submitted to the CHE)
- B.A. in Land of Israel Studies

2. Developing courses on topics that are lacking, such as history of the 20th century, non-European history, economic history and more
3. Revising and updating old courses
4. Additional development of technological learning aids for distance learning
5. Continuing the trend of integrating between histories, not only in programs of study, but also within individual courses

Chapter 3

The Evaluated Program of Study

3.1   The Program of Study - Contents, Structure and Scope

3.1.1 – 3.1.2   The program of study

General

History studies at the Open University offer students a broad historical education and basic historiographical concepts; strive to develop students' understanding of historical processes and to teach them basic skills and provide basic research tools for historical research, as is customary in History departments in Israel and throughout the world. The program of study in history is based on the outlook that history – any history – is a field of knowledge that relies on disciplinary principles and on fixed research tools that do not depend on the specific body of knowledge being studied. Therefore, the program includes courses in "general" history (the name commonly given in Israel to the history of western civilization), courses in Jewish history and courses on the history of the Muslim world, and eliminates the division common in many institutions of higher education in Israel (though not in the world) between these different "histories".

The program of study in history rests on methodological unity on one hand and the integration of contents on the other. It is based on a solid disciplinary foundation: teaching the basic tools of historical research, imparting comprehension of historical processes and developing learning skills that will enable the graduate of the program to engage in independent study of historical issues. Students can concentrate their studies on one area (for instance, European history, history of Islamic countries or the history of the Jewish people) or to diversify their studies and combine different areas in a way that expands their historical outlook and develops tools for comparison.

The program of study in history, therefore, does not focus on a geographical or cultural space (European, American, Jewish history, etc.) but rather on chronological periods. Each student selects a period of specialization, and within that framework, can decide to concentrate on one area of history or combine different areas. However, students are required to take some courses in periods not included in their period of specialization. In this way, students acquire a broad historical education together with in-depth and focused knowledge of one period. In addition, all students in the program must take three courses in general history, one from each period, at the beginning of their studies. This stems from the recognition that European history is the basis for historical research, where the principles of the discipline were formulated, the customary periodization was determined; and in fact, all historical research, including that of other regions, either compares to or challenges. These three courses provide a uniform disciplinary foundation for all students in the program. For those students who choose to study mainly Western history, these courses naturally fit into the continuation of their studies. For students who choose to focus on the history of the Jewish people in Christian countries, they provide the necessary background on the history of the Jews, and ensure that students understand the cultural environment in which the Jews functioned. For students who choose to focus on Islamic culture, these courses serve as a basis for comparison and provide general knowledge.

Programs in History

Name of the program	Date first offered
B.A. in History	2005-2006
B.A. in Sociology and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Economics and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Management and History	2006-2007
B.A. in Humanities and Social Sciences	1976-1977

Name of the program	Date first offered
B.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities	1976-1977
B.A. in Humanities	1976-1977
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on History of the Jewish People	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on Judaic Studies	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on the Middle East: Moslems, Jews and Christians	1997-1998
B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel	1996-1997
B.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities – Focus on Political Science and World History	1999-2000

3.1.3   Description and evaluation of the contents, scope and structure of the study programs

Single- and dual-disciplinary undergraduate programs[1]

For the most part, the content of programs in history at the OUI is similar to programs in other academic institutions, although the number of courses taken is slightly smaller than in parallel programs at other universities. Open University courses are wider in scope than courses in other universities; therefore, they grant 6 credits. In fact, each course combines a lecture and an exercise. That is, it presents the material and also conveys learning skills. The students are required to submit several written assignments (about 10 pages in length) in each semester-long course, beginning with their first course at the OUI (assignments are described in further detail below).

Another characteristic of the history programs is the organization of the courses, on introductory, intermediate and advanced levels, in clusters, where each cluster constitutes a thematic unit. The intermediate courses constitute a prerequisite for the advanced courses (students must complete six introductory and intermediate courses in the cluster before enrolling in an advanced course). Some clusters integrate several fields in the Humanities. Examples of this include "The Bar Kokhba Revolt," for which the prerequisites include two of the following: "From Exile to Independence," "Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome," "Midrash and Aggadah," and "The World of the Sages". Similarly, the prerequisite to "The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society" is "Jews in an Era of Transition" or "Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East". For details on the programs, lists of courses and the distribution of credits, see the booklet, "Programs of Study – History". These details are also available in the OUI Catalog (in Hebrew) and on the department website.

B.A. in History (single-disciplinary program)

This is a new program operated for the first time in 2005-2006, after being approved by the Council for Higher Education. The program includes courses in general history, history of the Jewish people and Middle Eastern studies. It covers three chronological periods: 1) The Ancient World; 2) The Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age; and 3) The Modern Era. In the future, when a larger number of courses on the early modern age are offered, we will consider dividing the second period into two periods (the Middle Ages; the Early Modern Age), as is customary at several universities.

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[1]   Programs of study are detailed in the separate booklet, "Programs of Study – History"

In order to acquire a foundation in history and sufficient methodological background, students must take courses from the three periods and among them, at least one intermediate course in general history from each of the periods. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that we do not perceive this chronological characterization as impassable. Courses that cover wide periods can be taken in either of two periods.

In the framework of this program, students must take 108 credits of which at least 84 are credits in history. Most of the courses grant 6 credits. The program includes the history of Christian Europe, the history of the Jewish people, the history of Islam and the Middle East and the history of the Land of Israel.

The courses are divided into periods as follows:
- The Ancient World: 14 courses
- The Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: 13 courses
- The Modern Era: 39 courses

The division between courses on history of the Jewish people and on general history is as follows:
- History of the Jewish people: 25 courses
- General history (including the Middle East and Islam): 31 courses
- Courses combining both: 5 courses

Among the 84 credits in history, students must take 24 advanced course credits. The program offers 24 advanced courses in which the student can write seminar papers.

During their studies, students must specialize in one of the three periods. They must take 36 credits in the period they selected, of which at least 12 are advanced credits, and write two seminar papers in courses on this period. Students must take 18 credits in one of the other periods (including 6 advanced credits and one seminar paper), and 12 credits in the remaining period.

To accumulate the remaining credits of the 108 required for the degree, students must take 24 credits in courses from among all the courses offered at the OUI, of which at least 12 credits are *not* history courses.

Beginning in Fall 2006, all undergraduate students must take bibliographic instruction. This is required of all students who have accumulated fewer than 72 credits by the Summer 2006 semester. The requirement must be fulfilled before students begin taking advanced courses.

B.A. in Humanities, Humanities and Social Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities

These programs are suitable for students who wish to be free to create their own personal program of study in accordance with their individual areas of interest and objectives. Students can focus their studies in one or more discipline and are not committed to concentrating on one specific field. The scope of studies for the BA is 108 credits of which the students can choose from a wide range of courses in Humanities and Social Sciences, including courses in history. The degree granted is a B.A. in "Humanities", "Humanities and Social Sciences" or "Social Sciences and Humanities"[2]

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[2] On the diploma, the degree will be either in Humanities and Social Sciences or in Social Sciences and Humanities, depending on the relative weight of the two disciplines in the student's overall studies.

Focused programs

Within the framework of studies leading to a Bachelor's degree awarded by the Open University in Humanities, Social Sciences or Sciences, students may focus on various areas. Each focused program is a structured program of study with specific requirements that students must fulfill.

The diploma awarded for focused programs notes only the discipline (Humanities or Social Sciences) and the topic of the focus does not appear on the degree. Confirmation of the focus is only provided in a letter accompanying it.

The following programs include a focus in history:

1. **B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on History of the Jewish People**

This program combines studies on the history of the Jewish people with another field in the Humanities or Social Sciences. It includes a foundation suitable for the two fields: required core courses and intermediate and advanced electives in each field. Of the 108 credits required for the degree, at least 54 course credits must be in history of the Jewish people, and they must include 24 advanced course credits, of which 12 are in history of the Jewish people and 6 are in Humanities or in Humanities and Social Sciences. Students are required to submit two seminar papers of which one must be on the history of the Jewish people.

2. **B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on the Middle East: Moslems, Jews and Christians**

This program combines Middle-Eastern studies with another field in Humanities or Social Sciences. It includes a foundation suitable for the two fields: required core courses and intermediate and advanced electives in each field. Of the 108 credits required for the degree, at least 54 course credits must be in Middle-Eastern studies, and 30 credits must include 12 credits in general history, 12 credits in political science and international relations and 6 credits in history of the Jewish people. In addition, the 108 credits required for the degree must include 24 advanced course credits. Students are required to submit two seminar papers in Middle-Eastern studies.

In addition to the English language requirement, students in this program must also demonstrate proficiency in Arabic.

3. **B.A. in Humanities or Humanities and Social Sciences – Focus on Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel**

This program combines Land of Israel studies with another field in Humanities or in Social Sciences. It includes a foundation suitable for the two fields: required core courses and intermediate and advanced electives in each field. Of the 108 credits required for the degree, students must take "Jerusalem Throughout the Ages" (6 credits) and 36 credits in history (12 credits in each period: The Ancient World, The Middle Ages, and The Modern Era), 12 credits in Social Sciences; and 12 credits in general studies among a list of 12 courses. In addition, the 108 credits required for the degree must include 24 advanced course credits, of which at least 18 credits are in Land of Israel studies. Students are required to submit two seminar papers, one of which is in world history and the other is in history of the Jewish people.

4. **B.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities – Focus on Political Science and World History**

This program combines studies in world history and political science. It includes a foundation suitable for the two fields: required core courses and intermediate and advanced electives in each field.

Of the 111 credits required for the degree, students must take 57 credits in political science, among these, 39 required course credits and 18 elective credits, of which 12 credits must be advanced courses in political science. In addition, 54 credits must be in world history, of which 42 credits include at least one course from each of the three periods (The Ancient World, The Middle Ages, and The Modern Era) and 12 advanced course credits. Students are required to submit two seminar papers, one of which is in political science and the other is in world history.

Divisions of study

History studies are also offered in the framework of divisions of study in the B.A. programs in other fields (see table in Chapter 2). The main goal of the divisions of study is to expand students' knowledge. Divisions of study in history are also organized in clusters: three introductory and intermediate courses, and one advanced course, covering a single topic. Students may choose any cluster of courses from among the history course offering.

Bridges to other universities

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies offers transfer options which enable students who begin their academic studies in the flexible framework of the Open University to later transfer to faculties of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, the University of Haifa or Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, to continue their studies until they finish their degree. The requirements of the various universities for students wishing to transfer are detailed in the booklet, "Transfer Tracks in History," attached to this report.

Pace of studies

Studies at the OUI are flexible and students can spread their studies over a period suitable to their needs. In addition, because of the scope of the courses, i.e., the quantity of reading material and written assignments, we recommend that students take only one course in their first semester and no more than three courses in the second semester. Authorization to deviate from this recommendation is granted by academic advisors only in special cases.

The average period of study for a degree (from the first course until entitlement to a degree) among the graduates of the different programs in history described above for the years 2001-2005 was 8.3 years (with a standard deviation of 5.1). Half of the graduates completed their degree studies in 6.5 years or less. The table below shows a more detailed picture:

Duration of studies towards an undergraduate degree (2001-2005)

Duration of Studies	Up to 4 years	5-6 years	7-8 years	9-10 years	11+ years
%	19	30	18	10	23

3.1.3.1 **Overlap with other disciplines**

Many courses in other fields in the Humanities also grant credits in history; for example, "Film as History: Imagining and Screening the Twentieth Century" (film studies), "Visual Representations of Zionist Ideology in Israeli Culture" (art history), and "Historical Thinking: Issues in Philosophy of History" (philosophy). Some courses in Judaic studies are also history courses, such as "Ashkenazi Hasidism in the History of Jewish Thought" and "Historical Topics in the World of the Sages".

There are courses in the Social Sciences that are also accredited in history, and history courses that also grant credits in the Social Sciences. Examples of these include "Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century" (political science), "The Emergence of New States in Africa" (political science), "The American Jewish Community" (sociology & anthropology, political science), "Issues in the Study of Nationalism" (listed under history, and also grants credits in political science), "Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy: Continuity and Change in United States Government" (listed under history, and also grants credits in political science).

3.1.3.2 **Providing a comprehensive foundation of knowledge and basic concepts**

The undergraduate program in history provides basic knowledge and a broad historical education by requiring that each student take at least one general history course in each period. It especially broadens students' knowledge when it comes to electives, since each student must choose a large number of courses (six courses, of which at least two are advanced). The program averts a situation in which a student has not studied at least one course from each period, from ancient times to the modern era.

The program provides definitions of periods, types of government, kinds of social and religious organization, and basic concepts in historical thinking such as proof, argument and reliance on sources.

In each of the courses, students are exposed to basic concepts relevant to the specific period, region and topic of the course. The diversified courses that students must take to complete the B.A. in History or the focused program ensure that they receive the basic concepts needed in the history discipline and for the most part, also in other bordering disciplines. The basic concepts are explained in the study materials.

The exams include proficiency in basic concepts in addition to comprehensive and thought-provoking questions.

3.1.3.3 **Students who take courses in history**

Since the program of study in history is a new program, a comparison between history students and students in other programs will only be possible in several years. Furthermore, since many Open University students can decide on their program of study at a relatively late stage of their studies, and they do not study in a department but rather enroll in individual courses, it is difficult to accurately estimate the proportion of students in the different history programs in comparison to those in other disciplines. However, we can say that many history students are veteran students and thus different from students in other fields, in which there is a more diversified population that includes more new students. The numerical relations between history students and the other students studying in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies are shown in the table in section 2.1.3 above. The table in section 3.6 below, which relates to the distribution of students taking history courses throughout the country indicates

that some two-thirds of these students are studying other disciplines, and take history courses as free electives or for enrichment.

3.1.3.4 Distinguishing between kinds of sources

As stated, the Open University's written courses are a combination of lectures and exercises. Together with the lecture material on the topic or the chronology, students read different types of sources and, in each history course, an analysis of these sources is presented. The assignments especially check whether students are able to identify the kinds of sources and their use. They also include unfamiliar sources and articles that students are required to analyze according to the tools they have acquired in the course.

3.1.3.5 Instilling skills for analyzing primary sources

The various programs of study in history encourage original and creative thinking by ensuring that students deal directly with historical sources by reading articles, both original and in translation, and by coping with specific questions in the assignments and seminar papers.

The exercises in OUI courses are structured within the courses, which include questions of various types: questions in the text to which answers are presented at the end of the unit; questions which are answered in the discussion that follows them; rhetorical questions that arouse thought or to open a discussion; questions requiring that the student deal with an issue or form an independent opinion on a certain topic. The study materials include a large number of documents accompanied by analysis and assessment questions. In the assignments, students are often required to go back to primary sources, and to apply the analytic ability that they acquired from the course. In this manner, the exercises are included both in the course itself and in the assignments.

Through the assignments, students independently analyze primary sources, critically read research studies and write essays that integrate a discussion of the sources and the studies. In addition, during tutorial sessions, for those students who wish to be given a guided review of the study materials and the assignments, the exercises include critical reading.

In advanced courses, most of the study is based on primary sources and articles. Many of the courses take the form of anthologies of articles and chapters from research studies, and primary sources. To this is added a study guide written especially for the course, which links together the different parts of the course. The guide emphasizes text analysis skills, comparing different theses in history and coping with distinct and diverse opinions, while attempting to assess and weigh their validity.

Through the assignments in advanced courses, students apply critical tools and discourse, which the course is designed to give them. Many advanced courses require that students prepare a *referat*, a written research paper that includes analysis of historical sources, a critical discussion of studies relating to these sources and independent conclusions regarding the topic.

Because of the OUI teaching method, in which tutorials are not compulsory, analysis of sources and discussion of different studies take place on an individual basis and not in the framework of group discourse. Currently, difficulties are overcome, to a point, through online communication and discussion forums on the course websites.

3.1.3.6 **Instilling the fundamental values of the historian**

OUI courses are written courses. The text is the teacher, and all the fundamental values of the historian are expressed in it.

Open University courses are written by leading historians whose professional values are their guiding principles and who present these fundamental values through the texts they write. Before beginning to write the course, they present a writing sample through which their didactic abilities are examined as well as their ability to present their theory in writing. Some of the course writers are OUI faculty members and others are leading researchers in other universities. Academic responsibility for each course is in the hands of an academic holding the rank of senior lecturer at least. As a result, the courses are diverse and represent different schools of thought and approaches that are customary at the Open University and at other universities. Leading historians, representing diverse schools of thought from different universities throughout Israel and the world, serve as consultants for all courses. The feedback they provide is incorporated into the final versions of the courses.

In writing the courses, all writers emphasize those issues that they view as more important to the course. In this way, students are introduced to diverse approaches, viewpoints, insights and sensitivities. The courses place emphasis on academic skills, on historiographic trends, on the complexity of the issues and the limits of the sources. The tutorials and the assignments are the framework in which these aspects can be expanded, and students are introduced to new up-to-date studies, developments in research, new schools of thought and new historians. Each semester the course coordinator updates the course booklet and refreshes the assignment questions.

In addition, the department organizes symposia at which students can meet with leading researchers in the field and are exposed to research developments. This is a partial solution to problems that stem from the OUI method of studies: the distance from the researcher, the unchanging course text and the isolation of the student.

3.1.3.7 **Oral and written expression**

Because of the character of studies at the Open University, which is based on independent learning that does not require participation in tutorials, oral expression is not an aspect that is emphasized. However, continuous exchange of views takes place at the tutorials.

In contrast, written expression is greatly emphasized. There are five or six assignments per course (of which the student must submit at least three or four). Among others, feedback on the assignments enables the tutor who checks them to impart written expression skills (coherence, clarity, methods of explanation, etc.).

The Study Guidance Unit at the Open University offers a variety of workshops and individual training in learning skills. Workshops are offered during the semester in response to students' diverse learning needs. At the beginning of the semester, a workshop on organizing learning and on academic reading is offered. Later in the semester, the Unit offers a workshop on analyzing questions and writing answers, and at the end of the semester, there is a workshop on preparing for exams. Towards the end of the student's studies towards the degree, the University offers a training workshop on writing seminar papers.

For the criteria applied in evaluating written papers, see section 3.4.1.

3.1.3.8 **Coping with professional literature in a foreign language**

To receive a degree at the Open University, students need to show evidence of English language proficiency. Fulfilling the English requirements is a prerequisite to advanced courses at the Open University in all fields of study, including history. During their studies, and mainly in advanced seminars, students must cope with a wide range of professional literature in English and must demonstrate the ability to understand, assimilate and integrate materials in English. Therefore, all students, at a fairly early stage of their studies at the Open University, undergo a classification process to determine their level of EFL English. Each student's level is determined on the basis of one of three classification processes:

- The English section of the psychometric test
- The "Amir" or "Amiram" exams (the same test, but the "Amiram" exam is administered via computer), which are equivalent to the English section of the psychometric exam.
- A transcript that testifies to the successful completion of EFL studies at another university.

Students with sufficient English proficiency are exempt from EFL studies at the Open University. The others are placed into the requisite English reading comprehension course and gradually study until they reach the exemption level.

The University offers five levels of English reading comprehension courses: A – advanced; B and C – intermediate; D and E – beginners. In addition, a "Bridging the gap" workshop is offered to students with a level below E. This enables all students to study English on their own level and to gradually advance to the level required for the degree. It should be noted that A level courses are offered in three disciplines: Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences. Naturally, a student who has decided to focus on history will prefer to take the English course designated for Humanities in which the students study and practice analyzing and understanding texts that deal with the fields of history, philosophy, literature, etc.

3.1.3.9 **Using different media**

Almost every course offered at the Open University has a website, which serves as a virtual campus. As a distance learning university, the OUI emphasizes the development of online communication and places great importance on imparting to students the skills needed to utilize technologies to the fullest. Nonetheless, because not every student has access to a personal computer, at this stage we do not include material on the sites that cannot be accessed through a different method.

The Open University offers the course "Computer Applications for the Humanities" (which is recommended in programs of study in history, but not required). The course provides students with basic knowledge about the computer and computer applications through a general approach that enables them to independently cope with future versions of applications introduced in the course as well as with new software packages. These computerized tools serve students in their studies and in writing seminar papers and also for conducting searches on the internet, participating in discussion forums and chat groups, and utilizing databanks.

Movies, films, audio tapes and CDs are included in many courses as part of the course or for enrichment. The audio tapes and CDs are loaned to the students and returned at the end of the course.

3.1.4 **How the various programs reflect the departmental goals**

The goal of each of the programs offered by the department is to qualify students in independent learning. This goal is achieved through the teaching method: learning is mainly based on independent study from textbooks, instead of face-to-face lectures as is common in other universities. The students must cope with the material on their own, which requires independent study skills and diligence. The different programs prepare our graduates for continued studies toward higher degrees at all of the institutions of higher education in Israel and abroad.

3.1.5 **How the programs comply with the decisions of the Council of Higher Education**

The Open University strictly adheres to the decisions of the Council for Higher Education that are relevant to the different study programs. These include:

Decision of January 15, 1991
Credits for studies in non-academic institutions

Decision of November 5, 2002
Accreditation of courses studied at non-academic post-high school institutions

Prospective students with prior knowledge from non-academic post-high school institutions can submit a request to the Committee for the Accreditation of Prior Studies. The Committee considers requests on a case-by-case basis and may grant up to 36 credits, taking into account the study field, institution, courses studied and grades received. Students who have completed academic studies towards a degree at another institution may be granted up to 60 credits.

Decision of January 2, 2001
Accepting Students without Matriculation Certificates

The Open University opened its gates without any prerequisites both to students wishing to take individual courses and to students who wish to study towards a degree. Enrollment is not subject to a matriculation certificate or any other diploma. The "entrance requirement" to the Open University is, therefore, success in coping with the academic standards that the courses demand.

Decision of November 2, 2004 (Appendix)
Special study programs for defined population sectors

From time to time, special population groups such as employees in hi-tech industries, defense system employees, bank employees, ask to study toward a degree at the OUI as a group. All of these groups are integrated into regular study programs, as recommended by the Council for Higher Education.

Tutorials may be held in the factory/institute where the employees work, based on the principles of the OUI, which hold that tutorial groups can be opened at any location where there is a critical mass (from both academic and budgetary perspectives), for the benefit and convenience of those who wish to study.

3.1.6 **Changes and updates to the study programs**

Development of study programs

New programs of study at the OUI are developed by faculty members in consultation with scholars from other universities who evaluate the programs, placing emphasis on their quality. 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 program and every change (including the development of new courses) undergoes the following stages before it is approved (for the detailed procedure, see Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 3, in Hebrew):

1. The program is submitted to experts in other universities for evaluation.
2. The Humanities 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. The program (if approved) is submitted to the Council for Higher Education.

In addition, there is an evaluation mechanism for courses that have not been updated for several years: every such course is submitted by the Academic Development Administration 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. Programs of study are continuously updated (changes in required and elective courses, and the addition of new courses). The department examines the programs, including a comparison with programs offered by other universities, and submits proposed changes to the Humanities subcommittee, which discusses and approves them.

Updating existing courses

Courses are continuously updated, in accordance with the developments in the field and changes in programs of study in Israel and abroad. For instance, teaching the course "Jerusalem to Jabneh" was discontinued and the course "From Exile to Independence" underwent revision and adaptation to new research in the field.

In order to comprehensively update an old course, a team of experts in the field is selected who examine the course and rewrite those parts in need of revision. The new units are sent to consultants within and outside the Open University.

Ongoing updating of courses is accomplished through the course booklets that are rewritten each semester. These booklets include the course assignments as well as sources and new articles to which the student needs to refer during the course. The booklets refer students to updated bibliographical items and to the course website. The site constitutes an additional channel of communication between the course coordinators and the students and serves to expand and update study materials. Teaching of outdated courses or courses that are not appropriate to a program is discontinued.

The annual study program

In contrast with traditional universities in which a course is offered only if there is a lecturer available to teach it, at the Open University, where the text is the teacher, the only limitation on course offerings is a minimal number of students (usually not less than 10) who register for the course.

Changes in the study programs over the past five years

New programs of study
The Council for Higher Education approved a program of study toward a dual- and single-disciplinary B.A. in History. The Council is considering a proposed bachelor's program in Middle Eastern studies, and a proposal for a bachelor's program in Land of Israel studies is in preparation.

Changes in the requirements for an undergraduate degree
Together with the approval of the program of study in history, the requirements for the degree also changed. This program requires specific required courses, submission of three seminar papers (instead of two) and specialization in one period.

Recent course development
History courses that were recently added to the course offering and those under development are listed below. The level of each course appears next to its name: (I) – Intermediate; (A) – Advanced

New courses
The Beginnings of Europe: Western Europe in the Early Middle Ages (I)
The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages: Ideology and Politics (I)
Rome: Imperialism and Empire (I)
The Modern Middle East (I)
Jews Among Muslims: Introduction to the History of the Jews in Muslim Lands in the Modern Era (1750-1914) (I)
Early Christianity (A)
Ethiopia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism (A)
The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society (A)
Pilgrimage: Jews, Christians, Muslims (A)

Courses planned and being developed
The Land of Israel between Christianity and Islam, 324-1099 (I)
The Age of Chivalry: Western Europe in the 12th and 13th Centuries (I)
Early Modern Europe: 1350-1600 (I)
Messianism, Belief and Heresy: The Shabtai Tzvi Movement (I)
The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Empire (I)
Women in Jewish Society in Palestine: 1882-1948 (I)
Jewish Children, Christian Children: Childhood in the Middle Ages (A)

Courses in the Russian language
In order to enable students in the former Soviet Union to acquire an academic education in Jewish history, the Open University developed a program of studies in the Russian language. Each year thousands of students throughout the CIS and the Baltic countries take part in these studies. The courses are also offered to the Russian-speaking population in Israel. The courses were translated into Russian from the Hebrew and are identical to the corresponding courses in Hebrew.

History courses offered in Russian
From Exile to Independence: From the Babylonian Exile to the Fall of the Hasmonean
    Kingdom (I)
From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making' (I)

History of Zionism: 1881-1914 (I)
The Holocaust: Days of Reckoning (I)
Jerusalem Throughout the Ages (I)
Jews and Christians in Western Europe (I)
The Jews in the Roman Empire 70-220: From Rabban Johanan Ben Zakkai to Rabbi
  Judah the Patriarch (I)
Jews in an Era of Transition (I)
The Jews of Eastern Europe: History and Culture (I)
The Bar-Kokhba Revolt (A)
Ethiopia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism (A)

Courses currently being translated
The Archeology of Ancient Israel in the Biblical Period (I)
Ashkenazi Hasidism in the History of Jewish Thought (I)
American Jewry: 1820-1950 (A)

3.1.7   **The highest academic authority and study program evaluation**

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, professors from other universities in Israel representing a broad range of scientific fields, and it is chaired by the President of the OUI.

The Committee considers the recommendations of the Faculty Council and of the disciplinary subcommittees concerning academic issues (approval of 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.

The faculty members in the department, 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. The goal of the revisions is to match the requirements and the expectations to those accepted in History Departments at other universities in Israel and throughout the world. When a department faculty member initiates the development of a study program, it is sent to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval (for the detailed procedure, see Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 3, in Hebrew).

The Evaluation Department conducts routine teaching surveys in every course at the end of each semester, in which students answer questions pertaining to the courses they took during the semester (see details in section 3.3.2, below). Additional feedback surveys are conducted among alumni 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.

The Department also initiates feedback surveys that ask students to express their opinion about their studies, including course-specific issues. For example, several surveys were administered to students to check their satisfaction with the study materials; why they chose this field of study; how familiar they are with OUI organization, and more.

Assignments and final exams are sampled and the results of the sampling serve the academic faculty as a basis for changes and improving quality.

All the modern technological tools used for teaching are monitored and evaluated through feedback from both the students and the tutors.

Many students also provide feedback by phoning course coordinators during their consultation hours, email or post.

3.1.8   Examining course contents

The contents of the courses at the OUI are initially determined through the course approval process detailed above. They are routinely checked by the senior faculty, and courses are rewritten and updated as required, as described in section 3.1.6. Course booklets that include assignments and study guidance are updated every semester, and undergo a control process administered by the senior faculty member who is an expert in the field from within or outside the department.

3.1.9   Study programs leading to a degree of a professional character

This section is not relevant to the department.

3.1.10   Method of examinations

3.1.10.1   Method of examinations, their character and organization

Of the 66 courses in history, one is at the introductory level, 39 are at the intermediate level and 26 are advanced courses of which four are advanced-seminar courses. All of the courses entitle the student to 6 credits except two designated for Russian speakers which entitle the student to 4 credits. All of the courses require a final examination in Hebrew (except in certain cases in which students can take their exams in Arabic and in Russian, subject to the approval of the course coordinator). 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.

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

Undergraduate students are entitled to take each exam twice. The OUI usually holds three exam dates in every semester for every course: two exam sittings and one repeat exam date, about a month later. Students abroad can take the exams during one exam period each semester; a second sitting is available in the exam period of the semester following the semester in which the course was taken.

The final examination is at least 70% of the final grade; the remainder is determined by the average grades on the course assignments.

The majority of the examinations have two or three parts. The first two parts, made up of open questions, usually focus on knowledge and analytic skills, and in the third part,

students are asked to define concepts. The weight of the open questions in the first two parts is usually equal, but may be less in the second part.

In all parts of the examination, there is usually choice among a set of questions (1 of 2, 2 of 4, 3 of 5, 4 of 7, etc.). Many exams include questions that present a primary source or part of one, and sometimes part of a research text; the student must answer all the questions in reference to the text.

In some courses, there is no choice on one part of the exam because of the scope or complexity of the central question.

"Choice" does not mean leaving out material. Usually all of the studied material is included on the exam. As a rule, the writers of the exams try to focus on the central topics studied, which may appear as a question or a concept. Because of alternate questions given in the different exam periods, not every examination includes all of the central topics as open questions. However, we try to make sure that the difficulty level of the examinations in each exam period is the same.

In most courses, students are not allowed to bring any material with them to exams, except in those courses that require the use of the Bible. Among others, this is due to the existence of a bank of questions in many courses (for which answers can be prepared in advance). A few examinations require the use of supplemental materials since the courses themselves are based on analysis of primary sources or due to the decision of the course coordinator. In addition, sections from primary sources or research texts that appear on the examinations serve as "open material" that help students to recall central topics studied.

In most courses, the students are permitted to take the exam questions with them at the end of the examination. Students can appeal the examination results by submitting a substantiated appeal to the Registrar's Office up to five weeks after receiving notification of the examination grade.

The matter of the "bank of questions" continues to challenge the course coordinators. Some send students a group of fixed or alternating questions from which the exam questions are selected about one month to two weeks before the date of the first examination. In some courses, as mentioned, the topics on the exam are provided to the students and tutors, only towards the end of the semester. During the time left before the exam, students can discuss the questions with their tutors and the course coordinators. A few course coordinators post the set of questions on the course website parallel to mailing them to the students; others post them on the site and/or include them in the course assignment booklets at the beginning of the semester (the booklets are mailed to students together with the study materials before the semester begins). All course websites and the OUI library have sample exams, which are also occasionally distributed during the tutorials.

About 30% of the course coordinators object to giving the questions to students in advance and prefer to provide general versions of questions because of the importance of the intellectual creative discussion on the exam itself, or for fear that this may sway the results.

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 such 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 teaching staff 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 sent to the course coordinator for checking.

3.1.10.2   Evaluation of the various examination methods

The examination method based on open questions best reflects the academic level of history students and is actually the only possible method in this field.

3.1.10.3   Grading

Course 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.

3.1.10.4   Average grades of graduates

The table below presents the average grades of the graduates of different history programs,[*] in each of the last three years (2003-2005):

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[*]   As noted, a "history student" is defined as a student in whose program at least half of the courses, not including basic courses, were in history, including at least one advanced course. Mean grades are rounded off.

Discipline	Focus	2003		2004		2005	
		No.	**Mean**	**No.**	**Mean**	**No.**	**Mean**
Humanities	None	21	83	26	83	21	84
	Judaic Studies	-	-	2	91	-	-
	History of the Jewish People	8	83	15	86	12	83
	Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel	1	80	-	-	1	83
Humanities and Social Sciences	None	59	80	55	79	33	80
	History of the Jewish People	8	82	8	85	9	84
	Peoples, Religions and Cultures in the Land of Israel	-	-	-	-	1	88
	The Middle East: Muslims, Jews and Christians	4	79	2	80	5	79
Social Sciences and Humanities	None	19	79	11	81	28	79
	Total / mean per year	120	80	119	82	110	81

The average grades of the students who have successfully completed their studies, in our opinion, accurately reflect the academic level of the students taking history courses. Moreover, since the combination of open admissions and high academic standards results in a relatively high dropout rate in the first courses taken, those who graduate apparently have the required skills and intellectual abilities, and we would therefore expect them to complete their studies with a high overall grade average.

3.1.11 **Papers, projects, theses, dissertations**

3.1.11.1 **Number of papers and projects required, their contents and scope**

Assignments in intermediate courses: The assignments that students must submit throughout the semester for each course are included in the assignment booklet sent to the students' home at the beginning of the semester, together with the other study materials. Students are usually required to submit at least three of the five or six assignments in each course on pre-determined dates by mail or through the Internet (though they can prepare all of them). The importance of assignments in history courses, as explained above, is that they emphasize understanding and absorbing the study material, and conferring scholastic and research tools in history, such as examining primary sources, analyzing and critically reading scientific articles and comparing and assessing theories.

Assignments in advanced courses: In advanced courses, the students must submit three assignments of which one is an expanded research paper (*referat*). It must be written according to guidelines for writing academic essays. In some courses, students are also required to prepare bibliographic tasks, which are designed to impart proficiency in the use of university libraries, the ability to cope with references and abbreviations in footnotes, acquaintance with the major journals in the field, etc. Both the *referat* and the bibliography tasks are designed to prepare students for writing seminar papers.

Undergraduate seminar papers: The most significant written assignment in history studies is the seminar paper. Students write three seminar papers in the history program and two in the other programs. With the completion of all of their requirements in an

advanced course, students receive notification of their grades and of the possibility to register for a seminar paper. They are entitled to register up to six months after the course ends. After registering for the seminar paper, they are referred by the course coordinator to a supervisor who guides the student in writing the seminar paper and grades it. The supervisors are faculty members at the OUI or at other universities and all hold doctorates.

The department offers four advanced seminar courses in which seminar papers are an integral part of the course. In the other advanced courses, students may, but are not obliged to, write seminar papers.

The paper is based on an analysis of sources and articles. Topics of papers are diverse. The scope and the level of seminar papers depend on the student and to a certain degree on the supervisor. The scope of papers averages about 30 pages.

3.1.11.2 Criteria for assigning supervisors

Supervision of seminar papers

Seminar paper supervisors are individuals with doctorates in history and they guide the students on subjects in their field of expertise. Some of the supervisors are members of the department faculty and others are faculty members of other universities. Supervisors may not advise more than 15 students in a given semester.

The supervisor meets with the student at least twice: the first meeting is dedicated to choosing a topic and the student receives an initial bibliography and the second meeting is a summary meeting after the supervisor has read the paper. Supervisors also have to approve the outline sent them before the paper is written. However, there are supervisors, especially among the department faculty, who meet with the student more often, read the first draft of the paper and carry on an intensive dialogue with the student during personal meetings, by phone or email.

The importance of guidance on writing the paper is that it exposes the student to researchers in the field and to up-to-date scientific material and enables the student to experience research-type writing.

Difficulties involved in seminar papers

Because of the nature of OUI courses, which are based on distance learning, students at the OUI usually acquire library skills only at a late stage of their studies.

As a result of the geographical dispersion of OUI students, not all students use the OUI library; many use the services of other university libraries. The OUI has an agreement by which students are referred to other university libraries and may borrow books (after depositing a security bond; this agreement does not include the libraries at Tel Aviv University).

The OUI library is small, and mainly answers the needs of course development; it is not always sufficient for students writing seminar papers. Nonetheless, the library offers students inter-library loan services, and faculty members of the OUI can place requests for book orders by the library as needed.

Many students have problems with reading ability in English, which is sometimes reflected in seminar papers. However, in all advanced courses at the OUI, students are required to read studies in English and must use English sources appropriate for the seminar paper.

3.1.11.3 Evaluation of papers and projects

Assignments are checked and graded by tutors of the groups at the various study centers. The department teaching faculty monitors the assignment checking process by means of sampling.

Seminar papers are assessed by the supervisors and the grade is determined according to criteria detailed on the seminar paper evaluation form which must be filled in by the supervisor after checking the paper (the form is attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 5, part 2).

The course coordinator examines the evaluated paper to assess the evaluation procedure and the grade and approves the evaluation form. The students receive direct feedback on their paper during the summary meeting that the supervisors hold with the students. During this meeting, supervisors go over their comments, explain the merits and the drawbacks of the paper and respond to students' questions and reactions. The seminar paper and the evaluation form are then submitted to the department head for final approval.

3.1.11.4 Grade average of graduate theses

This section is irrelevant to the history programs.

3.1.12 Congruence between published information and actual operation

Information provided to the public in the annual University catalog and on the website is fully congruent with the study programs. Updates are published twice a year – before the spring semester and before the summer semester. The updates contain all changes introduced after the catalog was published. All updates are also published on the department website. Important updates are sent by e-mail, SMS or mail to all students for whom the change is relevant.

3.1.13 Summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the study program

The study program in history is a rich and diverse program that offers many excellent courses. The materials of the department and the University serve students and instructors in universities throughout Israel. The graduates of the program acquire diversified historical knowledge and the capacity for independent work and critical historical thinking.

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies emphasizes multiculturalism in the study of history, an approach that suits the outlook of the Open University in general. The courses were written out of a conviction that the lives of various population groups living alongside one another are intertwined, so that the history of minority groups cannot be understood without also studying the history of the majorities in whose midst they lived. Conversely, the history of dominant groups cannot be understood without considering the minorities that lived among them. Relating to both groups clarifies broad phenomena common to different social and cultural groups, and sharpens the points of similarity and the differences between them. It illuminates the uniqueness of each group against the joint historical background and the problems of identity and the definition of "others".

On the individual course level, in the future we plan to offer as many courses as possible that will deal with, and contrast, different religious, ethnic, cultural and gender groups (Muslims, Christians and Jews; Germans and Jews; rich and poor; women and

men). Writing courses of this kind is difficult, since it requires that writers have knowledge in different fields, which are traditionally taught separately. The advantage of the Open University is its ability to develop courses that rely on teamwork, in which each participant contributes his or her particular expertise, and to recruit writers with extensive and unconventional historical knowledge.

Studies at the Open University provide superior higher education in Hebrew to students living outside Israel's main population centers and to students abroad. The same courses on the same level are taught year after year in the economically-established cities and in peripheral areas (and even in prisons), without needing to rely on the presence of a lecturer. This is in line with the Open University's commitment to equal opportunity of access to academic education. Indeed, the continuous improvement of teaching aids through advanced technology enables virtual interaction between students and tutors and among the students themselves. At the same time, such accessibility, and the unchanging nature of the courses, distances students from the scholar who wrote the course and involves a different kind of interaction than is found in other universities between students and lecturers. Because the course reflects the state of knowledge at the time of its writing, students are not active partners in the activity of research as it takes place. Though, on the basis of new knowledge, the course coordinators revise study guides and course booklets (that include the assignments and accompanying materials), old courses still need to be rewritten and updated. The department is prepared to do this, but the process is complex and drawn-out.

Since the writing of new courses is a long, expensive undertaking, the department's development plans can only be realized relatively slowly, and courses in certain subject areas are still lacking. Nevertheless, in most of these areas, courses are under development. We are making a special effort to augment our offerings in the early modern period, twentieth-century history, and non-Western history.

Because courses at the Open University are broader than traditional courses, and include both lectures and exercises, they provide extensive organized historical material, while conferring skills such as reading primary sources, historiographic discourse and formulating historic questions. Though fewer courses are required for a degree at the OUI than at other universities in Israel, as far as the scope of the material, the contents and particularly the methodological principles, the history program at the OUI corresponds to those of the other universities in Israel.

In summary, many of the weaknesses of the history program are related to the basic weakness of distance learning in general. However, alongside the weaknesses, there are the advantages to this teaching method: the variety of writers, the rigorous supervision of both course development and teaching, the transparency of the subject matter transmitted, and the access afforded to the broader public, both here and abroad. Furthermore, the new technologies available for distance learning today help to relieve the isolation of the distant student and make possible rapid and efficient updating of course contents.

3.2 Teaching Staff

3.2.1 Profile of the teaching staff

Data concerning **senior faculty** are presented in Table 1a, in the Appendix to this section. 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 irrelevant. The "Part of full time job" column in Table 1a 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 department does not have a graduate program and the OUI does not offer a doctorate.

Data about the **academic teaching staff** (course coordinators) are presented in Table 1b, in the Appendix to this section. 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". At the OUI the distinction between the two is irrelevant. The "Part of full time job" column in Table 1b 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. Table 1c in the Appendix to this section presents a description of those tutors' details that we are able to provide:

1. In the table, the "employment status" and the "yearly teaching units" are reflected in the number of study groups the tutor taught.
2. We do not have data on tutors' additional employment.

Description

Senior faculty members, academic teaching staff and tutors are involved in the development and teaching of history courses at the OUI.

The **senior faculty** members in the history programs in the framework of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies include the following:
- Two full professors: Prof. Ora Limor and Prof. Haggai Erlich (development consultant).
- Two associate professors: Prof. Henry Wassermann and Prof. Elazar Weinryb (emeritus).
- Four senior lecturers: Dr. Avriel Bar-Levav, Dr. Ram Ben-Shalom, Dr. Daphna Ephrat, Dr. Aviva Halamish
- One lecturer: Dr. Mustafa Kabha

The department has 25 **academic teaching staff** members in the field of history, who are course coordinators (some coordinators are responsible for more than one course). Fifteen of these have doctorates, 5 are doctoral candidates, and the rest have master's degrees.

About half are employed full-time (or almost full-time), with the remainder holding part-time positions ranging between 25%-75% of a full-time position (see details in Table 1b). Course coordinators are employed under contracts that change every semester based on the number of students enrolled in the courses they coordinate. Most of the course coordinators have been employed for many years. Their specialties cover the full spectrum of history studies.

In 2004-2005, over 60 **tutors** were employed by the department (external teachers). About 20 have doctorates and all but one have master's degrees. The number of tutors changes per semester depending on the number of study groups. The tutors are employed under personal contracts per semester.

The department does not employ research assistants. In addition to the teaching staff, the department occasionally employs academic faculty from other universities as **consultants** for development of a specific course.

Evaluation

The senior faculty at the OUI is small and cannot cover all areas. This limited range does not affect course development as to this end we recruit the assistance of faculty members, experts in their field, from other universities. This was taken into consideration when the university was established, on the assumption that OUI courses would also be developed by faculty in other universities.

In contrast, the range of specializations of academic teaching staff who coordinate teaching in practice is relatively broad, allowing for flexibility and adaptability of the study programs. Nonetheless, it is not always easy to integrate this flexibility into the study program. The temporary employment contracts and lack of promotion opportunities of course coordinators do not motivate them to invest the effort required in further studies.

The present situation was recently examined and the OUI is planning a reform in which a promotion scale will be determined based on continuing education (primarily on pursuing a PhD) and research activities.

3.2.2   Specializations and skills

Specializations required of the teaching staff:

With respect to **senior faculty**, on one hand we prefer to recruit candidates with fields of expertise that are not represented in the department in order to increase the variety and offering of topics. On the other hand, there is a desire to reinforce existing fields of knowledge in order to create a critical mass of researchers in a specific field that will enable collaboration between faculty members. Above all, however, the critical consideration in selecting new senior faculty members is their academic excellence and their ability to participate in and contribute to developing study materials.

As for course coordinators and tutors – they must have in-depth knowledge on the subjects of the courses that they coordinate or tutor. Most of the courses that course coordinators and tutors teach relate to their field of research.

Skills required of the teaching staff:
Like their colleagues in other universities, **senior faculty** members are expected to invest their efforts, first and foremost, in scientific research. Their additional activities differ slightly from those of senior faculty members at other institutions. OUI faculty members are usually not involved in face-to-face teaching, but rather in course development; in other words, writing textbooks for OUI courses. Accordingly, prospective and employed faculty members are assessed based on their methodical abilities (especially writing skills) as well as on their research abilities. Senior faculty at the OUI also supervise students in the preparation of seminar papers.

OUI faculty members are also expected to be involved in university-wide management roles. Due to the small number of senior faculty members at the University, they carry a heavy managerial load and most faculty members have a management role at the OUI.

Course coordinators 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 all logistical issues concerning classrooms, equipment, study materials, etc.

Tutors are the OUI position holders who meet with students face-to-face in tutorial sessions. They must hold a master's degree. In fact, only one tutor has only a bachelor's degree. This is a veteran tutor with vast teaching experience. Many of the tutors are studying towards their doctorates.

Faculty members' research areas and the study programs: Senior faculty members develop courses, which reflect their fields of expertise and research. Courses required for the study program that are not covered by faculty members' fields of expertise are written by faculty members of other universities in coordination with the OUI faculty member responsible for the domain.

3.2.3 Credentials required of the head of the department

The head of the department, a senior faculty member at the OUI, is also responsible for the departmental study programs. The department head is responsible for the following:
1. Preparing the annual work plan and its approval by OUI management.
2. Development:
   - Monitors the entire process of new course development: contacts writers, sets timetables, submits the course proposal for departmental review and to the subcommittee for discussion, transmits written material to reviewers for feedback, submits the material to the Faculty Council and the Academic Committee for approval. To this end, Academic Development Administration staff assist the department head.

- Monitors course revision and initiates updating of outdated courses. The latter is similar to the new course development process.
- Initiates the development of study programs.

3. Teaching:
   - Assigns course coordinators to courses and determines their position scope (according to number of students).
   - Approves attributes of special assignments
   - Ensures that assignments and exams are returned to students within a reasonable time
   - Approves seminar paper grades
   - Responsible for academic symposia

4. Department personnel:
   - Recruits new faculty members
   - Performs annual evaluations and participates in salary discussions with the Human Resources department.

5. Participates in various forums:
   - Undergraduate Teaching Committee
   - Departmental Teaching Committee
   - Humanities Subcommittee
   - Faculty Council
   - Academic Committee
   - Meetings of department heads with the Vice President for Academic Affairs
   - Committee on Transfer Tracks to other Universities
   - Department meetings

6. On-going matters:
   - Rooms to staff members
   - Supervising the insertion of updates, additions and corrections to the printed Catalog
   - Computer equipment and software, laboratories
   - Assistance in recruiting tutors
   - Approving special conditions for students
   - Cooperation with other universities

7. Departmental appointments:
   - Staff members responsible for the various study programs
   - Staff member responsible for student inquiries
   - Staff member responsible for computer-mediated communication and department website
   - Tutor screening team
   - Staff member who coordinates student counseling

Accordingly, the department head serves as both the academic and the administrative head of the department. The skills required, in addition to being a member of the senior faculty, are managerial abilities, outstanding 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, the department, faculty members and students.

3.2.4 **Rules, criteria, and procedures for appointments**

Department head: The President appoints department heads. The appointment is (usually) for three years. Criteria: 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 him/her to fill the position. Past experience shows that the response is in most cases positive.

Senior faculty: The appointment procedure of senior faculty members and their advancement in rank is attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, Part 2 (in Hebrew).

Teaching staff (course coordinators): The department head appoints the teaching staff with the approval of the Dean of Academic Studies. Until recently, their employment conditions 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.

Tutors: Tutors are employed based on a short-term (semester) contract and their specific responsibilities (checking exercises, etc.). There is no advancement track for tutors.

Evaluation

The advancement procedure for senior faculty is similar to that at other universities. The research element is crucial in their promotion. The length of time that a faculty member holds a rank is longer than in other universities, among other things, due to the heavy administrative load carried by faculty members.

Research

The academic advancement of faculty members is determined first and foremost by the member's research activities. In the past few years OUI management has made efforts to encourage faculty members to dedicate more of their time to research, even though the activities involved in developing courses are demanding and require a great deal of time. First, the Research Authority was established to encourage research by all OUI faculty, by assisting in locating external sources of funding and by submitting applications to the sources. In addition, the Research Authority supports faculty research through grants, scholarships and enrichment courses from the internal research fund.

There is also a financial reward system for research activity. Through this system – rewards for excellence – points can be accumulated (criteria) for activities performed in development, teaching, management and mainly research, whose weight in the system has grown in the past two years. At the end of each year, the points are translated into financial bonuses in addition to the faculty member's regular salary.

Research activities included in the criteria for the excellence reward are:
- Publication of a manuscript in a refereed journal
- Presentation of research results (lecture, poster, panel) at a refereed conference

- Publication of an academic book or a chapter in an academic book
- Editing an academic book
- Editing a professional journal
- Active membership on the organizing committee of a professional conference
- Reviewing a scientific manuscript or book
- Assessing a thesis written towards the fulfillment of a master's degree or a doctorate
- Reviewing a research proposal for a competitive fund
- Chairing a session at a professional conference
- Membership on the Editorial Board of a professional journal or publishing house

The research activities of the Department members in the field of history are detailed in section 3.5 below.

3.2.5   Thesis and dissertation advisers

Senior faculty members serve as seminar paper supervisors. Theses and dissertations are not relevant to the OUI.

3.2.6   Recruiting and absorbing teaching staff

Senior faculty: The appointment procedure of senior faculty members and their advancement in rank mentioned in section 3.2.4 is attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 2 (in Hebrew).

At present, we are crystallizing a plan for future recruitment and absorption of senior faculty members in History.

Academic teaching staff: 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. The scope of their position is based on the number of courses they coordinate and the number of students in each course. The process is problematic as it creates situations in which junior faculty are recruited in small and temporary part-time positions. The process does not allow for long-term personnel planning. The process can be improved by recruiting junior faculty in a specific area for a full-time position, rather than a specific course.

We are planning to expand the scope of the course coordinators' positions by producing new courses to be coordinated by course coordinators already employed by the department, on condition that their field of expertise corresponds to the new course.

3.2.7   Summary – Strengths and weaknesses of the setup of the teaching staff

In general, the faculty believes in the university as a unique institution with a social mission, which is the main motivating factor underlying their work. OUI coordinators and tutors are very good and experienced teachers who view teaching as a mission. Course coordinators are also excellent managers who know how to successfully manage a course, even one with many tutors, study groups and students. Senior faculty members also have very good management abilities.

The main weakness is that the small number of senior faculty members hinders ongoing work and research.

3.3 Teaching and Learning

3.3.1 Teaching and learning methods

Description

The University's teaching and study conception combines distance teaching with components of face-to-face teaching (blended learning). The emphasis is on active self-study (the constructivist approach). This method is applied in all OUI courses, including the history courses. The elements of this method include:

Study material: The course book is the main source of knowledge for independent learning and for preparing the assignments. These are textbooks written and produced expressly for OUI students: they are usually divided into study units, each unit dealing in a defined topic and designed to be studied within a set period. They represent the major up-to-date approaches in the field, accompanied by sections of articles, sources and documents. In several courses, the written units have been replaced by units on CDs. The study material is explained with the utmost clarity and combined with guiding and thought-provoking questions and, in many cases, with answers to questions for self-assessment.

Advanced history courses are usually made up of the course book, a reader that includes articles and primary and secondary sources, and a study guide. The study guide clarifies difficult points in the text and the reader, and helps students to integrate the various materials.

In the initial stages of study, until they write a seminar paper, students do not need to use the library and are not asked to locate sources and studies beyond those included in the study material distributed to them.

Group learning: In addition to independent study, the Open University believes that guided learning in groups is important and can improve the effectiveness and add to enjoyment in studies. Therefore, a group tutorial component is integrated into the learning process; however, this component is not the core of the course and in most cases is not mandatory. **Tutorial sessions** are held at Open University study centers throughout the country (see section 3.6) and provide students with the opportunity to discuss different problems in the material with the tutor and with their peers. In some courses, a number of interactive group sessions are held through a synchronized interactive distance learning system or via video conference. The tutor and students are in different locations (in a classroom, an office or at home) and despite the distance, various kinds of communication technologies make it possible to conduct a group lesson. The aim of tutorials is to guide, support and enrich the study process. This is done through guidance in preparing the assignments, review, clarification, exercises and preparing for exams. The tutorials are held every two to three weeks (regular tutorials) or once a week (intensive tutorials).

The course website: 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. The site helps students learn the material by providing supplementary information, guiding questions and explanations of terms as well as links to databases that can shed light on study material in wider contexts and new research not included in the material. The site also enables virtual group study. Through the site, the students can "chat" with the course coordinator, take part in discussion forums among students and enrich their study experience despite their distance and geographic isolation. The sites can be accessed from any computer in Israel and throughout the world at any time of day.

Telephone tutorials: All course coordinators and tutors have weekly telephone tutorial hours during which students can call them to discuss academic and administrative issues.

Field trips: In several history courses, students can participate in one or more field trips. The goal of these trips is to reinforce, demonstrate and complement the knowledge gained through other means.

Symposia: The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies holds symposia on different subjects throughout the year. The symposia are designed to enrich the students' knowledge in the field and to enable them to hear and meet researchers whose approaches they read about. Participation in the symposia is for the most part voluntary.

Assignments: It is important to emphasize the value of assignments as an integral part of teaching and learning. The assignments are exercises or papers whose goal is to help students assimilate the study material. Students are required to submit the assignments during the semester on pre-determined dates by mail or through the Internet. Most of the assignments are based on open questions, which serve to review and drill the material studied. Some of the assignments require that the student write a composition based on primary and secondary sources – in addition to those included in the materials. The purpose of these tasks is to prepare the student for writing seminar papers (see section 3.1.11.1 above). In addition to a grade, students receive written feedback on their assignments from the tutor.

Seminars: Students in the department are required to submit seminar papers in the framework of advanced courses that they take. Seminar courses include reading material, writing a paper that has an element of independent and original work, submitting the written paper and presenting it orally to the group. The Academic Counseling and Study Guidance System offers students a workshop on writing seminar papers, which includes deciding on a topic and formulating research questions, collecting, classifying and synthesizing information, preparing an outline, and writing the paper. In addition, there is courseware available to the students for home guidance. Participation in bibliographic training in the library is mandatory and, beginning in Fall 2006, is a pre-requisite for enrolling in advanced courses.

Examinations: Every course has a final examination. Examinations are held at OUI study 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.

Number of Students: The number of students in history courses ranges from a minimum of 10 to 350 students. In tutorial groups, the number of students does not usually exceed 40.

Evaluation
The OUI distance teaching method is congruent with the OUI's goals (section 2.2.1). It enables all those unable to study in a regular university or college framework to earn an academic degree during their free time and at their own pace. The method provides opportunities for those who work, people serving in the military, Hebrew-speakers who live or work abroad, people taking care of children, people restricted for health reasons or even those in prison, and allows individuals who have not completed formal studies and have no diploma to realize their academic potential. In addition, the method allows reciprocal relations between the tutor and the student and provides the student with support from the course teaching team. This method enables the University to reach students in the geographic and social periphery and sectors such as minorities, new immigrants (from Russia and Ethiopia) and the ultra-orthodox.

The method of study also suits the goals of the department: self-study trains students to pursue their studies independently as the field demands, and the textbooks and assignments provide graduates with academic knowledge that will enable them to pursue advanced degrees. The nature of studies at the OUI demands a large degree of self-discipline, so students who succeed and receive a degree are qualified to continue to higher degrees.

Despite the advantages of studies at the OUI, the method also has certain disadvantages:

- The lack of academic discourse between the students, except those who attend tutorial sessions, symposia and those who take part in discussion forums on the course sites. The OUI is attempting to arouse awareness to computer communication among students, course coordinators and tutors, and this should be promoted more intensively.
- The lack of connection between the student and the researcher (= the writer of the course, who is the 'lecturer' in OUI courses). We recommend that students have more opportunities to meet with researchers, especially when writing seminar papers.
- The students' minimal familiarity, at least at the initial stages of their studies, with academic libraries and their treasures. This disadvantage can be overcome, at least in part, through the use of more electronic databases.

3.3.2   The importance of quality in teaching and learning

Description

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

Course development

Courses are developed by senior faculty members from the OUI and other academic institutions, often in cooperation with academic teaching staff. Academic course development is monitored by external evaluators, who are leading experts in their field, and examined 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. The course development process is delineated in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 1 (in Hebrew).

Teaching

Teaching tasks are divided between tutors and course coordinators. Thus, there are separate systems for evaluating and improving teaching by tutors and course coordinators. The course coordinators are the academic teaching staff of the University and responsible for the planning and implementation of teaching in the course. They write the study guides, assignment booklets and exams; monitor the tutoring of the course, and manage the course website. Frequently, the course coordinators also actually tutor the courses they coordinate. When the course is studied at several study centers, coordinators recruit tutors who work under their guidance. A course coordinator at the Open University must have at least a master's degree.

While the language of instruction at the OUI is Hebrew; there are some study groups in which the language of instruction is Russian or Arabic. In these groups, students can submit assignments and write the final exam in the language of instruction, in six of the courses required for a degree at the OUI. Because study materials are not written in Arabic, students whose native tongue is Arabic may have difficulties. To cope with this, it has been proposed to translate some courses into Arabic (in the first stage, we will translate the assignment booklets of courses in which the language of instruction is Arabic). Courses in Russian already exist, since they are used for teaching in the former Soviet Union, so the problem is less relevant to the Russian-speaking population.

Evaluation of teaching
Evaluation of teaching activities and tutors: The course coordinator has four main tools to assess the quality of teaching: observing the tutorial sessions, sampling assignments checked by the tutor, student feedback through the teaching survey administered each semester and additional surveys, and student inquiries and complaints.

Course coordinators continuously monitor the quality of the tutors' work by conducting frequent visits to study centers throughout the country, observing lessons and talking with students. After conducting the observation, the course coordinator offers feedback to the tutor. Course coordinators also sample assignments checked by tutors and provide feedback on the quality of the assessment. By checking the assignments, the course coordinator can determine whether the feedback the tutor gave the students is clear and effective, and if the grades fit the requirements and the purpose of the assignment.

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.

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 through questionnaires administered to students at one of the tutorial sessions towards the end of the semester; beginning with the Fall 2005 semester, an electronic survey was administered (the questionnaire can be found in Chapter 5, Appendix 5, part 1).

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 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. However, in the event that the number of registrations to a specific course or study group does not justify the opening of a group, the tutors' employment is discontinued even if their work was outstanding. In certain cases, these tutors can be employed in the following semesters, or in other courses, however the temporary nature of their work, that also does not reward tutors for performance or seniority, does not encourage them to continue their employment at the OUI.

The data of the most recent "teaching survey" administered in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies shows that the satisfaction with tutors in particular and the tutorial sessions in general is high (above 80%). The data reveals that most of the students (about 70%) said that the assignments are clearly written, help to study the material and present diverse tasks. However, close to half the students (about 40%) find the assignments difficult. In our opinion, examination of the data shows that the assignments are challenging and their difficulty is not an obstacle, but rather the opposite. The difficulty constitutes part of the study process.

The survey also shows that students are less satisfied with the course sites (50%). The students mainly look to the sites for help in preparing assignments and thus we can conclude that the sites do not answer this need. However, all the sites include guiding questions for reading the texts, instructions on how to write the assignments, and on some sites, there is general feedback. Therefore, the students' criticism may stem from their expectation to find answers to the assignments. Perhaps a more detailed survey should be administered to the students in reference to their expectations of the sites. Alternately, students could be given an explanation that presents the goals and limitations of the course sites. Since the greatest contribution of the site is to those students who do not attend the tutorial sessions, we recommend that a separate survey be administered to these students.

The faculty of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies view student feedback as very important. Thus, the Evaluation Department conducted two surveys for the department in the spring semesters of 1999 and 2005 among history students, to uncover those issues with which the students were not satisfied, and to examine the areas in which departmental activities could be expanded by increasing the number of students registering for courses. The survey was administered by mail and about one-fourth of the students responded. The findings of both surveys showed that most of the students took history courses because of their interest in the field and most were studying toward a degree. On both surveys, most of the respondents were very satisfied with the courses they took and most of those who had submitted requests to the course coordinators during the year prior to the survey were very satisfied with the handling of their requests. However, most of the students' responses revealed that they were not aware of the existence of the role of the Department's staff member responsible for student inquiries; thus, a proposal was raised to inform students of the option to send requests and inquiries to this staff member together with a list of the issues that the coordinator handles. Most of the respondents of the two questionnaires (about 90%) noted that they would recommend to their friends to take courses in the department. Furthermore, the respondents offered suggestions such as offering studies towards a master's degree in history at the OUI, adding courses in different fields, opening study groups in the periphery, revising courses, improving the level of tutoring and more.

3.3.3 **Professional and academic updating of faculty**

Training the teaching staff

The unique OUI study method requires a system for training all personnel involved in teaching, despite the fact that in most cases they have prior teaching experience from other frameworks. The Training Department in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies is responsible for training the teaching staff and provides training activities for course coordinators and tutors.

Tutor training: New tutors at the OUI are required to participate in a three-day training program, offered twice a year, to socialize them in their position as we would like them to carry it out in the framework of the OUI. The program takes into consideration tutors' prior experience that some tutors bring with them, but emphasizes the characteristics of the OUI. **Part 1** – 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 addressing the first tutorial session – acquaintance, clarifying goals, etc. **Part 2** – 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. **Part 3** – 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.

Training and activities for veteran tutors: A wide variety of workshops is also offered to veteran 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.

Course and departmental symposia and meetings for tutors: Symposia and training in the area of the discipline and special tutoring skills for the field of study are held on the department and course levels. In addition, once a year a departmental conference is held to which all of the tutors of the courses in the Department are invited. The conference deals with academic enrichment on a selected subject, and well-known researchers are invited to speak.

Evaluation of course coordinators

The course coordinators are the academic staff responsible for all aspects of teaching at the OUI. The OUI conducts periodic evaluations of course coordinators to examine various components of their performance. The evaluation is based on an examination of the assignments and exams the coordinator has written, and is performed by a senior faculty member from the Open University or an external expert in the relevant field. Course coordinators who do not meet the requirements are replaced. However, as mentioned, the employment of course coordinators is determined by the number of students enrolled in their courses and the scope of their position changes from one semester to the next. Furthermore, currently there is no promotion scale for the course coordinators, most of whom have a master's degree, are studying towards their doctorate, or have a doctorate. The position of course coordinator is not therefore stable and to date there was no procedure for rewarding the coordinator for excellence. This

affected the ability of the University to build on the potential that this sector represents. Open University management is in the midst of changing this situation (section 3.2.1).

Course coordinator training: Every course coordinator hired by the OUI is required to participate in a four-day training workshop. In the workshop they learn to plan a good exam or assignment, to adapt the 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. 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 (9 sessions), offered once a year. This program is designed to help course coordinators to improve the quality of teaching in their courses through correct management of the team of tutors both from the academic and administrative perspectives. In addition, one-day training programs based on needs are also offered.

Enrichment in the framework of the department
The training programs described above are offered in the framework of the entire University. Within the department, monthly meetings dedicated to lectures by the faculty members on their field of expertise are held. At times guest speakers are invited to these meetings. In addition, the department holds symposia once a year for course coordinators and tutors on various fields of interest that provide interdisciplinary viewpoints related to the topics of their courses. The lecturers who take part are researchers from various universities or authors or artists. There are also forums in the field of history – the Middle East and Islam Forum and the Middle Ages Forum – that convene once a month for discussions on research conducted by members of the department and guests.

The course coordinators keep professionally up to date by membership in professional associations, subscriptions to professional journals and participation in professional conferences. The Department encourages and economically supports all of these.

The electronic databases to which the OUI library subscribes provide all faculty members with direct and convenient access to updated academic publications. In addition, faculty members visit websites of similar courses in Israel and throughout the world, and of leading researchers in their fields.

3.3.4   Use of information technology in teaching and learning
The Open University uses information technology to support its teaching and learning that includes three components:
1. An Internet learning environment that includes the Open University website, the department website, and individual course websites.
2. An online assignment system
3. *Sheilta* - Interactive services to students (see section 3.4.4 below).

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.

Administrative channel
All administrative details pertaining to the course are found in 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 staff) 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 staff. 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 staff and with their fellow students, to more easily keep up with the appropriate study rate 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.

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.

Accompanying the study process: Through the course site, the course coordinator can guide students in reading articles and study materials, and provide guidance in preparing assignments, analyzing sources and preparing for exams.

Enrichment: The course coordinator can refer the students to recommended reference sites, to sites of major research institutes in the field, to publications regarding new books and book reviews, and recommend reading additional articles for enrichment, in addition to the study material in the course. Moreover, links to video clips of relevant symposia can be found on several course sites. A project of filming interviews with major historians, in cooperation with the journal *Zmanim*, is currently underway.

Training: The sites include study aids as well as study skills and methodological training relevant to history such as analyzing sources and a set of links to reference sites in the discipline.

The department website (http://www.openu.ac.il/academic/History)
The website of the department contains all of the administrative and academic information regarding the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies:
- **Contact details**: Complete details on the course coordinators, including telephone numbers and reception hours, email addresses, links to personal websites and contact details of the administrative staff.

- **Academic counseling**: The students can find details on academic advisors and how to contact them.
- **Academic information**: The site contains complete information on the different study programs of the department, the requirements of each program and all additional information found in the University Catalog, including links to course descriptions.
- **Events**: Various notices regarding the department, information on conferences, symposia, seminars, workshops, changes expected in the programs of study, changes in various courses, etc. are posted in this section.

3.3.5   Student participation in tutorial sessions

Description

The OUI study method – distance learning and self-study – does not require students to participate in tutorial sessions except in special cases: seminar courses that devote tutorial sessions to guidance on writing seminar papers and courses that include field trips. The tutorial sessions do not resemble university lectures. The study material is in the course book; the tutorials are intended to clarify and discuss points with which the students have difficulty during self-study, and for enrichment.

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, between 5 and 8 sessions in all.
- **Intensive tutorials**: Usually about 14 or 15 tutorials a semester conducted almost weekly. Students who register through institutions or colleges are offered this tutorial format (there is an additional fee for intensive tutorials).
- **Telephone tutorials**: All course coordinators and tutors have weekly telephone tutorial hours during which students can call them to discuss academic and administrative issues.

3.3.6   Methods for measuring student achievements

Description

The aim of evaluating student achievements is to examine the knowledge they acquired during the course and their entitlement to academic credits. The OUI has open admissions in undergraduate courses of study and thus does not have information about students' prior scholastic achievements. The level of the courses is fixed and does not change from one semester to the next since the course material (books, assignments and exams) are written in advance and do not change according to the level of the students in one study group or another.

Student achievements at the OUI are evaluated through assignments and exams. During the semester, students are required to submit several written assignments. Assignments are checked, graded and corrected and returned to students. Assignment grades are weighted into the final grade of the course (up to 30% of the grade).

A **tutor assignment** is an assignment checked by the tutor and composed of open questions, enabling students to answer freely and demonstrate their writing, analysis and synthesis skills with respect to the topics studied. In addition to providing an opportunity for review, the assignments develop students' skills in various aspects relevant to the study of history: reading documents and primary source material, reading

scientific papers, distinguishing between fact and opinion, comparing sources. There are usually 5-6 assignments in a course, of which students must submit 3 or 4. The weight of the assignments is up to 30% of the course grade. Students may not take the final exam without submitting the minimum number of required assignments. The course coordinators update the assignments each semester so that they relate to new research in the field.

Exams: 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 teaching staff with a PhD. Exams are checked by the course coordinator and the tutors, based on criteria set by the former.

Calculating the final grade: The final grade in the course is calculated as a weighted average of the grades on the assignments and on the final exam. 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. The weight of the final exam in the final grade is at least 70%, to which is added the average grade on the assignments submitted.

Validity and reliability of measuring achievement
The validity and reliability of evaluation processes are also related to the design of evaluation tools (exams and assignments in this context) as well as the application of these tools (for example checking and assessing students' answers). To ensure the validity and reliability of the student evaluation processes, the Evaluation and Training departments use several methods:

- **Workshops** are provided by the Training Department to the teaching staff on writing exams and assignments and in checking and grading exams and assignments (see section 3.3.3).
- **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 assignment grades, the final exam grade and the final course grade.
  - Consolidated results of MC 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 that 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 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.

3.3.7 **Summary – Strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning**

The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies are similar to those in the OUI in general.

Since the OUI employs open admissions, it is difficult to compare the students' qualifications at the beginning and at the end of their studies. The large number of papers that OUI students write, and the tasks they need to deal with in the framework of the assignments, as well as the primary sources and the studies they have to read in the course materials, in the final analysis improve the students' learning skills.

Independent learning is more difficult for most students than group study through face-to-face lectures, and requires a great deal of self-discipline. Some students find it difficult to contend with technologies that may facilitate distance learning. Many students are not willing to sacrifice the group sessions, even if it means traveling long distances. However, the OUI cannot add more and more elements to the teaching method without forfeiting part of its traditional elements, if only for budgetary reasons. Therefore, a certain tension is created between the students' expectations and the ability of the OUI to fulfill these expectations.

The OUI has set as its goal to reach all its students and to allow them to participate in tutorial sessions, should they choose to do so, as close as possible to their place of residence. However, it is not always possible to open study groups everywhere because of the number of students who have registered. Though the OUI distinguishes between the periphery and the center and applies more flexible rules in the periphery, in more advanced courses, where the number of students is smaller, there is no alternative and tutorials are usually held in central study centers. The considerations for opening groups are mainly financial, but they are also academic, since it is difficult to hold fruitful discussions with very small groups of students. In these cases, technologies are designed to facilitate and aid, by allowing communication between the students and the faculty located at the center and also among the students themselves. But as noted, many students do not yet accept the technology as a replacement for the face-to-face sessions.

The OUI tries to overcome these difficulties by closely accompanying students from their initial interest in studies at the OUI and until they receive their degree. The OUI Academic Counseling and Study Guidance System accompanies students throughout their studies at the OUI through academic counseling, cultivating learning skills and personal tutoring. The presence of academic advisors at all OUI study centers, as well as telephone and e-mail counseling, help students to cope with these difficulties. In feedback discussions students tend to note the personal and warm attention the OUI gives them, the level of teaching, study material and teaching technologies. However,

most of the advisors at the study centers are from different disciplines and not part of the department staff. It is recommended that academic advisors specializing in history be added to the advisors in the study centers, in order to advise students on designing programs of study in history, or students in other programs who are interested in taking history courses.

Most important, the teaching approach suits the goals of the OUI (flexibility in learning), and the goals of the department (independent study and qualification for advanced studies). This approach expands the access to higher education to anyone interested, and enables students of high intellectual ability, who are occupied with making a living, raising a family or any kind of pursuit that prevents them from studying at other academic institutions, to continue their academic studies.

Proposed changes
In the context of program of study evaluated here, the main recommendation is to provide faculty members with the findings of surveys administered to students in the department, and to examine ways to respond to the proposals in the students' feedback in reference to the quality of teaching and to conditions of learning (the physical infrastructure).

Furthermore, as stated above, to create and cultivate the connection between students and course writers – either by way of visits of course writers at tutorial sessions or video-conferencing through the course website – and to examine additional ways to develop additional means of online teaching and learning in light of their great importance in distance learning.

3.4 **Students**

3.4.1 **Selection and admission procedures**

Undergraduate programs

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. Enrollment in the Open University is not dependent on a matriculation certificate or diploma or on a psychometric exam. Nonetheless, scholastic achievements at the Open University are the key to success and to attaining a degree. The Open University does not have an affirmative action policy.

Students in the program: Background data

Notes to the tables:
1. We define a "history student" as a student who was enrolled in at least one history course during an academic year and had taken at least four courses in history until and including that year.
2. The data are based on students' self-reports upon registration at the Open University.

1. **Age**

Year	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
to 18	1	0.1					3	0.4	5	0.5
19-20	3	0.3	1	0.1	1	0.1	4	0.5	5	0.5
21-25	142	14.5	121	14.0	110	14.1	93	11.4	105	11.4
26-35	392	39.9	337	39.1	324	41.4	338	41.5	379	41.3
36-45	180	18.3	180	20.9	152	19.4	161	19.8	188	20.5
46 +	258	26.3	222	25.7	195	24.9	214	26.3	237	25.8
Unknown	6	0.6	2	0.2	1	0.1	1	0.1		
Total	982	100.0	863	100.0	783	100.0	814	100.0	919	100.0

2. **Gender**

Year	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Total students (N)	982	863	783	814	919
Female	58.2%	59.0%	58.7%	58.6%	53.4%
Male	41.8%	41.0%	41.3%	41.4%	46.6%

3. **Matriculation certificate**

Year	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Total students (N)	982	863	783	814	919
Have certificate	67.1%	68.6%	67.6%	68.0%	68.0%
Have no certificate	27.6%	26.8%	27.4%	26.3%	26.8%
Unknown	5.3%	4.6%	5.0%	5.7%	5.2%

4. **Highest certificate earned before beginning OUI studies** (in percentages)

Year	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Total students (N)	982	863	783	814	919
None	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.5
High school diploma	20.4	19.1	22.0	24.0	22.6
Matriculation certificate	45.1	46.1	45.1	44.2	45.1
Technician's certificate	3.6	3.0	3.9	4.1	4.8
Teaching certificate	5.2	5.9	4.6	3.7	3.4
First degree	4.2	3.6	3.2	2.3	3.1
Second degree	0.5	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.5
PhD	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.5
Other certificate	9.8	10.7	8.9	8.6	8.5
Unknown	8.2	8.0	8.6	8.8	9.0

Background data show that about 40% of the students are between the ages of 26-35 and about one fourth are 46 and over (Table 1). The majority of students are women and about two thirds have a matriculation certificate (Tables 2, 3). The open admissions policy, which is not dependent on prior education, is evident in Table 4. However, this table shows that there are also students who began their history studies at the OUI after completing an academic degree at other institutions or at the OUI.

Evaluation of Achievements

At the OUI in general, and in history studies in particular, there are no unequivocal guidelines for defining a student's work as average, good or excellent. However, members of the teaching staff participate in workshops that provide them with the tools to more accurately evaluate the students' work (assignments, examinations, seminar papers; see section 3.3.3).

The general guidelines delineated here are not specific to the field of history. The distinctive requirements of the discipline are expressed through ways of explanation, analysis, and proof, which are characteristic of historical thinking and the study of history generally. These mainly relate to understanding what a question demands and focusing on the issues; providing an answer that reflects knowledge of the material, clear and coherent presentation and explanation, independent and integrative analysis, and raising questions that indicate that the student has internalized the material and deals in depth with the issues which emerge. Thus, a student's work is graded as 'excellent' when all these elements are executed on a high level. A 'good' paper is one in which the aspects of knowledge, understanding the question (such as distinguishing between "explain", "describe", "analyze", "compare"), and independent and clear writing – tasks that demonstrate a command and understanding of the material – are all very good, but not beyond this. An 'average' paper is one in which the aspects of knowledge and understanding are good but the student finds it difficult to answer the questions clearly or to integrate explanation, analysis and comparison.

Naturally, independent and integrative analysis that relies on sources not included in the study materials provided is required mainly for seminar papers. Deciding on a topic and formulating the research questions are the initial elements assessed as part of the evaluation of the paper.

The Student's Level

In the past, many older, more mature students studied at the Open University and brought with them various personal life experiences that affected their view of the materials. Today Open University students are younger. This has not affected the course materials. The uniqueness of the Open University is that the level of the courses remains stable, since they are written courses that are not dependent on the availability of individual lecturers.

In order to determine as accurately as possible whether the quality of students who enroll in history courses has improved, decreased or stayed stable over the past five years, we examined students' achievements in selected courses on different levels (introductory, intermediate and advanced). Our examination related to perseverance (remaining in the course until the final exam) and final grades (the weighted grade of assignments, the final examination and the seminar paper).

The results show that the level of student achievements has remained relatively stable. It is interesting to note that the percentage of students who take the final exam is significantly higher in advanced courses than in introductory courses. This reflects the role of introductory courses in helping students determine whether they are suited to academic studies. Between 30% and 40% drop out of the first course before the final exam, while a very high percentage of those who remain (90-100%) pass the exam with high grades. In contrast, in advanced seminar courses, over 90% of these experienced students take the exam, and between 95% and 100% pass. The table below shows these data.

Data on Achievements in Selected History Courses in 2000-2001 Compared to 2004-2005

Semester	Course	Level	No. of Students enrolled	% who took final exam	% who passed the course among those who took the exam	Mean final grade
Fall 2000	Classical Greece	introductory	52	65%	100%	84.4
Spring 2001	Classical Greece	introductory	46	65%	100%	84.1
Fall 2004	Classical Greece	introductory	85	72%	98%	81.2
Spring 2005	Classical Greece	introductory	68	59%	90%	80.9
Fall 2000	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	intermediate	162	84%	96%	82.0
Spring 2001	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	intermediate	72	78%	95%	82.0
Fall 2004	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	intermediate	319	89%	91%	82.2
Spring 2005	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	intermediate	114	77%	93%	86.5
Fall 2000	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	76	86%	99%	85.7
Spring 2001	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	79	94%	100%	86.6
Sum. 2001	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	136	91%	98%	82.4
Fall 2004	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	163	89%	98%	85.8
Spring 2005	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	92	80%	100%	88.6
Sum. 2005	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	intermediate	151	85%	100%	84.3

Semester	Course	Level	No. of Students enrolled	% who took final exam	% who passed the course among those who took the exam	Mean final grade
Fall 2000	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	93	78%	100%	83.5
Spring 2001	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	123	89%	97%	84.7
Sum. 2001	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	55	87%	100%	84.8
Fall 2004	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	59	86%	96%	83.2
Spring 2005	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	63	86%	100%	83.1
Sum. 2005	Jews in an Era of Transition	intermediate	106	87%	97%	84.4
Fall 2000	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	intermediate	114	72%	93%	81.5
Spring 2001	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	intermediate	141	77%	84%	77.0
Fall 2004	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	intermediate	77	78%	97%	84.8
Spring 2005	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	intermediate	66	67%	98%	86.0
Fall 2000	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	adv. seminar	33	94%	94%	82.4
Spring 2001	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	adv. seminar	22	100%	96%	82.9
Fall 2004	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	adv. seminar	25	88%	100%	86.0
Spring 2005	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	adv. seminar	19	74%	100%	85.0
Spring 2001	Youth, Education and Politics in the Middle East	adv. seminar	25	100%	100%	85.1
Spring 2005	Youth, Education and Politics in the Middle East	adv. seminar	87	95%	100%	82.2

3.4.2   **Procedures – Termination of studies, discipline, exams, appeals, tuition and financial assistance**

Termination of studies towards a degree

The University reserves the right to deny students the right to study toward a degree in a discipline or a field of study in which they have failed four courses. The OUI is also entitled to suspend a student's studies for one or more semesters (and even permanently) due to disciplinary offences (see below).

Disciplinary measures

Disciplinary measures are taken in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, which is published in the annual Admissions and Registration Guide, and on the University website (in Hebrew [http://www.openu.ac.il/General/ethics.html] and English [http://www-e.openu.ac. il/academic/23609.html]), and attached here in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 4, in Hebrew.

The Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Board handle complaints lodged against students who committed a disciplinary offence listed in Section 3 of the Student Code of Conduct.

The Disciplinary Committee is composed of three members – the Discipline Officer and two deputies. The President of the University appoint the members of the Disciplinary Committee for a period of two years and is entitled to appoint a replacement if one of the three cannot fill the position. A Discipline Officer is entitled to use his authority as he sees fit, or in consultation with the deputies.

The Disciplinary Committee is the first instance that deliberates the case of a student against whom a complaint was lodged. The Committee members will decide on the nature of the punishment within ten days after the hearing and will notify the student of

the decision in writing. The student is entitled to submit an appeal in writing specifying the grounds of the appeal with respect to the severity of the punishment, within 10 days after receiving the decision in writing.

Every appeal is transferred to a second instance – the Appeals Board. The members of the Appeals Board consider the student's grounds for appeal and examine whether the punishment imposed by the Disciplinary Committee is reasonable with respect to the offence, should be mitigated, or, in rare cases, increased.

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 President receives all the material related to the complaint, reviews the material and decides whether to pardon the student, to reduce the punishment or to leave the punishment as is. The President's decision is final and cannot be appealed. There is no time limitation for submitting a pardon request.

In addition to the members of the disciplinary authorities, there is also an OUI petitioner. The petitioner's role is to present the complaint and the findings to the Disciplinary Committee (and in the case of an appeal also to the Appeals Board).

Exam and exam appeal procedures
Students can take exams on the exam dates of the semester in which they were enrolled in the course as well as in the following semester (on the method of examinations, their character and organization, see section 3.1.10). The aim of the policy is to enable students to take exams at a time convenient to them. This does not reflect academic leniency as the procedure does not entitle students to sit for an exam three times, except in exceptional cases.

In cases in which students who cannot sit for an exam in the two semesters in which they are entitled to take the exam, the course coordinators will usually permit them to defer the exam by an additional semester.

Appealing a final examination grade: A substantiated appeal can be submitted to the Registrar's Office up to five weeks after notification of the examination grade is received. The individual checking the exam as part of the appeal process will not be the same person who initially checked the exam. This provides for mutual control and maintains objective criteria in the exam checking process.

After appealing an examination grade, the grade may change in both directions. The new grade may be higher or lower than the previous grade. The new grade is considered the final grade.

Tuition
Tuition at the Open University is determined according to the regulations of the Council for Higher Education, and tuition is paid for each course separately. The tuition for a complete degree is similar to the tuition paid at other Israeli universities.

Tuition details are published in the annual Registration Guide and on the University website.

Financial assistance
Students in need of tuition assistance who completed at least one OUI course successfully and are registered in a course in a subsequent semester are entitled to apply

for a scholarship. All students who meet this criterion are entitled to apply at least once a year. Students enrolled in six or more courses a year may apply twice a year.

After examining all the applications, tuition scholarships are allocated based on the student's socio-economic score compared to all other applications and the scholarship donations received in the specific year. The scholarships are granted as tuition coupons for upcoming semesters. The University also grants special assistance scholarships to students who are not able to pay even for their first course at the OUI.

For additional information on scholarships and grants for OUI students, see the Admissions and Registration Guide 2006. For information on loans to students pursuing an undergraduate degree, see the Admissions and Registration Guide 2006.

3.4.3   Code of Ethics

The OUI Ethics Committee
The OUI appointed an Ethics Committee to formulate a code of ethics. The 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 (such that students will not be inundated by questionnaires).

B. Examining these questionnaires to ensure that they meet ethical criteria.

C. In the case of empirical studies conducted by OUI faculty and students, examining the research plan or format, examining and approving questionnaires or unique experiment processes. The Committee is authorized to request changes even if the research population is from outside the OUI.

D. Approving in advance all laboratory experiments that involve animals or that reveal students' personal information (for example, through blood samples).

E. Examining all the University's registration questionnaires to ensure that they do not request irrelevant or unnecessary information.

Preventing sexual harassment
The OUI appointed individuals responsible for handling sexual harassment complaints. They act by virtue of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Law, legislated in September 1998. The guidelines are attached (in Hebrew) in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, part 5.

3.4.4   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. Students also have access to the *Sheilta* system through which they can receive electronically all information about the courses in which they are enrolled. OUI academic advisors and representatives of the department 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.

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. *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.

3.4.5   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". 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 are not capable of university studies. 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, high school students, 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 attached booklet, "Transfer Tracks in History".) Students choosing to do so are considered OUI "drop-outs" although they continued their studies at another university.

We need to relate to dropout data very cautiously because, as explained above, the figures do not necessary represent dropping out because of failure. Students are considered drop-outs if they studied at the OUI (and showed that they were capable of academic studies) but did not enroll in any courses for three consecutive semesters. Based on this definition, the overall dropout rate at the OUI was 9% in 2000-2001, 8% in 2001-2002, 10% in 2002-2003, and 11% in 2003-2004.

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 dropped out (the questionnaire is attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 5, part 3). The survey focuses on the students' personal reasons for quitting. The questionnaire is mailed prior to the registration period for the next 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. Conducting repetitive surveys is justified, as 13% of the students contacted return to their studies.

Dropping out of history programs: A "drop-out" from a history program is defined as a student who successfully completed at least four history courses (and possibly has taken courses in other fields), and who has not registered in the discipline for three consecutive semesters. The dropout rate of history students who were registered in the 2003-2004 academic year is presented in the following table.

	N	%
History students registered in 2003-2004	**814**	**100**
Graduated since 2003-2004	264	32
Continued in history for at least 3 semesters	371	46
Continued in other disciplines for at least 3 semesters	74	9
Dropped out and re-enrolled in history courses	6	1
Dropped out and re-enrolled other disciplines	10	1
Dropouts	**89**	**11**

3.4.6   Students with special needs

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. Students confined to their homes are entitled to a personal tutor that comes to their home. Visually impaired students do not pay tuition. The OUI provides all students with access to studies according to their specific needs: audio tapes for the visually impaired, audio recordings of exams, a larger exam form, an exam in a separate room with a designated monitor, rewriting of an exam, reading the exam aloud, etc.

Students with special needs, with physical disabilities or with diagnosed learning disabilities, also receive counseling during their studies, additional exercises on the study material on an individual or group basis, coordination of special conditions for examinations and help in lessening test anxiety.

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 various different exam conditions, and the major ones are additional time, learning aids, assistance in the classroom (from the monitor or someone else appointed for this task), special exam locations, exams in a foreign language, writing the exam on a computer, receiving a special exam.

3.4.7   Access to facilities and equipment on the main campus

This section is irrelevant at the OUI. OUI teaching activities are conducted at the study centers throughout the country. Students are not required, in most cases, to come to the main campus in Raanana. Facilities and equipment are accessible for those coming to the campus to take care of bureaucratic and/or academic matters (meet with a faculty member, use the library or a laboratory, buy books in the bookstore, etc.), or for tutorial sessions (for graduate students). At this stage public transportation to the campus still poses difficulties. There are very few bus lines that have stops near the campus.

3.4.8   Student participation in research conducted by faculty

This section is irrelevant for the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies.

3.4.9   Counseling systems

3.4.9.1   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. In our opinion, there is not enough emphasis among the different (general) counseling staff on Humanities in general and on studies in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies in particular. As a result, studies in Humanities are affected and students at the OUI do not show very much interest in them and there is not much demand for them. This is very distressing.

The counseling system in the Arab sector

After establishing the counseling system at the Open University in 1997, special attention was given to the Arabic-speaking population in order to implement the Open University's clear declaration regarding this population, that included giving these students the opportunity to study, to hand in assignments and take examinations in Arabic, in six of the courses required for a degree at the OUI (see section 3.3.2). In this framework, the Academic Counseling system offers the Arabic-speaking population the option to receive counseling services from Arabic-speaking advisors in the hope that this will encourage more students to study at the OUI and make the program clearer to this population. This is offered students at study centers in Wadi Ara – Givat Haviva, Nazareth, Kaukhab, Tira, Tamra and Yarkha.

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. The Unit also offers guidance in writing seminar papers.

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 Academic Counseling and Study Guidance center also offers information get-togethers for prospective students.

Field-specific counseling in History

Academic counseling for the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies is given by advisors in the department. The University Catalog and the OUI websites

include a list of names of departmental advisors according to their fields of expertise. There is no one in the department responsible for coordinating the counseling services and there is no counseling for organized groups, though counseling is given by senior faculty members to students abroad and to high school students. Students interested in counseling can call any of the advisors on the dates and at the times listed in the Catalog and on the department website.

Academic counseling includes:

- Guidance in choosing a study track
- Counseling for receipt of accreditation for 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 studies
- Designing a study program to be submitted to the Study Program Approval Committee

It should be emphasized that the advisors can only counsel students on accreditation and designing a study program, but they are not authorized to approve accreditation or the program. Authority to do so rests with the Committee for the Accreditation of Prior Studies and the Study Program Approval Committee.

Accreditation of prior 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 a member of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic 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 at the University. The Accreditation Committee will consider the request and inform the student of its decision.

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 will inform the student which courses are not 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.

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

All students pursuing a degree should consult with the academic advisors at an early stage of their studies, and certainly before submitting a proposal. Advance counseling may prevent difficulties which might otherwise be encountered by students at the end of their studies.

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, will be 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.

3.4.9.2 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

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 is sufficient to offer students as easy a transition as possible from studies to work.

3.4.10 Interaction between teaching staff and students

In addition to ongoing contact between students and the teaching staff through the course websites, by telephone and email, as well as in group and individual tutorials, contact is maintained when needed through meetings on the Raanana campus or at the study centers throughout the country.

This open channel of communication is used for both technical information and for content, such as clarification of the course topics, referrals to background and enrichment material, integrating study materials and preparation for writing assignments and exams. Students also tend to contact the tutors to ask for guidance in planning their study program. Due to their frequency and openness, these reciprocal relations serve as an alternative to tutorial sessions for those students who are unable to attend.

3.4.11 Student inquiries and complaints

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies, like all OUI academic departments, appointed an individual responsible for handling student inquiries and complaints, excluding complaints about tutors and/or course coordinators. Such complaints are handled directly by the head of the Department. The degree of awareness of the students of the option to submit inquiries and their satisfaction with their handling are shown in the surveys conducted by the Department (see section 3.3.2)

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 date it is due
- Requests to enroll in a course for the third time
- Requests to register for writing a seminar paper late
- Requests to submit a seminar paper after the date it is due

As stated, the head of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies deals with the following complaints:
- Complaints about tutoring
- Complaints about the exam
- Requests to allow a foreign student to complete the writing of a seminar paper without meeting with an advisor in Israel

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.

3.4.12 **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.

The list of honors students is published once a year (at the beginning of January).

3.4.13 **Maintaining contact with graduates and employers**

Maintaining contact with OUI graduates
The OUI is interested in maintaining contact with its graduates and to learn from their experience about the contribution of the academic degree to their personal, professional and academic lives. For this purpose, the Evaluation Department administers questionnaires to OUI graduates that deal with the contribution of the degree to these domains and the general assessment of aspects of teaching. The questionnaire is attached in Chapter 5, Appendix 5, part 4. Because the findings of the most recent questionnaire, which was sent to the 2001-2005 graduates of the Department of History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies, have not yet been received we are unable to at this stage to summarize the viewpoints of the graduates and to provide data regarding continuing studies or absorption into the labor market.

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 3.4.9.2 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. However, the OUI does not have accurate data on actual placements since most of these are completed directly between the students and the employers.

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.

3.4.14 **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.

3.5 Research and Other Activity

Description

As customary and expected, senior faculty members and some of the teaching staff are involved in research activities. Their studies are published in professional journals and at leading international conferences. The faculty is supported through grants awarded by the OUI Research Authority as well as grants from external foundations. Research activities conducted in the last five years are listed in the Appendix to this section.

Some of the researchers cooperate with their colleagues from other institutions in Israel and abroad. Numerous senior faculty members (as detailed in the Appendix) are members of professional academic committees, organizing committees of conferences and editorial boards of professional journals. The senior faculty members and some of the course coordinators serve as reviewers of books and manuscripts submitted to international conferences or professional journals. They also serve as referees of their colleagues' research proposals.

Department faculty members hold seats on the board of the Israel Historical Society and on the board of the World Union of Jewish Studies. They serve as editors of journals such as *Cathedra*, *Pe'amim*, *Historia*, *Zmanim*. For the past two years, *Zmanim* has been published by OUI's Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies in conjunction with the Tel Aviv School of History and the Israel Historical Society.

The Department initiates academic conferences and workshops for the research community. This is the third year that the OUI has held the research workshop entitled "Text and Context: The Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era," with the participation of historians and researchers of neighboring professions, who participate in an open dialogue on the texts. The workshop aims to change the traditional form of ex-cathdra lecture plus discussion and to carry on productive interdisciplinary discourse at the initial stages of research.

Evaluation

The academic level of research conducted at the OUI is high, as is customary at other academic institutions. The faculty enjoys full academic freedom with respect to research, however due to the limited number of faculty members (eight senior faculty members in the field of history), most of their time is devoted to management and course development. We hope that more senior faculty members will be recruited in the field of history so that research activity will be enriched and courses will be developed for the different periods needing further coverage. Thus, research cooperation among faculty members will also grow.

The academic teaching staff is employed in positions whose scope is determined by the number of students in the courses they coordinate. This scope is often unstable, and until recently, the definition of their position did not include research nor did they have a formal career path. Due to these factors, only few intra-institutional research groups were formed. It is also important to note that course development often has a research component, and when taken into consideration in measuring the volume of research activities, the research volume of the academic teaching staff is only slightly below that which is customary at other academic institutions. OUI policy with respect to the employment of academic teaching staff is currently being changed with the aim of increasing research activities.

3.6 **Physical Infrastructure**

3.6.1   **Location of offices and classrooms**

Description

The Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Students is located in 27 rooms on the first floor and 4 rooms on the second floor of the "Academic Building" on the Raanana Campus (see illustration below). Faculty members who live in Jerusalem and its vicinity were allocated rooms at the OUI's center in Givat Ram in Jerusalem.

The Open University Campus, Raanana

In the Fall 2004 semester, face-to-face study activities (tutorial sessions) in history courses (for all OUI students who took history courses) were held at 20 of the 52 study centers throughout the country (see the tables below). In that semester OUI students (including 54 students living abroad) took 41 courses out of the course offering in History.

Study Centers and History Courses (Fall 2004)

Study Center	No. of Groups *	No. of Students**	No. of Enrollments
Ashdod College	1	11	11
Beer Sheva, Beit Yatziv	1	26	26
Beit Berl	11	299	325
Haifa, Beit Biram	6	85	92
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	14	262	290
Katzrin	1	9	9
Kaukhab Center	1	9	9
Nazareth	4	51	58
Nes Ziona	3	41	43
Petah Tikva	2	52	52
Ra'anana College	3	56	60
Ramat Gan College	5	95	101
Rehovot College	2	36	41

Study Center	No. of Groups *	No. of Students**	No. of Enrollments
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	18	418	435
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	6	169	169
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	21	418	462
Tel-Aviv – Art Institute	1	33	33
Tiberias	2	22	28
Tira	1	30	30
Wadi Ara	6	101	116
Abroad	--	54	65
Total	109	2,277	2,455

* Each group is registered for one course but in some study centers, there is more than one group taking a specific course, as is evident in the table below. For example, in the study center in Beit Berl, 6 of the 11 groups that functioned there in the Fall 2004 semester were enrolled in "Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East".

** "Students" here are not what we defined in this report as "History students," but rather all OUI students who took history courses in Fall 2004. The statistics indicate that about half of the students who take courses in history do so for enrichment and out of interest in the topic, and not because of degree requirements.

Study Groups and History Courses (Fall, 2004)

Study Center	Course	No. of Enrollments in Each Group
Ashdod College	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	11
Beer Sheva, Beit Yatziv	Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome	26
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	17
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	38
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	34
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	28
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	34
Beit Berl	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	24
Beit Berl	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	37
Beit Berl	Thomas Jefferson and the Making of American Federalism: 1780-1820	33
Beit Berl	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	33
Beit Berl	The Middle East Between the World Wars	15
Beit Berl	The Middle East Between the World Wars	32
Haifa, Beit Biram	Classical Greece	17
Haifa, Beit Biram	Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome	14
Haifa, Beit Biram	Thomas Jefferson and the Making of American Federalism: 1780-1820	12
Haifa, Beit Biram	The American Jewish Community	20
Haifa, Beit Biram	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	17
Haifa, Beit Biram	Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion	12
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	17
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	29
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	29
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Jews in an Era of Transition	13
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	The Emergence of New States in Africa	15
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	23

| Study Center	Course	No. of Enrollments in Each Group
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	History of Israel during the First Temple Period	15
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Anti-Semitism	24
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	The Jews of North Africa: 1830-1956	20
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	The American Jewish Community	34
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	From Exile to Independence: From the Babylonian Exile to the Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom	16
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion	23
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society	15
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	Film as History: Imagining and Screening the Twentieth Century	17
Katzrin	Anti-Semitism	9
Kaukhab Center	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	9
Nazareth	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	15
Nazareth	The Emergence of New States in Africa	13
Nazareth	Issues in the Study of Nationalism	11
Nazareth	Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion	19
Nes Ziona	The Jews of Eastern Europe: History and Culture	12
Nes Ziona	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	15
Nes Ziona	Europe - Cradle of Nationalism	16
Petah Tikva	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	30
Petah Tikva	Jews in an Era of Transition	22
Ra'anana College	The Emergence of New States in Africa	15
Ra'anana College	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	27
Ra'anana College	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	18
Ramat Gan College	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	33
Ramat Gan College	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	25
Ramat Gan College	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	12
Ramat Gan College	Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union/Russia: From the Communist Era to the 21st Century	14
Ramat Gan College, Armonim	Film as History: Imagining and Screening the Twentieth Century	17
Rehovot College	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	25
Rehovot College	Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union/Russia: From the Communist Era to the 21st Century	16
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	34
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Classical Greece	38
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Classical Greece	27
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Jews in an Era of Transition	23
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Emergence of New States in Africa	22
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	28
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Rise and Fall of Regimes in Classical Greece	12
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Idea and Practice: Thomas Jefferson and the Making of American Federalism: 1780-1820	16
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	30
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Historical Thinking: Issues in Philosophy of History	29
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The American Jewish Community	27
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	23
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Middle East Between the World Wars	25

Study Center	Course	No. of Enrollments in Each Group
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union/Russia: From the Communist Era to the 21st Century	18
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Beginnings of Europe: Western Europe in the Early Middle Ages	26
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society	11
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Historical Topics in the World of the Sages	14
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	Film as History: Imagining and Screening the Twentieth Century	32
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	The Age of Revolution: 1760-1830	15
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	History of Israel during the First Temple Period	26
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	47
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	Anti-Semitism	31
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	Modernization of East European Jewry	12
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	38
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	35
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	39
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome	15
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	The Jews of Eastern Europe: History and Culture	11
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Jews and Christians in Western Europe: Encounter between Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance	33
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	The Culture of the Enlightenment in Europe of the 18th Century - I: France	20
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Anti-Semitism and Pogroms in Russia: 1881-1914	8
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Idea and Practice: Thomas Jefferson and the Making of American Federalism: 1780-1820	38
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Literature and Ideology in Palestine in the 1930s	12
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Issues in the Study of Nationalism	16
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Europe - Cradle of Nationalism	20
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	From Exile to Independence: From the Babylonian Exile to the Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom	25
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	44
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion	36
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Rome: Imperialism and Empire	23
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	Rome: Imperialism and Empire	19
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	From Cyrus to Alexander: The History of Israel during the Persian Empire	12
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society	25
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	German Jewry and the Challenge of Modernization	8
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages: Ideology and Politics	15
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel - Studies in the Book of Samuel	8
Tel-Aviv – Art Institute	Film as History: Imagining and Screening the Twentieth Century	33
Tiberias	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	15
Tiberias	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	13
Tira	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	30
Wadi Ara	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	20
Wadi Ara	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	22
Wadi Ara	The Age of Revolution: 1760-1830	16

Study Center	Course	No. of Enrollments in Each Group
Wadi Ara	Ethiopia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism	19
Wadi Ara	Literature and Ideology in Palestine in the 1930s	10
Wadi Ara	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	29
Abroad	Introduction to the Modern History of the Middle East	5
Abroad	Classical Greece	4
Abroad	History of Zionism: 1881-1914	1
Abroad	Jews in an Era of Transition	1
Abroad	The Emergence of New States in Africa	2
Abroad	Jerusalem Throughout the Ages	4
Abroad	Jewish History during the Second Temple: Judea and Rome	1
Abroad	The Age of Revolution: 1760-1830	2
Abroad	History of Israel during the First Temple Period	2
Abroad	Democracies and Dictatorships in the 20th Century	9
Abroad	Anti-Semitism	3
Abroad	Jews and Christians in Western Europe: Encounter between Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance	2
Abroad	The Culture of the Enlightenment in Europe of the 18th Century - I: France	4
Abroad	Ethiopia: Christianity, Islam, Judaism	2
Abroad	Individual Liberties and Constitutional Structure in a Federal Democracy	2
Abroad	Historical Thinking: Issues in Philosophy of History	1
Abroad	The American Jewish Community	1
Abroad	The Bar Kokhba Revolt	2
Abroad	Issues in the Study of Nationalism	1
Abroad	Europe - Cradle of Nationalism	1
Abroad	From Exile to Independence: From the Babylonian Exile to the Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom	2
Abroad	From 'National Home' to a 'State in the Making': The Jewish Community in Palestine between the World Wars	2
Abroad	Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union/Russia: From the Communist Era to the 21st Century	2
Abroad	Islam: Introduction to the History of the Religion	3
Abroad	Rome: Imperialism and Empire	2
Abroad	From Cyrus to Alexander: The History of Israel during the Persian Empire	1
Abroad	The Jews of Yemen: History, Culture, Society	2
Abroad	Historical Topics in the World of the Sages	1
Total	41 courses	2,455

History courses are taught at both the large study centers in the center of the country (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem - "Technological Garden", Beit Biram, Haifa and Beit Yatziv in Beer Sheva) and at the local study centers (see the table and the map below). Studies at the local study centers are usually in organized groups and are typically intensive tutorials. These centers have a special character that does not stem only from their distance from the center of Israel, or because of the groups of students who take one course after another together each semester. The atmosphere in these centers is usually intimate. The connection between the students and the tutor is based, for the most part, on personal acquaintance and the tutor has greater opportunities to accompany the students throughout their studies.

Study centers in which the Open University functions

Region	Location and Name
North	Haifa, Beit Biram
	Givat Haviva, Wadi Ara
	Carmiel, Open University Carmiel
	Nazareth, Nazareth Study Center
	Tamra
	Kiryat Haim, Kiryat Haim - Eshkol Payis
	Tiberias, Open University Tiberias
	Haifa, The College of Management – Haifa and the North
	Afula, Technological College
	Hadera, Matnas Givat Olga
	Afula, Open University Afula
	Katzrin, Katzrin Academic Center
	Kaukhab el Higa, Kaukhab Center
	Sachnin, Mahat Technological Training College
	Abu Snan, Al-Hoda College
	Haifa, Practical Engineering School
Jerusalem	Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"
	Jerusalem, Haredi College
	Jerusalem, Hadassah College
	Jerusalem, Haohalim campus
	Ma'ale Edumim, Ma'ale Edumim Regional College
Sharon Area	Raanana, The Open University Campus – Raanana
	Raanana, Raanana College
	Netanya, Hermelin College
	Beit Berl, Beit Berl College
	Tira
Central	Ramat Gan College, Armonim Campus
	Bat Yam College
	Petah Tiqva College
Tel Aviv Area	Tel Aviv, Alliance High School
	Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash
	Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibutzim
	Tel Aviv, Ramat Aviv campus
	Tel Aviv, Municipal Training Center, Tel Aviv Municipality
	Tel Aviv, Avni Institute
	Tel Aviv, Meimad school
	Tel Aviv, Koteret School of Journalism and Communication
	Ramat Hasharon, Hakfar Hayarok
Coastal Plain	Lod Regional College
	Modi'in
	Rishon Le'Zion –Avrutzky College
	Rehovot College
	Nes Ziona
	Rishon Le'Zion – Science College
South	Beer Sheva, Beit Yatziv
	Beer Sheva, Mahat Technological Training College
	Ashdod College
	Ashdod, Mahat Management College
	Kiryat Gat, Tichon Hadash
	Ofakim
	Mitspe Ramon, Pisga Center
	Eilat, Open University Eilat

Dispersion of study centers throughout the country

Evaluation

The wide dispersion of study centers makes it possible to realize the goal of the Open University to enable flexible learning throughout the country.

3.6.2   **The Department office**

Description

The department office is located on the 1st floor of the Academic Building, room 145. The office of the head of the department is in room 147, close to the department office and the offices of other faculty members.

Evaluation

The proximity of the department office and the department head's office to the other offices enables ongoing communication with the administrative staff.

3.6.3   **Academic faculty offices**

Description

Faculty member offices are allocated as follows: senior faculty members have their own offices, junior faculty 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.

Evaluation

The offices are spacious and newly furnished. The location of the technical services are problematic, as they are not conveniently located, and far from the offices of most of the staff.

3.6.4   **Classrooms, seats and equipment**

Description

There are classrooms in all OUI study centers throughout the country (see map). The number of classrooms is flexible and changes from one semester to another according to the number of study groups opened in a center (a study group is opened provided there is a minimum number of registrants). In most cases, the classrooms are furnished with desks for two and sometimes chair-desks, 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 national dispersion of students at the OUI.

Evaluation

Central planning of classroom allocation provides for maximum allocation flexibility according to need and significant savings on rental expenses. The quality of classrooms and equipment varies. There are big differences in study centers in reference to teaching and learning conditions (hot/cold, noise) and accessibility (private car/public transportation). Furthermore, there are study centers in which the infrastructure is far from modern (blackboard, possibility of hanging maps, etc.).

3.6.5 **Computer classrooms, computer stations, hardware, software and institutional computer-based communication that serve OUI study programs**

The computer-based communication system for students

Students in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies use personal computers. The OUI provides software to students according to the requirements of the various courses, for example, Eviews, Jump and MS Project. The software programs are licensed and downloaded from the Internet. The 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 (e.g. Givat Ram in Jerusalem or Beit Biram in Haifa). 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.

Evaluation

The institutional computer system services meet the needs of the department on the professional level and in terms of response speed. In general, OUI computerization services are excellent and the support provided to the faculty is ongoing, immediate and high-level.

3.6.6 **Laboratories**

Not applicable

3.6.7   **The Library**

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 bibliographic databases, electronic journals, 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.

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.

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 which is a prerequisite to all advanced courses at the Open University. 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.

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

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 history students
- 4128 print books (maximum number of copies per title – 3)
- Multi-volume Open University course books in the field of history (maximum copies per title – 6)
- 34 electronic books
- Access to 498 electronic periodicals in the field of history
- 6 special history databases
- 13 multi-disciplinary databases that include material in the field of history

History faculty and student use of the library facilities over the past year
- Digital books: 191 entries
- Electronic Periodicals: 1,580 entries in 482 different history journals
- Print Books: 470 history books and 260 Open University course books in history were loaned
- Databases: 5,856 entries (not including "Rambi" which does not provide usage statistics)

Evaluation
The library is located in a modern building and provides search, reference and reading services in a comfortable and convenient setting. The acquisition policy is coordinated with the department. Due to the location of the library in the center of the country, searching for information in the library is less convenient for students that are not from this area. To a certain extent, the online service offsets this problem. The offering of research literature is limited, and students rely on online services and agreements that give OUI students access to other University libraries for reference and loan services, agreements, which are usually satisfactory, with the exception of the Tel Aviv University libraries. Nonetheless, with the move to Raanana, the library needs to be enlarged and to be given more independence with reference to acquisitions.

3.6.8 Additional space for conferences, research centers, meeting rooms and seminars

Description
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. Furthermore, when the OUI needs additional meeting places, for example for departmental symposia, it rents them according to the purpose and demand.

Evaluation
The rooms are modern, roomy and well-equipped.

3.6.9   Summary: 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 history materials in the library by increasing the collection of books and electronic periodicals.

Chapter 4
The Self-Evaluation Process

4.1 **Routine Self-Evaluation at the Open University**

The two cornerstones of the Open University are teaching and development. Evaluation of the teaching system is discussed in section 3.3. The process of developing courses, characteristic of the studies at the Open University that does not exist at other universities, also undergoes external evaluation. Every course proposal and every study unit is sent to leading experts in their fields from other universities. Their remarks are taken into consideration during the development of the courses. In addition, every study program and course proposal is discussed by various Open University committees and must be approved by the disciplinary subcommittee and by the Academic Committee. These processes are employed for courses developed by OUI faculty members and by faculty of other universities.

Moreover, as stated in section 2.1.7 above, the OUI Evaluation Department is responsible for implementing research and surveys to assess all OUI academic activities, including programs and courses.

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

In July 2005, when Dr. Shalev-Mevorach (the former staff member in charge of self-evaluation) went on sabbatical, the President, on the recommendation of Prof. Ora Limor, Vice President for Academic Affairs, 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, a member of the Steering Committee of the OUI Research Authority and a member of the library committee.

As the individual responsible for quality self-evaluation, Dr. Roccas's role includes:
- Collecting information pertaining to the quality self-evaluation process (participating in symposia organized by the CHE) 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 at 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.

4.3   Conclusions of the University and the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies concerning the self-evaluation

The main contribution of the self-evaluation activities in the field of history to date stems from the manner in which they were performed. The process brought together academic and administrative bodies who invested time and knowledge in collecting information for the report, discussions on the issues raised in the report, writing parts of the report and reading and checking sections of the report written by others. Those who took part in writing the report include the Head of the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies, staff members in the Office of the Dean of Academic Studies, the Computer Center, the Evaluation Department, the Training Department, the Office of the Registrar, the Library, and the Department of Examinations. This enabled us to examine the connection between the different facets of the activity of the academic unit and the evaluated program.

The evaluation team, which included senior faculty members and course coordinators divided up the task, and sub-teams were responsible for writing the different parts. A coordination team was formed and Dr. Daphna Ephrat, a member of the senior faculty, was chosen to serve as editor. In addition, a technical coordinator was appointed. During the work, the entire evaluation team held several meetings with the editor, who also met with the sub-teams separately. This teamwork led to discourse and cooperation beyond the preparation of the report itself.

The only guidance that team members received were explanations and clarifications regarding the type of information and evidence that should appear in the answers to the questions in the report. This ensured that the different teams would have autonomy and freedom in describing and evaluating their topics. After completing the first draft, the different sections were distributed among the members of the entire evaluation team for feedback in preparation for the final version. During the work on the report, there was continuous interaction between the editor, the evaluation team and Dr. Roccas, the person in charge of the quality assessment report. The coordination team and especially the department head and the technical coordinator assisted Dr. Ephrat until the final draft was approved.

It is not yet possible to assess the results of the evaluation process; how and to what extent the self-evaluation activities will contribute to improving the quality of development, of teaching and of learning in the field of history. Thus far, the self-evaluation process has provided additional information on the various departmental activities and has highlighted aspects that should be addressed and improved further, as indicated below.

4.4   Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- **Programs of study and courses**: The different programs of study in history provide a broad and multi-disciplinary education. The divisions in history contribute to studies at the OUI as a whole. The B.A. in History is a structured program that provides even those not registered in the program a framework and direction. The courses are stable since they do not depend on individual lecturers, and teaching and

learning are centrally administered and routinely monitored. The courses are well known for their meticulously high level and quality, and course books are regularly used by lecturers and students in universities throughout the country.

- **Teaching and learning**: As a combination of a lecture and an exercise, each course provides students with learning skills, like distinguishing between kinds of sources, and the ability to analyze documents, from the first stages of their studies. The assignments are the primary means for implementing and developing these skills.
- **Revising and updating**: Because courses become obsolete, it is necessary to invest additional effort in rewriting and updating the courses either by rewriting the entire course or specific units, adding new reading material from current research, replacing the course book with a text that reflects new research and that has undergone the development process (sometimes translated) and preparing new study guides for the new materials. In parallel, course booklets are revised each semester.
- **Teaching staff**: The small number of senior faculty members fulfill a large number of administrative roles. In light of the fact that senior faculty have academic responsibility for courses in their fields and periods of expertise, it is important to recruit additional members in order to enrich research in the field of history at the OUI, and to cover additional periods, areas and fields, especially since we aspire to develop a graduate program in history. A first step was recently taken in this direction: defining the needs and directions of the research and development in the discipline.
- **The library and its use**: The holdings need to be enriched. Students should be exposed to library use at earlier stages of their studies. They should undergo training in library use that is designed specifically for studies in the field of history.
- **Control and evaluation systems**: The OUI and the department are fortunate to have routine, in-depth and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems. Nonetheless, there is a need to strengthen the link between the university-wide system, i.e., the Evaluation Department, with the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies in order to determine various aspects of assessment policy and activities.

4.5 Mechanism for continued monitoring of the handling of problematic issues

It is recommended that the problematic issues be handled in the following manner:

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

4.6 Additional initiatives to improve internal quality

1. In recent years, almost all of the courses have been computerized and updated material is posted on the websites. Each site has a forum through which students can present questions to the teaching staff.

2. The programs of study in history and each of the courses in the discipline are assessed regularly and are updated as needed.

3. Rewriting courses is currently based on policy dictated by the OUI. OUI management recently decided to establish a mechanism for ongoing monitoring of the need to rewrite courses in all study programs. We estimate that such a mechanism will significantly improve the rate of course updating.

4. New methods of development and revision of history courses are being explored, such as recorded lectures and tutorials via video-conferencing.

5. With respect to encouraging research activities:

   - The Research Authority funds travel of course coordinators (who do not have a research fund) to conferences. Funded proposals undergo academic screening and evaluation by members of the Research Authority steering committee. The Research Authority also provides different kinds of research scholarships and grants.

   - Research Authority seminar – With the aim of helping researchers submit research proposals, the Research Authority recently initiated meetings addressing issues pertaining to submitting research proposals to external foundations.

   - Open University management is planning to grant prolonged paid vacations (6 months) to course coordinators involved in research on a competitive basis.

6. The department is currently formulating a proposal to establish a Department Council – a forum of faculty members (senior faculty and veteran course coordinators), which would hold regular, institutionalized discussions on academic matters such as course development and revision, research, teaching and recruiting senior faculty members. This forum could also be the body that would ensure that the self-evaluation process is carried out on a routine basis and that reports are prepared periodically.

4.7 **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.