

**The Open University of Israel
Department of Management and Economics**

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Business Administration

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The Open University of Israel

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Executive Summary

The Open University of Israel (OUI) is unique on the Israeli academic scene. While resembling other universities in its pursuit of excellence in teaching and research, it differs from them in its educational mission – wide accessibility to quality higher education, and in its main method of instruction – distance learning. The OUI is dedicated to the creation of university-level materials that are suitable for independent study, and to the development and implementation of versatile means, including technology, for support of learning.

Teaching and learning: At the OUI, students enroll in one or more courses each semester. The main course materials (books, study guides, etc.) are sent to students before the beginning of the semester, with instructions for independent study and with homework assignments for the entire semester. Students study mainly on their own and submit assignments according to a predetermined schedule. The learning process is supported by detailed personal feedback and by various printed and digital learning aids. Tutorials held at study centers throughout the country, or online, help clarify the material, provide practice, and encourage interaction with peers. At the end of the semester, students take monitored written final exams. Since assignments and exams are prepared in advance, the same pre-set high standards are preserved, regardless of tutorial mode or student profile.

Academic staff: The academic staff consists of senior faculty, course coordinators, and tutors. The senior faculty is the academic leadership; its members conduct research, initiate and manage study programs, and are in charge of developing all course materials. Each OUI course is administratively and academically managed by a course coordinator. Coordinators prepare new assignments and exams for each semester, maintain the course website and supplement it with appropriate materials, participate in course revision teams, and hire and supervise tutors. Tutors, whose number in each course depends on the number of students enrolled and their geographical dispersion, conduct group tutorial sessions, grade homework assignments, and provide individual support when necessary.

Management programs: The Department of Management and Economics offers single- and dual-disciplinary undergraduate programs in management, economics, and accounting, as well as an MBA. There are 10 senior faculty members and 65 course coordinators in the department. In addition, approximately 400 tutors lead study groups. In 2012-2013, approximately 12,400 students studied towards an undergraduate degree in the department (approximately 6,800 towards a degree in management), together with approximately 2,500 MBA students.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Describe the main strengths and weaknesses that were pointed out in the self-evaluation process, and the actions that will be taken in order to improve the weak points that were found.

Strengths

Academic excellence: Our courses and programs are held to superior academic standards, and enable students to continue on to advanced degrees. The OUI study method increases the independent study abilities of our students.

Equal opportunity and flexibility: Our programs increase access to higher education through open admissions for undergraduates. The distance learning methods that we employ, using advanced technologies, address the needs of special population groups. Flexibility in time, place, pace, and teaching methods allows our students to excel in academic studies while maintaining demanding careers or other obligations.

Academic quality assurance and learning outcomes: The OUI system ensures the preservation of quality and standards, and greater control of learning outcomes. Rigorous course development procedures ensure academic quality, from the initial stages of course planning, via its rigorous course development procedure, to course operation and examination.

Research: A major part of the role of senior faculty members is to conduct research. Although their small number limits the overall impact of their work; individually, they achieve high research standards, as measured by their publications in leading refereed professional journals, research grants, contributions to international conferences, etc.

Weaknesses

Small number of senior faculty members: The main weakness of the OUI's study programs in management is the small number of senior faculty members. Compared to other universities, studies in the OUI are much more structured, leading to more academic administrative duties for faculty members. Although the research and high-quality academic studies are definite strengths of the OUI, these could be improved even further if the administrative load could be shared by more than the current ten senior faculty members in the department (five economists and five specializing in management).

Mission, Goals, and Learning Outcomes

State the extent to which the Study Program has achieved its mission, goals and learning outcomes. Are the Institution, Parent Unit and Department satisfied with the outcomes of the Study Program?

Mission and goals: We believe that the study program in management achieves its mission and goals, which are, to a very large extent, derived from those of the OUI. In fact, the four main strengths specified above correspond to the main elements of the mission of the OUI.

Learning outcomes: Analysis of this evaluation process, and in particular, of the data collected, has revealed that the management study program specifies learning outcomes clearly and that they are internalized well by our students.

Changes since the last evaluation

The Department of Management and Economics is relatively new, having been formed in 1997. Its first 17 years have been characterized by rapid growth, which can be divided into two stages: an initial stage based on new beginnings, and a later stage based on maturing and stabilizing. The 2006 self-evaluation was conducted during the transition from the first stage to the second, and contributed to this evolution.

The most notable elements in the pre-2006 departmental growth were the initiation of the study programs in management, economics and accounting, and the development of a large number of new courses for these programs. The main **post-2006** elements in the department's growth include the following:

- A final and permanent accreditation has been received from the CHE for each of the department's BA degrees and the MBA degree.
- New courses have been added to the study program in management (e.g., Game Theory and its Applications to Economics and Management; Technology and Innovation Management; Contemporary Theories of Social and Economic Justice; Emotions in Organizations), but the major effort in course development has been directed towards updating and revising existing courses. In some courses the original version has been replaced by a totally new one (e.g., Advertising Management; Consumer Behavior; Survey Methodology; Planning, Analysis and Design of Information Systems; international Management; Strategic Management; Leadership in Organizations), and many others have been partially, but significantly, revised (e.g., Organization Behavior, Human Resource Management, Cost and Managerial Accounting).
- The number of students has grown: In 2005 the OUI has conferred 611 BA degrees in management and 63 MBA degrees, whereas in 2013 the OUI has conferred 940 BA degrees in management and 412 MBA degrees.
- A study program in management was created to modularly fit into a dual-disciplinary undergraduate study program. In 2013 the OUI granted 437 dual-disciplinary bachelors degrees in management.
- The number of the department's senior faculty members specializing in management has grown from three to five.