ॐ THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF ISRAEL

Department of Education and Psychology

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Psychology

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Raanana 2007

Acknowledgements

The Open University of Israel

PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM SELF-EVALUATION

Executive Summary

The University

The Open University of Israel (OUI) was established in 1974 with the mission to open its gates to all individuals capable of higher education. Specifically:

• To increase access to higher education for groups in the population that for various reasons have difficulty studying at traditional universities or prefer the OUI study method.

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

• To enable all those capable of academic studies maximum flexibility in time, place and pace of studies and in learning styles through a wide range of programs, unique teaching and learning aids and diverse teaching methods.

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. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 40,914 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses and 3,164 in graduate programs. In FTE terms, this is comparable to 16,579 undergraduate students and 1,274 graduate students.

The Department of Education and Psychology

The Department of Education and Psychology, which is one of seven academic departments at the University, was established in 1997, when the OUI was reorganized on a departmental basis. The first Bachelor's degree (in Education and Sociology) was offered in 1993. The OUI has offered dual-disciplinary degrees in Psychology since 2002 and a single-disciplinary Bachelor degree in Psychology since 2005. In 2003, the OUI was authorized to offer an MA in Education in Learning Technologies and Learning Systems. The department offers 62 undergraduate courses (27 of which are methodology and psychology courses) and 36 undergraduate study programs (24 of which are in psychology). The Department is responsible for the development and teaching of the methodology courses (statistics and research methods) for all Social Science students.

Because students do not enroll in a department but rather register for specific courses, it is difficult to present numbers of students according to academic departments. In 2006, the number of enrollments in undergraduate courses offered by the Department of Education and Psychology was 32,529, which represents 30% of all undergraduate course enrollments at the OUI. This includes courses in research methods and statistics. In the last 5 years, 857 students graduated from the department (556 with a degree in Psychology, 130 with a dual-disciplinary degree in Psychology and Education, and 171 with a degree in Education).

Learning and Teaching

OUI courses differ markedly from courses in conventional universities as they are first and foremost printed scholarly-scientific works specifically suited to independent study. Books are written either by the department's senior staff or by scholars from other universities. In some courses, materials include readers of articles and case studies. Study guides are provided whenever a course is based on a textbook not written specifically for the OUI. These study guides contain self-study tools characteristic of OUI course books. Study

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materials often include CDs containing studio recordings of lectures, multimedia material and recorded films.

Each course has a course coordinator (CC), who is a member of the academic teaching staff and whose task is to hire and supervise tutors, write assignments and exams, and maintain the course website, under the guidance of a senior faculty member who has academic responsibility for the course. CCs have MA degrees and some are doctoral candidates or hold a PhD. At the end of 2006, there were 49 course coordinators in the Department, 23 of whom were responsible for psychology and methodology courses.

In order to facilitate students' comprehension of the material in the course book, the OUI offers group tutorials in each course conducted by tutors (who have at least an MA) in 52 study centers throughout the country. Attendance at tutorials is not mandatory and many students opt for their home as a private campus supported by the OUI distance teaching method, notably via the internet. CCs also hold regular telephone consultation hours. CCs and tutors receive special training before beginning their work, in addition to on-the-job training.

Senior academic faculty members are engaged in research and in the initiation, development, maintenance and monitoring of courses. There are currently ten senior faculty members in the department, four of whom are in psychology.

The academic year at the 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, all study materials are mailed to students, including course booklets that contain the assignments and the timetable. During the semester, students are required to submit several written assignments by mail or via the internet. At the end of the course, a written examination is held simultaneously at study centers throughout the country, and the student is given a grade.

As a distance teaching institution, the OUI devotes significant efforts to developing learning technologies. Every course has a website, maintained by the CC, that enables the university to improve services to students, enhance teaching quality, address varied target groups, bridge geographic distances and supply easy communication and continuous availability. The websites include discussion forums that enable interaction between students and the course team, personal notebooks, chat rooms, an online assignment system, additional learning materials and a tool that enables students to perform collaborative work (Wiki). Two general websites serve all Psychology students: Psychology Online and the Laboratory Website.

In some courses, students receive DVDs containing interviews with experts, demonstrations of relevant phenomena and expert lectures. In other courses, study materials requiring three-dimensional, color or dynamic demonstrations were developed on CD. In some courses, tutorial sessions are conducted through advanced technologies: the *Ofek* system and InterWise.

The OUI library subscribes to databases that provide full digital texts to the major journals in Psychology and Education.

Psychology programs, students and graduates

The 23 study programs in Psychology are designed to promote the goals of the Department and the University as well as the following specific goals: To qualify psychology graduates who (a) Understand the historical, sociological and philosophical context in which psychology was established and operates; (b) Have a broad and deep knowledge of the different areas of psychology; (c) View psychology as a scientific discipline; (d) Have a deep understanding of methodology; (e) Have the skills necessary for searching for material in

libraries and databases; (f) Know what is ethically permitted and prohibited in psychological research; (g) Have the ability to express themselves orally and in writing; (h) Are able to study independently (i) Are able to comprehend material in English; (j) Have basic experience in research; (k) Have a perspective of psychology that enables them to make an informed decision as to the area in which they prefer to continue their psychology studies.

All the psychology programs include required methodology courses that impart a broad foundation in statistics and research methods, required courses providing an introduction to different fields of knowledge in psychology, intermediate and advanced (i.e., seminar) elective courses that focus on a specific topic and present research and an updated perspective of the topic. Two seminar papers are required, at least one of which is based on an empirical study in psychology. Participation in research is also required, as are proven English proficiency and bibliographic training in the library.

For the purpose of this report, we defined a "Psychology student" as a student who has taken and passed four required courses in psychology. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, in retrospect, we may find that a student is pursuing a general degree in the Social Sciences or in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Of the 2,859 Psychology students in 2006, 976 had an approved study program in Psychology, 515 had a different approved study program and the remaining 1,368 as yet had no approved program. The student body is relatively older than in other institutions, 83% are females, almost half live outside of the major cities, and 13% did not complete high school. Thus, the Psychology programs fulfill the OUI goals of increased access to higher education.

The average grade of Psychology graduates over the past five years in the various undergraduate Psychology programs is 83.20 (SD=5.3), the distribution of grades is approximately normal, with 5.2% between 70 and 74, and 1.2% above 95. The OUI's open admission policy combined with its high academic requirements results in a relatively high dropout rate in the student's first courses at the OUI. Students who are able to graduate are usually highly motivated and have high intellectual abilities.

Data from a telephone survey performed for the present report indicate that of 116 graduates who responded (all of whom completed their studies after 2002), 57% enrolled in further studies, 85% of these in master's degree studies. All but three students were accepted. The majority are enrolled in universities and several in colleges, most in psychology and education. Half have completed their master's degrees and four are pursuing a PhD.

Research

Research in the department is carried out by members of the senior faculty and of the academic teaching staff, most notably by those among them who hold a PhD. In the last five years, faculty members published numerous papers, many in top tier journals. Senior faculty members submitted four proposals for competitive grants to the Israel Science Foundation in the last five years, and three of these applications were successful. Beyond international publications and grants, the Open University undergraduate textbooks that our faculty members write also have a research aspect, in terms of analysis of up-to-date research and knowledge. These textbooks have an excellent reputation for their high academic standards.

A psychology laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment for conducting studies in social and cognitive psychology (e.g. experiment generators such as e-prime and superlab, audio-video digital recording, and a central lab control system) supports the research of students and faculty.

Quality control mechanisms

Due to the nature of distance teaching, the OUI has developed quality control mechanisms for almost every product, process and function. These mechanisms enable the University to continuously examine its strengths and weaknesses and to address problems when necessary.

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

The innovation in the current process of quality self-evaluation stems from the fact that it was conducted on the disciplinary level: for every development, teaching and research component in psychology. The process highlighted our strengths and weaknesses and motivated thinking about ways to overcome those weak spots.

Aside from the statistical data, the report includes the ideas and feelings of all faculty members, not only of a select group of writers. We believe that the report preparation process we chose to implement contributed to the validity of the report, to the departmental atmosphere and to the involvement of all faculty members in the activities of the department.

Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom

Head of the Psychology Program

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Additional Materials

Enclosed with this report: *Programs of Study – Psychology* (in English)

On CD:

Catalog and Registration Guide (in Hebrew)

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

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

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

Extras:
    Programs of study – Psychology (in English, also enclosed with this report)
    Ethics Committee-Psychology (on the departmental Ethics Committee, in English)
    Ethics committee request form (application for approval of research study, in English)
    Teaching survey (ongoing survey administered to students, in English)
    Report on coordinator (course coordinator evaluation form, in English)
    Report on tutor (report of course coordinator on tutor function, in English)
    Special exam conditions form (in Hebrew)
    Weights of grades (relative weight of assignments and examinations in each course, in English)
    Seminar paper guide (guide to writing a seminar paper, for students, in Hebrew)
    Booklet for supervisors (guide to writing a seminar paper, for seminar paper advisors, in Hebrew)
    Seminar paper criteria-evaluation (criteria for seminar paper evaluation, for advisors, in English)
    Seminar paper grades (grades of seminar papers, 2002-2006, in English)
    Declaration of original work (students' declaration of original work on seminar paper, in Hebrew)
    Survey graduates (findings of telephone survey of OUI graduates in Psychology, in English)
    Course Coordinators (report of the committee examining the status of course coordinators, July 2006, in English)
    Letter on self evaluation (to the members of the Psychology Division, in English)

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, together 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 (BA) in 1980, and in 1996 the University was authorized by the CHE to teach the first program leading to a Master's degree. At this time, the OUI does not offer studies towards a doctoral degree.

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

Degree entitlement: In order to earn a Bachelor's degree from the Open University, students need to accumulate at least 108 credits (this does not include English language studies, computer applications courses and seminar papers). However, the credit requirements are not identical for all programs of study. Some programs require more than 108 credits, sometimes because of the scope of the specific program, and sometimes because of the courses that each individual student chooses to take. Usually, no more than 128 credits are required. A B.Sc. in Engineering requires about 160 credits. This difference in the scope of the programs reflects the situation in other universities, where studies are organized according to years, and degrees in Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences take 3 years to complete, while an Engineering degree takes 4 years to complete.

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

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

Number of Students: Students at the Open University are not required to enroll in a department as is customary at other universities, but rather register for specific courses. A student's program of study may include a variety of courses offered by more than one department. Consequently, numbers of students in academic departments at the Open University are difficult to present. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 40,914 students were enrolled in undergraduate courses and 3,164 students in graduate programs. In FTE terms, this is comparable to 16,579 undergraduate students and 1,274 graduate students. While we have a large student body, we have relatively fewer graduates than other universities because of our open admissions policy: some students are simply not

suited to academic studies. In addition, there are students (such as soldiers) who begin their studies at the OUI and continue in other universities, and there are those who take individual courses for personal enrichment only.

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

Study Centers: In addition to the central campus in Raanana, the OUI operates study centers throughout the country. In the 2005-2006 academic year, 4,957 student groups took part in tutorial sessions held in 52 study centers (see map, p. 79). Most of the study centers provide registration, academic counseling and some library services in addition to classroom facilities. Not all study centers are opened every semester; study centers are opened in response to the number of students enrolled in each course in each area.

Courses: Courses at the OUI are fundamentally different from courses in conventional universities. An OUI course is first and foremost a printed scholarly scientific work. The study materials are mailed to the student's home and include textbooks, an assignment booklet, a study guide, a reader of articles, and additional materials such as audiotapes, videotapes, multimedia courseware, etc. The homogeneous academic level of the studies in all study centers is preserved since all students use the study materials, and all take the same examination (based on the written material) at the end of the semester. In addition, the course coordinators supervise the tutors and visit the study centers regularly.

1.2 Mission Statement of the Institution, its Aims and Goals

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

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

Our goals:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rigorous assessment and review are central to advancing its research faculty, as are participation and leadership in national and international academic forums.

- **To enable all those capable of academic studies maximum flexibility in time, place and pace of studies and in teaching methods**

1. Flexibility in time, place and pace of studies: Within the framework of an academic semester, OUI students can study from any location in Israel and the world, at a time of their choice. Students can adjust their rate of progress to their needs and lifestyle. The OUI does not require them to complete a structured and uniform program of studies during a specific academic year. Their progress depends on the number of courses in which they enroll each semester. Students determine their own pace of study based on the time at their disposal, taking into consideration family and professional obligations, as well as their determination and diligence. Students can also choose to follow a structured program based on the accepted pace at other universities. The University opens study centers throughout the country wherever there is a large enough group of students to justify this, and holds regular tutorial sessions at these centers.

2. Disciplinary flexibility: In creating an individual program of study, students can select courses from a diverse array of disciplines or a focused disciplinary format. Students who choose to expand their horizons and to enhance their knowledge and understanding in a variety of disciplines in pursuit of a degree, can enroll in courses in diverse fields, while students who choose a more focused approach can select one of the structured programs of study towards a degree offered by the University. In either case, students are bound by rules that limit the multi-disciplinary flexibility of their personal program of study, so that their course list – which is the basis of their degree – has both internal logic and academic justification accepted in the general university community. The OUI offers 75 structured undergraduate programs of study in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, 12 in the Sciences, 12 interdisciplinary programs, and one Engineering program. In addition, there are five graduate programs: Master of Business Administration (MBA); M.A. in Democracy Studies (Interdisciplinary); M.A. in Education – Learning Technologies and Learning Systems; M.A. in Biological Thought; M.Sc. in Computer Science and an M.A. program in Cultural Studies was recently approved and will be offered in 2009. In contrast to the open admissions policy regarding undergraduate studies, candidates for the graduate programs are accepted only after fulfilling strict admission requirements, as is customary in all other Israeli universities. The University also offers programs toward high school teaching certificates in several areas as well as certificate studies in Computer Science.

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

1.3 The Organizational Structure of the Open University

According to the OUI organizational structure, the President is the academic and administrative head of the University, with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Director General reporting to him. All OUI units, except the Resource and Public

Relations Unit, the Research Authority and the Evaluation Department, report to the Director General or to the Vice President who oversee the activities of the units.

The organizational structure of the Open University, as of September 2006
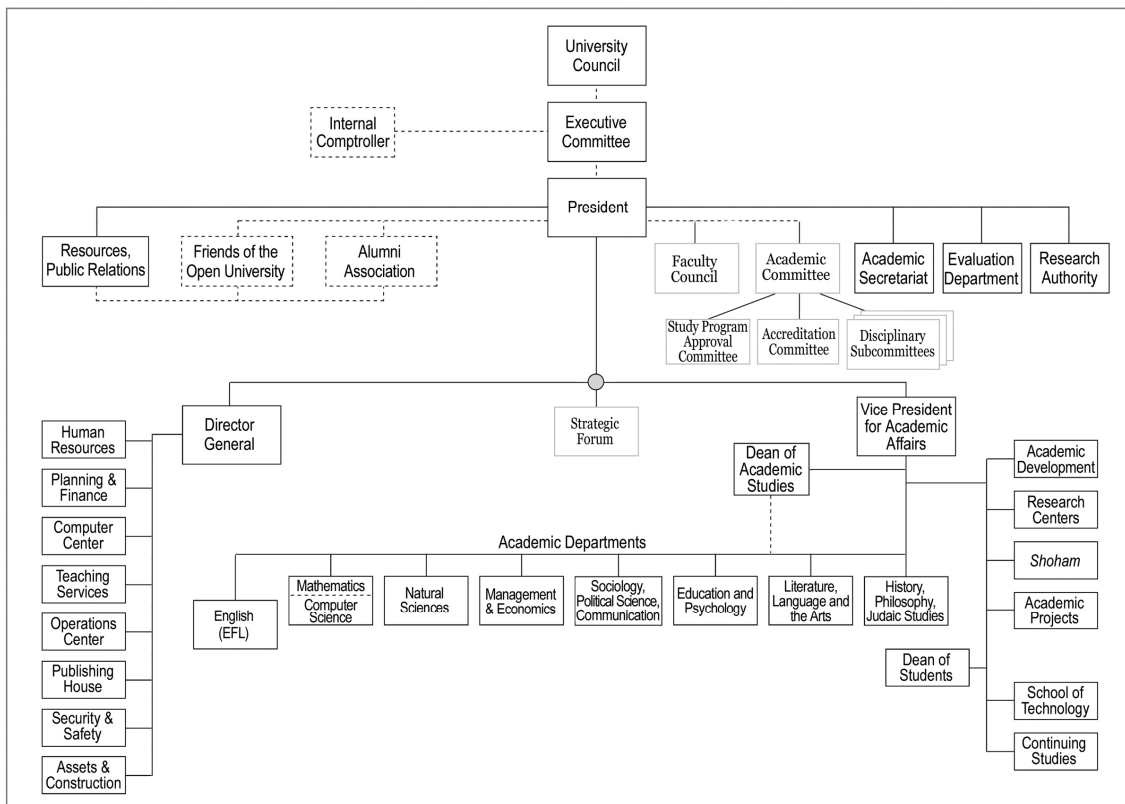
The major Open University bodies are:

- 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; Mathematics and Computer Science; Natural Sciences; Engineering; Social Sciences; Management and Economics; Sociology, Political Science and Communication; Education and Psychology. They approve new programs of study and the development of new courses.

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

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

- The **Committee for Accreditation of Prior Studies** considers requests for accreditation from students who previously studied at an institution of higher education in Israel or abroad. The Accreditation Committee may grant up to 60 credits for courses studied at an accredited academic institution.

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

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

  A departmental Ethics Committee approves all empirical studies conducted by students in the Department of Education and Psychology (see p. 18).

1.3.1 University bodies that support the work of the academic departments

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

The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies: The departments act within the guidelines formulated by the Dean of Academic Studies. The Office of the Dean of Academic Studies is responsible for university-wide and inter-departmental issues related to studies and teaching at the Open University, including the following:
- Formulating ongoing teaching policy which all departments must follow
- Formulating guidelines, rules and regulations which students must observe
- Monitoring and regulation of teaching
- Training of teaching staff
- Coordinating academic counseling and study guidance activities
- Managing the central Open University library and the libraries in study centers
- 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. A special unit in the center focuses on students with learning disabilities by

supplying special technologies, workshops and test accommodations. The academic support system functions on the main OUI campus in Raanana and in study centers throughout the country.

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

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

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

1. Evaluation and examination of system-wide issues and projects, for example
   - 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

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

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

***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, access to study materials and communication between students and course coordinators or tutors, and among the students themselves
- Locating, examining and testing new technologies and their integration into the teaching and learning system
- The development of alternative distance learning methodologies and models and the assessment of the use of technological and pedagogical alternatives for tutorial sessions
- The development and production of a variety of study materials rich in images, sound and motion to supplement the written study materials
- Training and support of teaching staff who integrate technology in their teaching

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

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

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

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

1.4 Senior Academic and Administrative Officeholders

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

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

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

Chairman of the Executive Committee – Mr. Zeev Abeles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Department	Senior faculty		Development consultants		Visiting faculty, academic teaching staff and administrative staff		Total staff	
	Personnel	Positions *	Personnel	Positions *	Personnel	Positions*	Personnel	Positions*
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science:								
Mathematics Division	2	2	-	-	15	11.2	17	13.2
Computer Science Division	7	7	4	1.7	34	21.3	45	30
Department of Sociology, Political Science and Communication	6	6	1	.2	39	27	46	33.2
Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies	8	8	1	1	33	21.3	42	30.3
Department of Literature, Language and the Arts	6	5	1	.5	34	20.3	41	25.8
Department of Education and Psychology	9 **	9	-	-	49	33.2	58	42.2
Department of Management and Economics	6	6	3	1.5	74	46.3	83	53.8
Department of Natural Sciences	10	10	-	-	36	24.1	46	34.1
English Unit	-	-	-	-	19	13.9	19	13.9
In-Service Teacher Training Unit	-	-	-	-	5	3.6	5	3.6
Center for Information Technology in Distance Education – *Shoham*	1	1	-	-	35	28.8	36	29.8
Chais Research Center	1	1	-	-	2	1	3	2
Supporting Units: Academic Development Administration; Office of the Dean of Academic Studies; Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center; Research Authority; Library; Dean of Students; President's Office	1	1	-	-	127	98.6	128	99.6
Total	57	56	10	4.9	502	350.6*	**569**	**411.5***

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

** The table reflects the situation in December 2006. Today there are 10 faculty positions in 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.

Chapter 2

The Department of Education and Psychology

2.1 Organizational Framework

The programs of study assessed here are offered by the **Department of Education and Psychology**. The University offered the first courses in Education and Psychology in its third year of operation. In 1978, one psychology course (Introduction to Social Psychology) was offered, one education course (Curriculum Design, Development and Implementation) and one methodological course (Introduction to Statistics). The number of courses has increased significantly over the last three decades. The department was established in 1997, when the University adopted its current structure.

Historical Milestones

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

1993 – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies).

2002 – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer dual-disciplinary programs in Psychology with other fields in the Social Sciences and in Education with other fields in the Social Sciences.

2002 – The Psychology Lab was established (see section 3.6.3)

2003 – The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a Master's degree in Education - Learning Technologies and Learning Systems

2005 - The Open University was authorized by the Council for Higher Education to offer a single-disciplinary Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

Programs that have been submitted to the Council for Higher Education for approval:

2001 – Bachelor's degree in Education in the area of Learning Disabilities

2006 – Master's degree in Managing Educational Systems

2006 – Two Master's degree programs in Psychology

The founding group responsible for the development of Education and Psychology courses at the OUI included Prof. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom and three colleagues from Tel-Aviv University (Prof. David Chen, Prof. Arie Kruglanski and Prof. Arie Nadler, all of whom left after the first few years). Dr. Lilach Shalev Mevorach, Dr. Sonia Roccas, Dr. Ronit Bogler and Dr. Tali Heiman joined the department in 1996. Prof. Yoram Eshet joined the department in 2001; Dr. Dvora Ben-Shir and Dr. Eran Chajut in 2004. Dr. Gitit Kavé joined the Psychology group as a guest lecturer in 2005. Dr. Lilach Sahlev Mevorach moved to the Hebrew University in 2007 and was replaced by Dr. Nurit Gronau. A large number of academic teaching staff members joined the department over the years – some holding PhDs as well as doctoral candidates, who, together with senior faculty members, are involved in developing and operating the courses offered by the department.

At the end of 2006, there were 57 faculty members in the department, of whom 23 were in Psychology. Of the nine senior faculty members in the department, three were in Psychology. Currently, there are 10 senior faculty members in the department, four in Psychology.

The Department of Education and Psychology offers 36 programs of study (listed in section 2.5 below) and 62 courses in Education, Psychology and Methodology. The courses were developed by OUI faculty and leading scholars in their fields affiliated with other universities. On average, two courses are added, updated or revised annually. OUI textbooks are in high demand by faculty and students at other Israeli higher education institutions. 25.4% of all course enrollments at the Open University are courses offered by the Department of Education and Psychology. This reflects the high level of departmental activity. In the last 5 years, 857 students graduated from the department (556 in psychology,

130 in the dual disciplinary program in Psychology and Education, and 171 in Education), which represents 9.2% of OUI graduates during that period.

The Department of Education and Psychology is responsible for the development, teaching and updating of the methodology courses that serve all students in the Social Sciences. We view this as an important task, as through these courses we ensure a high standard of methodology and scientific thinking among all the students in this area.

2.2 The Mission and Goals of the Department

1. To **promote the goals of the Open University**, as delineated in chapter 1 above, the OUI's continuous striving for excellence, and its focus on high quality scholarly and scientific activities.

2. To **create** knowledge in the field of psychology and education and **disseminate** this knowledge on a high level through **research** and **development of study materials** and teaching tools.

3. To **promote the goals of programs of study** in Psychology (as specified in chapter 3) and in Education.

4. To **provide services to other departments** in methodology or in content areas. The Department of Education and Psychology is responsible for the development and teaching of most of the methodology courses (statistics and research methods) for students in the social sciences. In content courses, the department contributes mainly to the Department of Management and Economics. The department is responsible for the didactic courses in various OUI teaching certificate tracks: in the social sciences, psychology, civics, literature and computer science.

2.3 Internal Organizational Structure

The Department of Education and Psychology is composed of the head of the department (appointed by the President), the heads of fields (Education, Psychology) and of the graduate programs, senior faculty, the academic teaching staff, tutors, the assistant head of the department, an individual responsible for technology, administrators of student inquiries (in undergraduate and graduate programs) and the administrative staff.

The Department of Education and Psychology has the authority to seek and select candidates for senior faculty positions whenever such a position is available. The appointment process is detailed in Rules and Procedures, "Appointments" (in Hebrew). Currently the department has ten senior academic faculty members and one guest lecturer.

The academic teaching staff includes course coordinators and tutors. Course coordinators are responsible for planning all teaching aspects of an academic course and for implementing and monitoring these aspects. They are also responsible for the administrative aspects of the teaching. The scope of the positions of course coordinators is determined by University regulations based on the number of students enrolled in each course. Tutors are employed under contract and are not faculty members of the department. They are hired each semester based on a contract drawn up according to the number of students registered in the course.

In collaboration with the Dean of Academic Studies, 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. The head of department and the senior faculty members are responsible for evaluating their performance. With respect to the teaching process, the level and weight of assignments, the number of tutorial hours, etc., the department is autonomous subject to University regulations as specified in the procedures of the Dean of Academic Studies.

The assistant head of department for academic issues assists the department head in various academic matters including promoting transfer options to other Israeli universities (see p. 4).

The administrators of student inquiries (one for undergraduate students and one for graduate students) deal with student requests (for example, requests for an additional exam date), as well as student complaints concerning courses, exams, procedures, etc.

The individual responsible for technology maintains contact with course coordinators and the department head in all matters concerning course websites (their technological and pedagogic aspects). She is responsible for improving the websites and integrating new technologies into them.

The manager of the psychology laboratory coordinates research days conducted in the laboratory, plans experiments and is responsible for the integration of new technologies in the laboratory (for additional details about the laboratory, see section 3.6.3).

Department of Education and Psychology

Head of Department [1]

Asst. Head of Dept. for academic issues

Administrator, BA student inquiries

Administrative staff

Psychology

Head of field, senior faculty

Academic teaching staff

Head, Psychology Laboratory

Tutors

Committees

Disciplinary subcommittee [2]

MA program steering committee

Ethics Committee

Master's degree committee

Departmental council

Departmental forum

Ad hoc committees

Education

Head of field, senior faculty

Academic teaching staff

Tutors

Head, MA Program

Administrator, MA student inquiries Thesis coordinator

Academic teaching staff

Tutors

[1] The Head of the Department is also head of the field to which s/he belongs.
[2] The disciplinary subcommittee is a subcommittee of the Academic Committee.

The referent of the Evaluation Department is responsible for assisting the department in performing assessment of projects initiated by the department. The referent belongs to the department functionally, not administratively or physically, and is therefore not on the chart.

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

- The technical production of the course booklet
- Responding to student inquiries by phone, handling the inquires or referring them to the appropriate entity
- Handling correspondence of course coordinators and students via mail, fax and email
- Receiving and disseminating correspondence regarding the course
- Providing administrative assistance to course coordinators
- Administration of seminar papers

The following committees and forums function within the department:

Subcommittee of the Academic Committee for Education and Psychology (Chair: Dr. Tali Heiman). The committee is composed of all senior faculty members, as well as four representatives of the academic teaching staff with doctoral degrees. This committee deals with new study programs, updating study programs, proposals for new courses or course updates and academic issues concerning teaching and learning. The committee convenes about once every two months and its decisions are submitted for approval to the Academic Committee.

Steering Committee of the Master's degree program in education (Chaired by the head of the program, Prof. Sara Guri-Rosenblit).

MA program admissions committee (Chair: Prof. Sara Guri-Rosenblit).

Ethics Committee (Chair: Dr. Gitit Kavé). Every empirical study conducted by faculty members, or by students as part of their seminar papers, must receive the approval of the committee before research begins (Ethics Committee procedures and standards are published on the department website and attached in Extras, "Ethics Committee-Psychology").

Departmental council (Chair: head of the department, Dr. Ronit Bogler). A forum of all senior faculty members in the department.

Departmental forum (Chair: head of the department, Dr. Ronit Bogler). The forum convenes once every two months and is composed of all department position holders. Forum meetings are usually divided into two parts: an academic lecture presented by a faculty member followed by a discussion on an academic or pedagogic issue related to teaching or learning in the department.

Ad-hoc committees: Established when an issue pertaining to teaching arises, in order to discuss it and propose solutions. Examples include ad hoc committees on registration procedures and writing seminar papers; and on promoting students' searching for and reading articles.

Departmental colloquium: Held every two months, this is a departmental framework to which all OUI employees are invited with the aim of presenting interesting issues in education or psychology. A senior faculty member from one of the higher education institutions in Israel is invited to give a talk.

2.4 Names of Holders of Senior Academic and Administrative Positions

Head of department and head of Education studies: Dr. Ronit Bogler
Head of Psychology studies: Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom
Head of MA programs in Education: Prof Sarah Guri-Rosenblit
Asst. head of department for academic issues: Dr. Dorit Olenik-Shemesh
Manager, Psychology Laboratory: Asi Schupak

Administrative Staff
Department secretary and the secretary for education courses: Irit Nattiv
Secretary for psychology courses: Tal Matatyahu
Secretary for methodology courses: Tami Shivek

2.5 Programs of Study

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

Undergraduate programs of study: Single- and dual-disciplinary programs

B.A. in Psychology –   בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה

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

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

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

B.A. in Psychology and Sociology –   בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה ובסוציולוגיה

B.A. in Psychology and Political Science –   בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה ובמדע המדינה

B.A. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) and History –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בחינוך (במגמת תכניות ושיטות הוראה) ובהיסטוריה

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

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

B.A. in Political Science and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) –
בוגר אוניברסיטה במדע המדינה ובחינוך (במגמת תכניות לימודים ושיטות הוראה)

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

B.A. in Social Sciences - Emphasis on Behavioral Sciences –
בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החברה בהדגשת מדעי ההתנהגות

B.A. in Social Sciences - Emphasis on Education: Learning Disabilities –
בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החברה בהדגשת חינוך : ליקויי למידה

Degrees with a division of studies in an additional field

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

Interdisciplinary degrees

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

B.A. in Psychology and Life Sciences –   בוגר אוניברסיטה בפסיכולוגיה ובמדעי החיים

B.A. in Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies) and Computer Science - Systems and Applications –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בחינוך (במגמת תכניות לימודים ושיטות הוראה) ובמדעי המחשב - מערכות ויישומים

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

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

Focused Programs

B.A. in Social Sciences - Focus on Psychology and Communication –
בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החברה

B.A. in Social Sciences - Focus on Education –   בוגר אוניברסיטה במדעי החברה

Graduate degrees

M.A. in Education - Learning Technologies –   תואר שני בחינוך במגמת טכנולוגיות למידה

M.A. in Education - Learning Systems –   תואר שני בחינוך במגמת מערכות למידה

Divisions of study in Psychology and Education in other programs
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Psychology –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה עם חטיבה בפסיכולוגיה
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Psychology –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול עם חטיבה בפסיכולוגיה
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Education –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בכלכלה עם חטיבה בחינוך
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Education –
בוגר אוניברסיטה בניהול עם חטיבה בחינוך

Transfer options: (see "Bridges to other universities" on p. 4) between the Department of Education and Psychology and other universities currently available are:
- Transfer option in Psychology to the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Transfer option in Education to the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Transfer option in Behavioral Sciences to the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Number of Students
As noted in chapter 1, students at the Open University are not required to enroll in a department, but register for specific courses. Therefore what follows are data on the number of enrollments rather than the number of students. A student is usually enrolled in more than one course at the same time. The number of enrollments in undergraduate courses in the Department of Education and Psychology has grown over the years, as is evident in the table below. In 2006, the number of enrollments reached 32,529, which represents about 30% of all undergraduate course enrollments in the OUI.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Psychology					
Methodology courses	9,753	11,700	11,601	10,704	12,353
Required courses	8,094	8,838	9,442	9,846	10,911
Electives	600	594	786	751	1,016
Advanced electives	435	465	485	640	825
Courses for students in other departments	311	254	213	177	216
Total enrollments in Psychology	**21,195**	**23,854**	**24,531**	**24,123**	**27,327**
Education					
Intermediate courses	4,452	4,262	3,418	3,316	4,252
Advanced courses	949	963	1,114	1,128	950
Total enrollments in Education	**5,401**	**5,225**	**4,532**	**4,544**	**5,202**
Total enrollments in Department	**26,596**	**29,079**	**29,063**	**28,667**	**32,529**
Total OUI enrollments	102,065	104,762	104,145	106,532	110,584
% of Psychology courses among all OUI enrollments	20.77	22.77	23.55	22.64	24.71
% of Education courses among all OUI enrollments	5.29	4.99	4.35	4.27	4.70

Enrollment in the MA program in Education is different from enrollment in undergraduate programs. Prospective students must comply with admission requirements in order to enter the program. The MA program was first offered in 2003. In that year, students took only qualifying courses. Enrollment data are as follows:

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Course enrollments	28	589	711

2.6 **Graduates**

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

Distribution of graduates in Education and Psychology, by degree

Discipline	Type of program	Degree	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Psychology	Focused programs	Psychology (BA in Social Sciences) *	78	68	79	90	79	394
		Psychology and Sociology (BA in Social Sciences) *				1		1
		Psychology and Education (BA in Social Sciences) *				1		1
		Psychology and Communication (BA in Social Sciences)		1	9	4	6	20
	BA programs	Psychology				4	3	7
		Psychology and Sociology	6	3	4	9	10	32
		Psychology and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)	33	26	24	21	25	129
		Psychology and Management	3	5	11	19	14	52
		Social Sciences - Emphasis on Behavioral Sciences	6	10	10	13	11	50
Total - Psychology			126	113	137	162	148	686
Education	Focused programs	Education (BA in Social Sciences)	25	27	28	32	22	134
		Managing Educational Systems (BA in Social Sciences)	2	2				4
	BA programs	Sociology and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)	8	6	2	3		19
		Management and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)			4	1	7	12
		Social Sciences - Emphasis on Education: Learning Disabilities					2	2
Total - Education			35	35	34	36	31	171
Total - Education and Psychology			161	148	171	198	179	857
Total OUI graduates			1607	1764	1792	2012	2123	9298

* The focused program has since been replaced by a parallel BA program.

2.7 **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 are reviewed and approved by the Education and Psychology subcommittee, by the Faculty Council, and the by Academic Committee (in that order). Each new course also undergoes an approval process. The goals and objectives are discussed at regular meetings conducted by these bodies, at department meetings, at ad-hoc meetings convened for a specific purpose and in informal conversations.

The major changes that have been implemented in the last five years are listed below:

- Development of new programs toward a master's degree in Education and new programs in Psychology (a single-disciplinary undergraduate degree, one with divisions of study in an additional field, and a proposal for a master's degree).

- The addition of an experimental research component in the course "Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance," required in all psychology programs, after it became apparent that students have difficulty writing a seminar paper based on an empirical study.

- The addition of mandatory participation in research for all psychology students. Students are required to come to the psychology lab for three hours to participate in research studies as subjects.

- The addition of an SPSS component to acquaint students with the software and enable them to work with it, in the course "Introduction to Statistics II."

- Decisions to rewrite and update many of the courses in existing programs.

- Decisions to develop new courses, mainly advanced courses, in psychology and education programs (e.g., "Cross-Cultural Psychology," "Identification with Groups," "Reading Disabilities," "Research Experience") and decisions regarding the development of graduate courses in Education.

- Development of new learning aids (mainly for course websites).

Following their approval, faculty members are informed via e-mail and decisions are presented at department meetings. All the information is available to students on the University website, the department website and the "Psychology on-line" and "Education on-line" websites. In addition, course coordinators post the decisions on their course websites. When decisions pertain to a certain sub-group of students (MA students, for example), a letter is sent to all students in the specific program. The printed university catalog includes all approved changes.

Chapter 3

The Evaluated Study Program

3.1 **The Goals and Structure of the Study Program**

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

Psychology studies at the OUI began as part of a trend that characterized the University in its first years: to offer broad academic education in different disciplines. Thus at the outset, most of the efforts were invested in developing a variety of courses in many disciplines, with each discipline represented by a small number of courses. The first course in psychology, "Introduction to Social Psychology," was offered for the first time in 1978.

Courses in statistics were developed in 1978. They served, and continue to serve, all programs in the Social Sciences. The table below lists all the courses included in the various psychology programs, by the year in which they were first offered. Over the years, courses were modified, divided and updated.

Course	Level	Year developed
Introduction to Statistics	introductory	1978
Social Psychology	intermediate	1978
Visual Imagery and Dream	advanced	1980
Cognitive Psychology	intermediate	1986
Research Methods in Social Sciences	intermediate	1987
Regression and Analysis of Variance	intermediate	1987
Judgment and Evaluation	advanced	1988
Introduction to Psychology	introductory	1989
Attitudes and Persuasion	advanced	1989
Psychological Testing	intermediate	1991
Personality	intermediate	1993
Psychology of Gender	intermediate	1996
Developmental Psychology	intermediate	1997
Human Intelligence	intermediate	1997
Physiology of Behavior	intermediate	1998
History of Psychology	advanced	1998
Psychopathology	intermediate	1999
Visual Attention	advanced	1999
Field Experience in Psychology	-	2000
Cross-Cultural Psychology	advanced	2002
Research Experience	-	2003
Identification with Groups	advanced	2005
Reading Disabilities	advanced	2005
Sleep and Sleep Disorders in Childhood	advanced	2007
Psychology of the Holocaust	advanced	2007
Honors Research Seminar	advanced	2007
Mathematical Disabilities: Cognitive, Neuropsychological and Educational Perspectives	advanced	2008

Following the change in the university's organizational structure (in 1997), and the authorization to offer a variety of psychology and methodology courses, students were offered several structured programs toward a bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences with a focus on Psychology (in 1998), a bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences with a focus on Psychology and Communication (1997), as well as programs toward a bachelor's degree in the Social Sciences with an emphasis on Behavioral Sciences (in 1995). While the conferred degree did not specifically state that the degree was in Psychology, the range of courses in the programs corresponded to accredited Psychology programs offered by other universities. As a

result, OUI graduates who met the criteria for admission to master's degree programs in Psychology at other universities were not required to take qualifying courses.

With the development of required courses in psychology and methodology as well as several advanced elective courses, in 2002 the OUI was accredited by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) to offer the Psychology program as part of a dual-disciplinary program. Following the enrichment of the course offering in psychology, the CHE authorized a single-disciplinary degree in Psychology in 2005. In recent years, the main thrust of OUI efforts has been devoted to adding varied elective courses and to updating and revising existing required courses.

The academic faculty involved in developing the psychology programs also grew over the years. The first senior faculty member in psychology was recruited in 1982. In addition, a senior consultant, a full professor from another university, accompanied the OUI until the mid-1990s. Two additional senior faculty members joined the department in 1997 and two more in 2007. One senior faulty member left in 2007. The academic teaching staff has grown in accordance with the number of new courses developed. Senior faculty members in psychology from all universities in Israel accompanied program development and contributed as consultants to course development, writing study materials and performing quality control – a practice that continues today.

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

The various programs of study in Psychology have the following aims:
1. To promote the goals of the University as specified in chapter 1 and the goals of the department as specified in chapter 2.
2. To qualify psychology graduates who have the following characteristics:
   a. Understand the historical, sociological and philosophical context in which psychology was established and operates
   b. Have a broad and deep knowledge of the different areas of psychology
   c. View psychology as a scientific discipline
   d. Have a deep understanding of methodology that enables:
      - Critical reading of scientific and popular material
      - Critical analysis of psychological theories and approaches
      - The ability to translate general research questions into a research procedure
   e. Have the skills necessary for searching for material in libraries and databases
   f. Know what is ethically permitted and prohibited in psychological research
   g. Have the ability to express themselves orally and in writing
   h. Are capable of independent study
   i. Are able to read scholarly texts and contend with material in English
   j. Have basic experience in research, and if they choose, also a "taste" of treatment
   k. Have a perspective of psychology that enables them to make an informed decision as to the area in which they prefer to continue their psychology studies

A graduate with these characteristics will also have the qualities necessary to pursue master's degree studies in psychology.

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

In keeping with the OUI organizational structure, there are several types of key academic positions in the program: Senior faculty, academic teaching staff (course coordinators) and tutors. In addition, senior faculty in psychology departments at other universities are involved as program and course consultants, course developers and seminar paper supervisors.

Administrative positions:
Head of the department
Head of psychology studies (when the department head is a faculty member in education)
The department administrative staff
Manager of the psychology laboratory
Statistical consultant for statistical data processing in empirical seminar papers
Administrator of undergraduate student inquiries

Committees (see descriptions in section 2.3):
Education and Psychology subcommittee
Ethics committee
Ad-hoc committees

The position holders and committees are shown in the chart on p. 17.

3.1.4   **Names of holders of senior academic and administrative positions**

Head of the department: Dr. Ronit Bogler
Head of program: Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom
Senior faculty: Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom, Dr. Sonia Roccas, Dr. Lilach Shalev-Mevorach (until 2007), Dr. Gitit Kavé (visiting lecturer), Dr. Eran Chajut (since 2007), Dr. Nurit Gronau (since 2007)
Head, Ethics committee: Dr. Gitit Kavé
Manager, Psychology lab: Asi Schupak
Statistical advisor: Dr. Shaul Tzionit

Administrative staff:
Department secretary: Irit Nattiv
Secretary for Psychology courses: Tal Matatyahu
Secretary for Methodology courses: Tami Shivek
Administrator - undergraduate student inquiries: Yael Grinshtain

3.2   **The Study Program: Contents, Structure and Scope**

3.2.1   **The name of the study program, specializations/tracks within the program**

The undergraduate programs in Psychology:

Name of program	Date first offered
B.A. in Psychology	2004-2005
Degrees in Psychology with a division of studies in an additional field	
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Economics	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Management	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Sociology	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Communication	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Political Science	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Education	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in the Arts	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Film Studies	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Literature	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Music	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in History	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Philosophy	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Judaic Studies	2006-2007
B.A. in Psychology with a Division of Studies in Mathematics	2006-2007

Name of program	Date first offered
Dual-disciplinary degrees	
B.A. in Psychology and Economics	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Management	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Sociology	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Education (Curriculum & Instruction Studies)	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Political Science	2005-2006
Interdisciplinary degrees	
B.A. in Psychology and Computer Science – Systems and Applications	2001-2002
B.A. in Psychology and Life Sciences	2005-2006
Focused Program	
B.A. in Social Sciences – Focus on Psychology and Communication	1996-1997
Other Programs	
B.A. in Social Sciences – Emphasis on Behavioral Sciences	1994-1995
B.A. in Economics with a Division of Studies in Psychology	2002-2003
B.A. in Management with a Division of Studies in Psychology	2002-2003

3.2.2   Description of the undergraduate programs in Psychology

In planning and designing the programs of study, a comprehensive comparison with other programs offered in Israel was conducted. Following this examination, a Bachelor's degree program in Psychology was designed that includes three main options: a single-disciplinary track in Psychology, a degree in Psychology with a division of studies in an additional field and a dual- or inter-disciplinary degree (with another discipline in the Social Sciences or in the Sciences). A large selection of courses in Psychology was offered with the aim of giving students a broad and in-depth background in the area.

The programs offered are similar in content to those offered by other academic institutions, to ensure (a) a smooth transfer to advanced degrees for capable graduates, and (b) transfer to other universities after beginning their studies at the OUI for students who wish to do so (such a possibility already exits with the psychology department at Ben-Gurion University; with other departments of Psychology, we are still in the process of negotiation). Because a number of OUI Psychology courses are 6-credit courses (equivalent to two corresponding courses at other universities), the number of courses required for a degree is smaller. The various psychology programs are described in the separate booklet, "Programs of Study – Psychology."

All the psychology programs described below include the following:

- Required methodology courses that impart a broad foundation in statistics and research methods (Introduction to Statistics I and II; Research Methods in the Social Sciences; Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance) – 13 credits
- Required courses providing an introduction to different fields of knowledge in psychology: Introduction to Psychology, Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Personality, Testing, Physiology of Behavior, and Psychopathology. History of Psychology is required in the single-disciplinary program – 40-46 credits
- Intermediate and advanced elective courses (students must take at least two advanced courses) focusing on a specific topic from among the content areas in the required courses and presenting research and an updated perspective of the topic.
- Two seminar papers, at least one of them based on an empirical study in psychology
- Participation in research – 3 hours (no credit)
- Computer Applications for Social Sciences; Proven English proficiency (no credit)

B.A. in Psychology: The contents of the program correspond to single-disciplinary undergraduate programs in Psychology at other universities in Israel and throughout the world. In addition to requirements in all programs as specified above, students are required to take "The History of Psychology" and additional electives in psychology. Both seminar papers must be in psychology. To accumulate the number of credits required for the degree, students may select courses from other departments.

B.A. in Psychology with a division in an additional field of studies: The program is similar to the B.A. in Psychology program, particularly with respect to the basic and required courses; however, it enables students to enrich their knowledge by selecting a division of courses in an additional discipline. The program offers flexibility in the choice of courses from among a wide range of fields (see the list above).

Dual-disciplinary programs: The OUI offers study programs that combine Psychology with another discipline in the Social Sciences (see list above). Each combination includes the three groups of courses in psychology and methodology, as specified above, and courses in the second discipline, enabling graduates to pursue advanced degrees in each of the disciplines.

Interdisciplinary programs: These programs combine Psychology studies with a discipline outside of the Social Sciences (Computer Science and Life Sciences). They include a foundation suitable for both disciplines, required core courses, and advanced elective courses in each discipline.

B.A. in Social Sciences: Emphasis on Behavioral Sciences: This program of study includes in addition to the courses required in all psychology programs, courses in Sociology and Management. The emphasis is on behavioral studies.

B.A. in Social Sciences with a Focus on Psychology and Communication: This program enables students to combine studies in two fields, Psychology and Communication. It includes in addition to all the specified courses required in all psychology programs, courses in Communication.

Teaching Certificate in Psychology: Students who completed a BA in Psychology may choose to continue their studies towards a teaching certificate in psychology that includes six courses in Psychology and in Education, as well as practical training. As this is a post-graduate program, it is only mentioned here.

3.2.2.1   Duration of studies

Students set their own pace of studies and their progress is measured according to the credits they accumulate rather than in units of time. The OUI does not require students to complete a uniform and defined study program in a given academic year. The only given time framework that the students must take into consideration is the semester. Most courses span one semester and students are required to fulfill all course requirements within the semester in which they take a course.

The Registrar's Office monitors the timeframe of each student. Students can spread their studies according to their individual needs, but every undergraduate program also has a recommended "accelerated" track, enabling students to complete their degree in three years. For the 686 graduates of the various psychology programs between 2002 and 2006, the median time taken to complete all courses toward the degree was 4.0 years. However, the median for degree entitlement was 6 years (delayed by the need to complete seminar papers).

3.2.2.2   Courses for students of other disciplines

Several courses in the psychology programs were developed to serve all students in the Social Sciences or in a specific discipline in the Social Sciences:

- Statistics courses: Introduction to Statistics for Social Sciences I and II – required courses in all Social Science programs
- The course "Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance," which is offered to Sociology students, is part of the course "Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance"
- The course "Research Methods in the Social Sciences" serves all the programs in the Social Sciences, except for the single-disciplinary program in Economics
- The course "Judgment and Evaluation under Conditions of Uncertainty," which is offered to students of Economics and Management, is an adapted version of an advanced course on judgment developed for psychology students
- "Critical Thinking" serves mainly students studying toward a teaching certificate

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

The first two goals of the program are the goals of the university and of the department. They are achieved in the psychology programs in the following ways:

Open admissions, distance learning and addressing the needs of special population groups contribute to achieving the goal of **increased access to higher education**. Despite the fact that there are many higher education institutions currently offering psychology programs, hundreds of students pursue a psychology degree at the OUI. Many special groups in the population take our undergraduate degree programs: students from the periphery, Arabic-speaking students, the ultra-orthodox sector and students with learning and other disabilities. The flexibility (in terms of place, time and teaching methods) enables students from these groups to cope, each in his or her own way. It also enables talented students, unable to attend traditional universities due to work or family commitments, to study at their own pace. Programs of study at the OUI are based on distance learning and therefore the university does not require that students come to a central campus. Studies take place in various study centers dispersed throughout the country. Study groups in each course are opened each semester based on the number of students enrolled in the course in a given geographical area.

The goal focusing on **study material development and research** is realized through the special integrative learning materials that have been, and continue to be, developed, for psychology courses, materials that serve all higher education institutions in Israel. Research conducted by faculty members in various psychology fields is published in the most prestigious journals in the field (see chapter 4).

The learning and teaching methods, materials, study aids and flexibility in time, place and study pace enable those with a potential for academic studies to realize this potential in psychology studies. The department is engaged in developing technological learning aids that serve OUI students as well as students in other institutions. These aids enable students with different learning styles and needs to experience effective and enjoyable studies.

Through the methodology courses developed by the department, OUI students are provided with high-level training in methodology. These courses are highly regarded, and utilized, by other universities. The department also contributed several content courses to other departments.

With respect to the specific goals of the psychology program, each goal is examined separately below:

a. **Understanding the historical, sociological and philosophical context in which psychology was established and operates**

b. **Having a broad and deep knowledge of the different areas of psychology**

The program exposes students to all the major areas in psychology. In all courses – introductory, intermediate and advanced – emphasis is placed on teaching the contexts in which psychology operates: historical, sociological and philosophical.

   c. **Viewing psychology as a scientific discipline**: The program includes many methodology courses that expose students to various research approaches.

   d. **Having a deep understanding of methodology that enables**:
   - **Critical reading** of scientific and popular material
   - **Critical analysis** of psychological theories and approaches
   - **The ability to translate general research questions into an organized research procedure**

In required courses, students are exposed to key theories and various approaches. In various, mainly advanced, courses, students read many research articles and examine complex research issues. In advanced courses, students analyze studies that contrast and challenge different theories and approaches. Students gain experience in the different stages of the research process. The seminar paper based on an empirical study provides another and more in-depth research experience.

   e. **Having the skills necessary for searching for material in libraries and databases**: This is acquired through the requirement that all students must fulfill bibliographical training in the library (see section 3.6.4). In advanced courses and in writing seminar papers, students must locate, read and summarize scientific material in their areas of research.

   f. **Knowing what is ethically permitted and prohibited in psychological research**: Students learn about the various ethical aspects of psychology (treatment and research) in different courses and in preparing seminar papers based on empirical studies that are approved by the Ethics Committee (see Extras, "Ethics committee request form").

   g. **Having the ability to express themselves orally and in writing**: Students are required to submit assignments in all courses and receive written feedback. This activity aims to develop students' writing abilities. In several advanced courses, students are required to present an article or articles orally, at a tutorial session. This enables students to gain experience in oral presentation of scientific ideas.

   h. **Are capable of independent study**: The unique OUI study method includes reading material, dealing with assignments independently and participation in discussion groups on course websites. Students gain experience in independent study through these activities.

   i. **Are able to read scholarly texts and contend with material in English**: In general, students are required to reach a high level of English proficiency and must show evidence of such proficiency prior to enrollment in advanced courses, in which most of the material is in English.

   j. **Having basic experience in research, and if they choose, also a "taste" of treatment**: Students are required to write a short research paper as well as perform a more significant empirical study. Students who wish to experience treatment can do so in the framework of the course, "Field Experience in Psychology."

   k. **Having a perspective of psychology that enables them to make an informed decision as to the area in which they prefer to continue their psychology studies**: The program provides its graduates with training both in theory and in applications, in different areas of psychology, thereby giving them the opportunity to examine important aspects of psychological research as well as practice. This increases their chances of making an informed decision when selecting a desired track when pursuing an advanced degree.

3.2.4   **Planning and managing the study programs**

Design of study programs: New programs of study at the OUI are initiated by senior faculty members in the department and usually developed by OUI faculty members in consultation with scholars from other universities and consultants who submit written evaluations of the programs. In most cases, one of the initiators also heads the program and is responsible for its operation. Every program undergoes the following stages before it is approved (for the detailed procedure, see Rules and Procedures, "Program approval," in Hebrew):

1. The program is submitted to experts in other universities for evaluation.
2. The development team revises the program, in accordance with the reviewers' comments.
3. The Education and Psychology subcommittee discusses the program.
4. If approved by the subcommittee, the Faculty Council discusses the program.
5. If approved by the Faculty Council, the Academic Committee discusses the program.
6. If approved by all the committees of the OUI, the program is submitted to the Council for Higher Education for approval.

The Academic Committee is the highest academic authority with respect to study programs (see chapter 1). If one Committee member opposes a decision or maintains that it was not sufficiently substantiated (for example, if individuals recognized as leading experts in the relevant field in Israel were not involved in the decision), the recommendation is returned to the relevant academic department.

Members of the department in the field of Psychology design the programs and initiate and edit updates to them (the Academic Committee only considers recommendations submitted to the Committee and does not initiate changes in study programs). The department faculty continuously compares the programs to corresponding programs at other universities, and evaluates and updates the programs as needed. Changes in the programs (including changes in required and elective courses, and the development of new courses) go through the first five of the six stages specified above.

Developing new courses in psychology: In general, every course undergoes stages similar to those of the program: the course proposal is submitted to advisors, and then to the Education and Psychology subcommittee and the Academic Committee. As part of the course development process, all written material is submitted to an external consultant and undergoes quality control, editing and production processes.

Updating courses: Teaching of outdated courses is discontinued and new or updated courses are developed. Such updates are usually conducted following a direct initiative of the department (e.g., the course "Judgment and Decision Making under Uncertainty" was discontinued and replaced by a new updated course, "The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment"). In other courses, some units are replaced by new ones and updating is performed continuously (e.g., in "Cognitive Psychology," "Research Methods in the Social Sciences") and in others, a special unit that includes all updated material is added to the course (e.g., "Introduction to Psychology"). Some courses are based on a translated textbook and a study guide. In those cases, we update the course by translating new editions of the textbook and revising the study guide accordingly (e.g., "Physiology of Behavior"). Course credits are updated and adjusted to both the updated contents and the study program.

Changes in study programs over the past five years

Updates to the Bachelor's degree programs: The psychology programs have undergone many changes over the past five years: beginning in 2001-2002, the OUI has offered dual-disciplinary programs in Psychology and Economics, Psychology and Management, Psychology and Sociology, Psychology and Education (Curriculum and Instruction Studies), and in Psychology and Computer Science (Systems and Applications). Since 2005-2006, the

department has offered dual-disciplinary programs in Psychology and Political Science and in Psychology and Life Sciences.

Since 2005, the OUI has offered a B.A. in Psychology, replacing the B.A. in Social Sciences with a focus on Psychology. In 2006, the OUI offered a degree in Psychology with divisions of studies in additional fields.

Changes in advanced courses: In the past five years, we significantly developed and expanded the selection of advanced courses in psychology.

- Six new courses were added to the program: "Cross-Cultural Psychology," "Identification with Groups," "Reading Disabilities," "Sleep and Sleep Disorders in Childhood," "Mathematical Disabilities" and "Psychology of the Holocaust."
- Three advanced courses were rewritten and totally revised: "Attitudes and Persuasion," "Visual Imagery and Dream" and "The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment."
- An honors research seminar was developed with the aim of offering a unique experience to outstanding students who will most likely continue to graduate studies. This is a year-long course conducted by a senior faculty member who advises students in writing a seminar paper based on an empirical study as part of the course requirements.

Research experience: Over the years, we found that students encounter difficulties when conducting empirical studies, despite taking methodology courses (Statistics and Research Methods). We therefore decided to add a research component to the study program. The course "Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance" was revised to include a research experience component and the new course is now called "Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance." In the new course, students conduct a small-scale study and, stage-by-stage, write a research report, closely monitored by tutors, thus gaining experience in the different stages involved in describing an empirical study.

Participation in research as subjects: With the aim of exposing students to research in psychology and encouraging research, in 2001, we added 3 hours of mandatory participation in research studies in the psychology lab. Students must complete this requirement prior to enrolling in "Cognitive Psychology."

Learning to use SPSS: As of 2007, SPSS training was added to "Introduction to Statistics II." With the materials, students receive a CD with the software, a study guide, and a schedule of tutorial meetings.

3.2.5 Managing and monitoring study programs

Study programs are monitored in two general areas: in program development and teaching, and in the student's programs of study.

- **Monitoring programs and courses in terms of development and teaching**

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

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

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

- **Monitoring of the student's programs of study**

Studies at the OUI in general and in our study programs in particular are characterized by a high degree of flexibility. All students are entitled to complete their study program at the rate suitable for them and, in many cases, also in the sequence convenient for them (except in cases in which courses have specific prerequisites). Study flexibility at the OUI is also reflected in the fact that students are not required to complete the study program that they began. They can change the program at any time. For example, they may begin a very focused program (such as a single-disciplinary bachelor's degree in Psychology) and then decide to change to a dual-disciplinary program in Psychology and Sociology, and finally choose a general degree in the Social Sciences. Under these conditions, it is crucial to monitor every student's individual study program. This monitoring is performed through academic counseling and the approval of study programs.

Academic counseling: Upon commencing their studies, students are invited for academic counseling in order to design a study program suited to their needs. At any time during their studies, students can seek counseling from department faculty members or from the Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center. Counseling is offered by phone, face-to-face or online.

Approving a study program: An interdisciplinary committee, the Study Program Approval Committee, examines each student's program and determines whether the student has fulfilled all degree requirements. A degree cannot be conferred without the Committee's approval. Every student who accumulates 48 credits receives a special form from the Committee asking him/her to suggest a program for completing his/her studies in accordance with requirements specified in the academic catalog. The Committee reviews the proposed program submitted by the student and returns it along with comments and guidelines or with written confirmation that the program was approved toward a degree. Upon completion of their studies, the students' programs are reexamined to ensure entitlement to the degree.

3.2.6 Summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the study program

Strengths

For the most part, the programs achieve their goals. The advantages of the programs are the high-level studies together with considerable flexibility in pace and learning methods.

- In line with the program objectives, studies expose students to the myriad topics in psychology and to the philosophical, historical and social context in which it operates. The study programs provide experience in theoretical and research areas.

- The independent nature of studies in the program develops self-discipline and the ability for self-criticism in its graduates, and prepares them for the type of learning required in advanced studies.

- Open admissions, along with the distance learning nature of studies, offers an opportunity to various population groups to take advantage of high-level academic studies. These include individuals living in the geographical periphery, those with physical disabilities, or those who studied in the ultra-orthodox school system, who would otherwise be unable to gain admittance to studies or to study in traditional institutions.

- The high quality of learning material (developed by scholars from the OUI and other academic institutions) serves OUI students and students in other institutions.

- The high academic level of the programs in general and of the courses in particular is recognized by Psychology departments in other Israeli universities, and enables capable graduates to continue toward advanced degrees or to transfer credits to other universities.

Weaknesses

- Despite substantial efforts to continually update courses, this is a difficult task, mainly due to the small number of senior faculty members in the department. OUI development and instruction methods require monitoring, control and evaluation mechanisms that take up a large share of senior faculty time. Despite their good intentions, they cannot keep up with the updating demands. Nonetheless, much has been achieved in this area in recent years, and course websites facilitate this endeavor.

- Most courses in the various psychology programs are semester-long. The 6-credit courses (for example, "Introduction to Psychology," "Social Psychology," and advanced courses) cover very large amounts of material, which in other universities is usually spread over multiple courses. Therefore, students are expected to study and internalize large quantities of material in a short period. Students can naturally enroll in fewer courses in order to devote more time to such heavy-load courses.

- As noted, most introductory and intermediate courses are based on textbooks written expressly for OUI students. In advanced courses, on the other hand, students must contend with original sources written in English. This transition from material specifically prepared for the students in Hebrew, to material that, for the most part, is not processed and in English, is often very abrupt, and the skills required to make this transition are not acquired as gradually as necessary. In order to surmount this problem, we established an ad-hoc committee that is currently formulating recommendations for a more gradual transition from courses based on OUI books written in Hebrew, to advanced courses based entirely on articles in English (for example, by adding articles in Hebrew in introductory courses in the program, and articles in English in intermediate courses).

- Due to the nature of distance learning, there is a gap between the demanding requirements of writing seminar papers and the level of support and guidance provided students in the writing process. Although seminar paper supervisors provide extensive support (multiple meetings, phone and e-mail), many students have great difficulty writing papers on a high level. This problem is probably particularly acute because some students in the program come from a weaker educational background and as a result require greater support. In recent years, several attempts have been made to implement a different framework for writing seminar papers and, in light of this experience, we are currently formulating recommendations, some of which have already been implemented.

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

No additional non-academic bodies are involved beyond those described in chapter 1.

Department involvement in the activities of other bodies: Several members of the department are involved in programs offered by the In-Service Teacher Training Unit (headed by Zippora Jacob). They give lectures as part of continuing education programs offered to teachers employed by the Ministry of Education. Department faculty members participate in extra-academic studies offered by the OUI through lectures open to the public.

Community involvement initiatives: The department initiates special community involvement projects. For example, faculty members collaborate with the rehabilitation team at the Levenstein Rehabilitation Hospital in a project dealing with psychological elements of

patient rehabilitation. During the recent war in Lebanon, an emotional support hotline was offered to OUI students and employees, conducted by clinical faculty in the department.

3.2.8   Directions for further development

Updating and development of existing BA programs: Maintaining the high academic level of BA programs requires ongoing monitoring of courses. This will be reflected in updating and rewriting parts of some courses, and others in their entirety.

Dual-disciplinary program in Psychology and Education: Learning Disabilities: This program was submitted to the Council of Higher Education and is under evaluation.

Interdisciplinary undergraduate program in Cognition: After being approved by all internal OUI bodies, a program of study in Cognition, which combines psychology, life sciences, philosophy and computer science, was submitted to the CHE. When the program is approved, several designated courses will be developed for the program.

Graduate programs: The next major development is offering graduate programs in psychology. After approval by all internal OUI bodies, two master's degree programs in Cognitive Neuropsychology and in Social Psychology were submitted to the CHE for approval. Both programs combine knowledge of applied aspects of the field along with courses with a theoretical focus. Students will also conduct research to ensure that graduates of the program have the tools necessary to critically evaluate the validity of innovations they will encounter over the years:

- **Cognitive Neuropsychology**: The aim of the program is to provide a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for individuals interested in neuropsychological research or diagnosis.
- **Social Psychology**: The aim of the program is to provide a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for individuals interested in theoretical and applied aspects of social psychology.

Recruitment of additional senior faculty: In September 2007, a new faculty member joined the psychology team (in Neuropsychology) as well as a part-time senior development consultant. We are in the process of recruiting another faculty member (in Social Psychology). Following the approval of the new programs of study, we intend to recruit additional senior faculty members to the department.

3.3   Teaching and Learning

3.3.1   Teaching and learning methods

The distance teaching and self-study method developed by the Open University enables individuals with work, family and military service constraints to organize their studies according to the their personal needs. This method is not time or place dependent; it is not based on a central campus with teachers and students or on a fixed and uniform class schedule. The OUI's teaching and study conception combines distance teaching with components of face-to-face teaching (blended learning). The emphasis is on active independent study that enables students to choose the tutorial framework most suited to their needs.

3.3.1.1   Learning materials

Most courses are based on **books** especially produced in Hebrew or Hebrew translations of existing books. The written courses are specifically suited for self-study: they are usually divided into study units, each unit dealing with a defined topic and designed to be studied within a set period of time; the material is clearly explained and combined with guiding questions, answers to questions, and in many cases also self-assessment questions. The latter

enable students to assess their progress vis-à-vis the material and to examine the extent to which they understood it up to that point and whether they need to review any of it further.

Some courses include **readers** of articles on course topics to expand students' knowledge. In advanced courses (and in a few intermediate courses), students are required to search for materials in the library or in electronic databases. The articles in readers designed for advanced courses are not translated into Hebrew. In these courses, students are required to have sufficient mastery of English to comprehend scholarly articles.

All courses based on readers or translated books are accompanied by a **study guide** (in digital or booklet format) providing detailed instructions on how to approach the various materials. The guide includes a short general overview of the material, a list of the objectives of the unit, definitions of key topics, references to reading assignments, clarifications of complex issues, fundamental questions, reflection questions on specific topics (some accompanied by a detailed answer or guidelines), key terms related to the unit and more. The aim of the study guide is to guide the student and integrate all materials (course book, articles, multimedia, lectures, video films, etc.).

Course materials frequently include **technology-based material**, particularly:

CDs: A multimedia CD was developed for the course "Physiological Psychology" presenting the brain in three dimensions, demonstrating and explaining physiological processes and showing films illustrating different disabilities resulting from brain damage. In the course "Visual Attention," students receive a CD they use to conduct attention experiments. The CD in the course "Cognitive Psychology" is used to demonstrate various perception phenomena. In the course "The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment" students receive a CD used to read a basic article, conduct experiments and collect data.

Recorded lectures: The material in several courses includes lectures recorded by experts.

Films: In "Developmental Psychology" and "Psychopathology," students receive films that are part of an American educational series on these topics.

Printed course materials and CDs are mailed to students' homes, accompanied by a **booklet** that describes the course format and process. The booklet includes the course topics, assignment questions and timetable (dates of tutorial sessions and topics of discussion, as well as deadlines for submitting assignments). The booklet also includes sample final exams from previous semesters.

3.3.1.2 Tutorial sessions

All courses include face-to-face or online tutorial sessions, conducted by a tutor who holds at least a master's degree. Tutorial sessions are not mandatory (in the majority of cases), in line with the OUI spirit that seeks to enable maximum flexibility and encourage independent study. The aim of these sessions is to discuss issues in the course material, clarify complex topics, enrich the study material, demonstrate and expand on issues not included in the printed course material, promote enjoyment in studies and help students plan and maintain the rate of study. Tutors select topics together with the course coordinator and use varied methods: activities in small groups, role play, case studies, etc. Students are offered several tutorial formats and choose the most suitable for them from among the following:

- **Regular face-to-face tutorials (at OUI study centers)**: A 2-3-hour session once every 2-3 weeks, 5-8 tutorial sessions over a semester. Beginning in 2007, there will be a "reduced" tutorial option – a single tutorial per semester.
- **Intensive face-to-face tutorials (at OUI study centers)**: Usually between 7 and 14 tutorials per semester conducted weekly or biweekly.
- **Online tutorials**: The Psychology faculty uses a variety of tools and methods for virtual tutorials conducted through course websites (see section 3.3.1.3).

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

Tutoring via e-mail: In addition to telephone tutoring that is usually limited to specific hours during the week (although there are tutors who agree to answer calls outside their formal tutoring hours), students can send an e-mail to the teaching staff at any time and receive a speedy response. With respect to topics relevant to all the students in the course, the course team makes an effort to offer tutoring within the framework of the course website forum.

3.3.1.3 Online teaching

The department makes extensive use of distance teaching methods, some of which are presented below. Synchronous learning is conducted through different media in the aim of bridging geographic distances and varying teaching methods. These methods are used throughout the semester or specifically in preparation for the final exam on the course websites, through various channels:

Course websites: All the courses have a website that serves as a major learning and teaching component (see section 3.3.3.1).

InterWise: A system used to create virtual classes enabling real time interaction among students and between students and lecturers (one person interacting with many people). Classroom activity is based on transmission of a live lesson so that the lecturer speaks and all the students hear, and a student speaks and the entire class hears. Live lessons reach students' computers so that they can participate without leaving home.

Ofek **satellite system**: A live broadcast of a tutorial session, usually conducted by a course coordinator who is a veteran and experienced tutor or a guest lecturer who is an expert in the field, enabling a dialog between the students and the lecturer. *Ofek* lessons are broadcast to 20 classrooms throughout the country and to students' computers.

Studio recording of lectures: Recording of a lecture or tutorial session that does not include interaction with students. The lecture is edited, sent to students on a CD and posted on the course website.

3.3.1.4 Assignments, examination and seminar papers

In all courses, students submit a specified number of assignments during the semester based on a predefined timetable. Assignments serve several goals. A typical assignment in most courses provides the opportunity to review basic questions from the course material, introduces students to key concepts and their applications and allows for integration and/or in-depth processing of certain parts of the study material.

Several courses have special assignments of larger scope. For example, assignments based on reading several articles or material not included in the printed course materials and integrative application of concepts and principles across many study units (further details about different types of special assignments are presented in section 3.3.7.1).

In most courses, assignments are submitted by students individually; however, in several courses, students may perform the assignment in small groups. Students submit assignments via regular mail or through the online assignment system (see section 3.3.3.1). Assignment grades are weighted as part of the course grade, and in most cases comprise 10-30% of the final grade.

Students receive **feedback** on assignments from their tutor. In most courses, the course coordinator formulates guidelines for checking the assignments in order to ensure uniformity of the checking process among all those checking the assignments. In some courses, the course coordinator posts combined feedback on the course website in order to clarify major issues that emerged after checking numerous assignments.

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. For details on examinations, see section 3.3.6.1.

Students in the undergraduate psychology program are required to write two **seminar papers** in advanced courses, at least one based on an empirical study. In some advanced courses, students are required to read material, write a paper that includes an original and independent research idea, submit the paper and present their work at a tutorial session. Participation in bibliographic training in the library is a prerequisite for enrolling in advanced courses.

3.3.1.5 **Practical experience**

Students in the Psychology program have three opportunities to gain practical experience: two mandatory and the third optional. The first involves **conducting research** as part of "Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance." In this course, students select an article for review, read the article and propose a research question. Students conduct the research in stages, accompanied by a personal supervisor, and write a report based on the rules of scientific writing. This experience prepares students for the seminar paper they will write as part of the program requirements. The second is **participation in research**: students are required to come to the psychology laboratory to participate in three hours of research as subjects. The third, which is optional, is **experience in treatment**, in "Practical Experience in Psychology." The course offers students an opportunity to participate in activities conducted in varied treatment frameworks (for example, the Geha or Shalvata mental health centers). This activity requires a commitment to one or two weekly sessions over a year, accompanied by supervision at the treatment location and at the OUI. Students coach or tutor an individual receiving treatment in the treatment framework or are involved in group coaching. At the end of the course, students submit a final paper that reports on their experience in the course. The course does not grant credits and is primarily taken by students planning to pursue a master's degree in clinical psychology.

3.3.1.6 **Symposia**

The psychology department holds symposia that afford students the opportunity to enrich their knowledge in different areas in psychology and to meet leading experts in the field. Attendance is not mandatory.

3.3.1.7 **Honors research seminar**

This seminar was added to the psychology programs in 2007. It provides outstanding psychology students an opportunity to participate in a seminar conducted by a senior OUI faculty member. During the year-long seminar, students meet with the faculty member eight times each semester and write multiple assignments and a seminar paper based on an empirical study.

Evaluation: The aim of the teaching methods used in the department is to enable distance learning to students by offering maximum flexibility to those combining studies with other endeavors (employment, military service, etc.). These methods are based on and enhance learning skills and personal responsibility for the process, which demands significant investment of resources on the part of the student. The methods provide students with a concentrated and active learning experience that helps them process and internalize the study material, and contributes to their preparation for advanced degree studies.

Originally, the key weaknesses of studies in the OUI format pertained to limited campus life as a learning community. Discussion groups in course websites and the option to participate in tutorial sessions provide a (partial) solution to this difficulty. Another limitation is the lack of direct contact with researchers and leading academics in the field. To reduce this

limitation, efforts are made to include recorded expert lectures in a growing number of courses and to organize conferences with content experts on a more regular basis.

3.3.2. Evaluating and improving teaching

Three groups are involved in teaching at the OUI and its improvement: senior faculty members, course coordinators and tutors. Actual teaching is primarily conducted by course coordinators and tutors.

3.3.2.1 Training the academic teaching staff

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

Course coordinator training

New course coordinators begin their employment two months before the beginning of the semester. They visit various OUI units and are briefed by key individuals: the office of the Dean of Academic Studies (where they receive a printed "Guide for Course coordinators" that describes the coordinator's roles and activities); human resources (to finalize the employment agreement); the library; the computer center (to open an account); *Shoham* (to be acquainted with the integration of technologies in teaching); teaching services, and the senior academic faculty member who is the academic responsible for the course. The department head appoints a veteran course coordinator to **mentor** the new coordinator. When a new course coordinator replaces a current coordinator, there is an **overlap** period, during which the new coordinator works side-by-side with the veteran coordinator.

In the second stage, the course coordinator participates in workshops conducted by the Training Department that include:

- **Orientation for new course coordinators** (5 hours): participants learn about the OUI – its nature and key values; study and discuss the essence of their position, its challenges, position partners and interfaces. Participants meet with a panel of position holders who answer questions and address dilemmas.
- **Writing assignments and exams** (a two-day workshop – totaling 14 hours): the workshop provides theoretical knowledge as well as skills in writing assignments and exams. Participants drill proper writing of an exam in the course they will coordinate and receive feedback from the coach and the participants. The workshop provides tools for mapping the course in order to write comprehensive, exhaustive, valid and reliable assignments and exams, and imparts skills for: writing exam items on varied levels; formulating questions accurately, including proper formulation of instructions ; preparing accurate guidelines for checking assignments and the exam; analyzing and evaluating the quality of exams and assignments they write, and more. Participants also learn about the complexity of holding exams at the OUI and the unique process of producing and managing exams from the time they are written by the course coordinator up to the time students submit the completed exam.
- **Using Oracle software** (3.5 hours): Oracle is the OUI database software that serves as the main tool used by course coordinators. The information that can be produced from the system is necessary for ongoing academic and administrative course management. Course coordinators learn software functions relevant for them and practice using the software.
- **Training in managing course websites** from *Shoham* staff members.

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.

Tutor training

The OUI Training Department is involved in initial training of the tutors. Course coordinators are responsible for training tutors in the course they will tutor.

Tutor training in the general university system: New tutors at the OUI are required to participate in a three-day training program, offered twice a year, that deals with the nature of the position, the first tutorial session, checking assignments and examinations, and tutoring skills. Correcting assignments is one of the main components of the tutor's job. Therefore, the training process emphasizes the development of skills for formulating grading criteria, as well as improving reliability and providing effective feedback to students.

The training program for new tutors

Session 1 (about 5 hours): Acquaintance with the OUI and preparing for the first tutorial session. Tutors are acquainted with the OUI, its values and work style (known as "the OUI spirit") and with the University's employment terms. Group workshops are conducted in the second part of the session (15-20 tutors in every group, 3-5 groups) addressing the first tutorial session – acquaintance, clarifying goals, etc.

Session 2 (about 5.5 hours): Assignments as a means of two-way communication –checking assignments and providing feedback. Assignments play a key role in the OUI teaching process and feedback on assignments is first and foremost for learning purposes. In this session, tutors practice checking assignments and providing effective feedback, discuss grading dilemmas and the preparation of students for writing assignments.

Session 3 (about 5 hours): Tutoring skills. In this small group workshop, tutors learn and practice the use of a wide range of tutoring skills through simulations and constructive feedback from colleagues and experienced tutors. Session activities are accompanied by a closed-circuit television.

Training and activities for experienced tutors

1. **Workshop – The online assignment system** (3.5 hours): This workshop aims to acquaint tutors with the tool for submitting assignments and giving feedback through the Internet.

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

3. **Workshop – Feedback and Criticism** (8 hours): The aim of the workshop is to enhance tutors' skills in giving and receiving feedback.

4. **Workshop – Pygmalion Tutoring** (7 hours): The workshop aims to teach tutors how to improve students' achievements by raising their expectations about themselves.

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

6. **University-wide activities**, including symposia, lectures, guided concerts, exhibitions, tours and workshops on a variety of topics. Demand is high for most of the activities offered.

Activities for experienced tutors are not mandatory. Thirty experienced tutors in the department participated in these activities in 2005. In 2006, only five tutors participated. Activities were not offered in the second semester because of the second Lebanon war.

Tutor training in the framework of individual courses: Course coordinators are responsible for training new course tutors. A variety of means are used for tutor training:

1. **Tutor team orientation**: At least one meeting between all new tutors and the course coordinator is held for every course. The meeting goals are:

- To present the course teaching goals and study aids
- To survey the study topics and various emphases (for example, to help in detecting difficulties encountered by students) and the teaching schedule
- To explain the importance of assignments in general and in the course in particular
- To provide teaching aids that can facilitate tutoring (lesson plans, exercises developed in the course, presentations, film clips for illustrating different topics, etc.)

2. **Continuous tutoring throughout the semester**: The course coordinator is responsible for maintaining continuous contact with new tutors throughout the semester, accompanying them and monitoring their integration into the tutoring framework.

3. **Observing tutorials**: The course coordinator and senior faculty members observe tutorials from time to time, and discuss the quality of tutoring with the tutor.

4. **Observing a veteran tutor**: New tutors in several courses are asked to observe tutorial sessions conducted by veteran tutors as part of their training process.

5. **Accompaniment by a veteran tutor**: In several courses, the course coordinator appoints a veteran tutor to be responsible for the new tutor's integration.

6. **Tutor discussion groups**: Most courses have a tutor discussion group on the course website to facilitate ongoing course management and discuss problems.

7. **Workshops or symposia**: In some courses, the course coordinator or a number of course coordinators organizes workshops or symposia for the tutors.

8. **Tutor meetings**: Meetings of tutors are often held when a course has more than two tutors. In most courses these meetings are held every semester, usually before the beginning of the semester or after the semester ends. The main issues discussed are:

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

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

3.3.2.2   Evaluation of the teaching staff

Course coordinator evaluation

The senior faculty members who have academic responsibility for the courses are involved in the annual evaluation of the course coordinators. Every senior faculty member receives data (assignments and exams, results of the teaching survey described below, course grades) on the courses for which s/he is responsible, evaluates the assignments, exams and course website activities, and reviews any additional information available, as a result of direct interaction with the course coordinator. The course coordinator's initiatives, research and doctorate are also addressed.

The course coordinators are informed by the department head of the evaluation process and are asked to write a summary of their activities in the past year (in addition to their work as course coordinators); the tasks they agreed to undertake (following the evaluation of the previous year), what they did in practice, and their plans for the coming year regarding any

special projects that will improve the course and/or teaching. They are also asked to address studies, research and any other relevant information.

The department secretaries fill out a standard form for all course coordinators (see Extras, "Report on coordinator"), recording the number of tutorial observations they conducted, delays in submitting exams and/or assignments; letters of appreciation or complaints, etc.

After receiving all the information from the senior faculty member, the course coordinator and the secretary, as well as all the statistical data, the department head reviews the information and examines the course website. Particular attention is given to the goals set at the previous year's evaluation meeting, compared to what was accomplished in the current year.

A two-hour meeting is scheduled between the course coordinator and the department head at which questions are raised about the gaps between what was planned and what was executed. Both decide together on the goals for the coming year and document the decisions. The course coordinator is also asked to give feedback on departmental administrative services and the department head, and about any other relevant department activity.

The evaluation summary is filed in the course coordinator's personal file. The summary of goals for the coming year is sent to the coordinator, and a reminder is sent in the middle of the following academic year.

Tutor evaluation

Observing tutorial sessions: Course coordinators continuously monitor the quality of the tutors' work by conducting visits to study centers throughout the country, observing tutorial sessions and talking with students. After conducting the observation, the course coordinator fills in a short form (see Extras, "Report on tutor") that is submitted to the department office and to the department head, to track teaching quality. Senior faculty also visit study centers.

Assignment and exam sampling: Course coordinators are responsible for examining the quality of assignment checking. To this end, assignments are sampled during the semester. They are photocopied and sent to the course coordinator after they are checked by the tutor. The course coordinator summarizes his/her comments and sends feedback to the tutor. Course coordinators can decide in advance for every tutor how many assignments will be sampled. They usually sample more from new tutors than from veteran tutors. In the online assignment system, course coordinators have the option of viewing assignments checked by a tutor directly on the computer and receiving statistics on all tutors' grades (average grades and SDs on each assignment), how long it took the tutor to check the assignment and whether s/he met the timetable. Similarly, the course coordinator can sample exams in order to examine the quality and uniformity of the grading process among all those grading the exam (when tutors are involved).

Teaching survey: One of the important tools for evaluating and examining teaching quality is the survey of teaching conducted in every course each semester, through which course coordinators and faculty members responsible for the course receive feedback from students about various aspects of teaching and learning in the course. The survey helps course coordinators to monitor tutors' performance and the efficacy of the variety of teaching tools and methods used in the course. The survey is conducted by the Evaluation Department via the internet through the course website, using a standard questionnaire (see Extras, "Teaching survey"). Course coordinators may add and change survey questions according to the unique needs of the course for which they are responsible.

Students are asked to evaluate the course with respect to (a) overall satisfaction, (b) assignments, (c) the tutor and tutorial sessions, (d) the course website, (e) general questions (difficulty of course and expected grade) and background questions (credits accumulated to

date, participation in tutorials). A summary of the results is sent to the head of the department, the course coordinator and the tutors.

Statistics reflecting student performance on the assignments and exam are submitted to the course coordinator who sends it to tutors along with comments and insights.

3.3.3   The use of information technology in teaching and learning

The information technology used includes several components:

3.3.3.1   Course websites

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

Example of a course website (translated)

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

Academic channel
Message board: Every website has a message board with notices posted by the course coordinator throughout the semester about the study material (e.g., clarifications, emphases, guidance) 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 a-synchronous 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.

In many courses, discussion groups are divided by topic based on the timetable of the material studied during the semester. In some courses, tutors participate in conducing discussion groups, and in certain cases efforts are made to assign a tutor with expertise in the discussion topic. Furthermore, in most courses, students are invited to answer each other's questions, while some discussion groups are intended for independent study without tutor involvement.

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

Personal notebook: This tool 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.

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

Online assignment system: The system enables students to submit assignments and receive feedback from the tutor online. The procedure is efficient and enables tutors to grade assignments; enables students, tutors and the course coordinator to monitor assignments; and helps overcome technical obstacles (delays in regular mail services). The system serves all students and is especially helpful to students who prefer to study at home or who live abroad.

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

Wiki: A relatively new tool enabling students to perform collaborative work. The tool is used for pedagogic purposes, for example, for creating a lexicon of course terms.

3.3.3.2   General department websites

The **Psychology Online** website is intended for psychology students and for those interested in psychology studies. It presents important information for students, including: rules and procedures concerning seminar papers in psychology, how to receive letters of recommendation for graduate studies, rules and procedures of the departmental Ethics Committee, information about master's degree programs in Israel and date of the nationwide exam for acceptance to master's degree studies. The website also includes details about OUI psychology programs as well as a list of psychology faculty members. Students can also request online academic counseling through the site – presenting a question and receiving the response directly by email.

The **laboratory website** describes activities in the psychology lab and enables students to register for mandatory research hours.

A special website was established for the psychology faculty for the purpose of this **quality evaluation**: http://telem.openu.ac.il/psy_evaluation/.

3.3.3.3   *Sheilta* – **Interactive services to students**

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

3.3.3.4   **Electronic databases**

The OUI library subscribes to electronic databases and to a database of journals of all higher learning institutions (that provides a full digital text of the articles), providing direct and convenient access to updated academic publications to faculty members and students (see section 3.6 for information about the library, databases and their frequency of use).

3.3.3.5   **DVDs and CDs used for teaching**

In some courses, students receive DVDs containing interviews with experts, demonstrations of phenomena and expert lectures. In other courses, study materials requiring three-dimensional, color or dynamic demonstrations were developed on CD (see section 3.3.1.1).

3.3.3.6   **Online tutorial sessions**

In some courses, tutorial sessions are conducted through advanced technologies: the *Ofek* system and **InterWise** (see section 3.3.1.3).

Evaluation: The use of technologies in the learning process has many advantages. They enable continuous contact between students and the teaching staff, as well as a means of communication among the students themselves. This contact enriches and facilitates the learning process. From the course coordinator's perspective, they can update and enrich course study material beyond the written course material and tutorials. Integrating technology allows for learning through different channels (integrating picture, three-dimensional diagrams and interactive activities) and can suit various learning styles. Technological tools enhance access: they enable studies from any place and at any time, in a format adapted to students' learning styles.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to the integration of technology in learning and it is not a simple endeavor. Operating the technologies demands intensive investment in resources on the part of the course coordinators, and despite its obvious importance, detracts from the time allocated to their academic work. Furthermore, some students still have difficulty finding their way on the websites despite their very friendly human interface (we estimate that the number of such students will decrease over time and the data bear this out). Another problem that needs to be addressed is the tendency of a handful of students to use the websites rather than thinking through issues on their own. The availability of the teaching staff may encourage them to ask questions without first investing time in working out a problem alone. Finally, reliance on technology exposes the learning process to technological problems.

3.3.4   **Policy regarding student participation in tutorial sessions**

The OUI study method (distance learning and self-study) does not require students to participate in tutorial sessions except in special cases: advanced courses that devote tutorial sessions to guidance on writing seminar papers, or when students present one of the course articles. The tutorials are intended to clarify and discuss points with which the students have difficulty during independent study, and for enrichment. They also serve those students who find it difficult to rely on the written material only. Students who prefer the self-study method

only can contact the tutor and the course coordinator throughout the semester during telephone office hours, through the course website or by email.

As all course material required for the course exam is mailed to students enrolled in the course, student participation in tutorial sessions depends on different considerations: physical convenience (there are no study groups close by, a student lives abroad or is a prison inmate), learning style (the student prefers to read rather than to listen, feels comfortable with the study material) or other commitments (cannot find time for tutorials).

Participation is required in the following: the course "Field Experience in Psychology," in three hours of laboratory participation in research; one or two tutorial sessions in advanced courses at which students give presentations; the Honors research seminar .

3.3.5   Methods for measuring student achievements

The aim of evaluating student achievements is to examine the knowledge and skills they acquired during the course and their entitlement to academic credits. The OUI has open admissions in undergraduate courses and does not have information about students' prior scholastic achievements. In this context it is important to underscore that the principle of open admissions does not contradict upholding standards of excellence with respect to the academic level of OUI courses or the methods used to evaluate students' academic achievements. The level of the courses is fixed and does not change from one semester to the next nor does it change according to the level of the students in one study group or another.

Student achievements at the OUI courses are evaluated mostly through assignments and exams. During the semester, students are required to submit several written assignments. These are checked, graded and corrected and returned to students. Assignment grades are weighted into the final grade of the course (on assignments, see section 3.3.7).

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 (on exams, see section 3.3.6).

Calculating final grades in the courses: The final grade in the course is calculated as a weighted average of the assignments submitted and of the exam. A student who fails the final exam (less than 60) cannot pass the course even if the weighted grade is above 60.

Grading of seminar papers: See section 3.3.7.2.

Calculating the final degree grade: The final degree grade is the weighted average of all grades in courses studied and of seminar papers written at the Open University. The weight of each course is equivalent to the number of credits granted for the course. The weight of a grade for a seminar paper is 6 credits.

3.3.6   Examinations

3.3.6.1   Method of examinations, their character and organization

Written final examinations are conducted at the end of all courses offered by the department (except in the new Honors seminar, where the exam is replaced by a paper). 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.

Students are entitled to take each exam twice (the grade that counts is the second). Students who fail an exam twice or want to improve their exam grade have to re-enroll in the course and fulfill all course requirements (including assignments). The OUI usually holds three exam dates in every semester for every course: two regular exam dates (sitting 1) and one repeat exam date (sitting 2). Exam questionnaires are different on every exam date. The exam is three hours long. 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 may not take an oral exam, a take-home exam or write a paper in lieu of a written exam.

Special exam conditions are granted in some cases, primarily to students with learning disabilities or physical problems (for the list of possible accommodations, see Extras, "Special exam conditions form," in Hebrew).

During the exam, the course coordinators (who wrote the exams) are available at the telephone center on the OUI campus to answer the students' questions referred to them by the exam proctor. Tutors are not present at the examination centers during the examination and do not see the exam before it is administered.

The department conducts three types of examinations: Exams with only open-ended questions, exams with only multiple-choice questions and exams that combine open-ended and multiple-choice questions. Most exams are of the first type (open-ended questions). In most of the courses, there is some choice on the exam questions.

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

The relative weight of an examination in the student's final grade varies in accordance with the number of assignments submitted during the semester. In most courses, the examination accounts for 70%-85% of the final grade, with the remainder determined by assignment grades. A detailed breakdown of weights in course grades can be found in Extras, "Weights of grades."

The examination process at the OUI

The testing process at the OUI is a complex logistical process. It 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 at the end of the semester when they studied, or in the following semester.

2. **Geographical distribution**
Exams are held simultaneously at dozens of centers throughout the country to enable all students to take the exams as close to their place of residence as possible.

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

4. **Organization**
The "Proctor Coordinator" is responsible for the management of the examination center and works with a local team. Examinations for different courses are held in the same classroom. Seating arrangements are computerized, and no student sits next to a student taking the same course. Students' questions are transmitted to the course coordinators (by phone) via the proctors. At the end of the examination, the examination booklets are transferred to the campus in Raanana where the course coordinators pick them up for checking. Examination booklets are not sent by mail. Examination booklets are anonymous – the grader sees only the number of the booklet, and not the student's name or ID number.

3.3.6.2   Grading
Grades in all courses 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.

The distribution of exam grades is available for all courses each semester, enabling the coordinator and senior faculty member to compare the current grade distribution to prior semesters. Experience shows that the grade distribution is usually very stable, most likely because of attention to processes applied to writing exams and extensive monitoring.

Course coordinators have a bank of exam questions that, in many cases, include statistics on them. "Good" questions may be reused, though coordinators are required to include new questions on every exam. Poor items are removed from the question bank.

If, while checking the exams, the course coordinator finds that a problematic question misled the students, s/he may decide not to count that question in the exam grade. In such a case, all the exams are regraded.

All OUI students receive information about their grades via *Sheilta* and can view a table of the grade distribution showing frequencies and percentages. The category of the student's grade is marked, enabling students to see their grade relative to other students.

3.3.6.3   Average grades of graduates

The average grade of 686 graduates over the past five years in the various Psychology undergraduate programs is 83.20 (SD=5.3) (see figure below). The OUI's open admission policy combined with its high academic requirements results in a relatively high dropout rate in the student's first courses at the OUI. Students who are able to graduate are usually highly motivated and have high intellectual abilities.
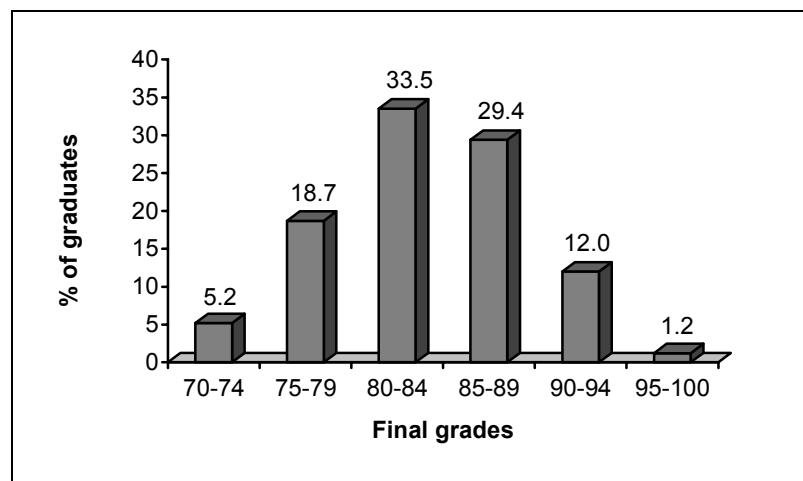
Grade distribution of graduates in Psychology in the last 5 years (N=686)

As the lowest passing grade of a course is 60, there are no graduates with a GPA of 60-70 (to get such an average, students would have to get around 65 in all courses). Psychology students know that in order to be accepted to a graduate program in Psychology, they need a GPA higher than 90 (as a necessary but not a sufficient requirement). As a result, psychology students check their GPA after each semester. Many of them reconsider their program of studies when they realize that their chances of graduating with a high grade are very low, and usually decide to switch to a degree in Social Sciences. This is probably a wise decision as the general program is easier. This may also explain the final grade distribution of psychology graduates.

3.3.7   Written papers

3.3.7.1   Types of written assignments, their contents and scope

Assignments: Written assignments are an important component of teaching and learning that aim to help students assimilate the material, underscore important course contents, provide

feedback to students and, through the students' answers, provide feedback to the teaching staff on how well students understood the study material or what difficulties they encountered. Assignments are submitted during the semester on pre-determined dates by mail or through the Internet and sometimes serve as the only means of communication between students and tutors.

In many courses, students may submit more assignments than required. Only the assignments with the highest grade and weight are used in the final course grade calculation. In this way, the OUI encourages students to invest time in assignments and to study throughout the semester and not only before the final exam.

Special assignments: One course, "Developmental Psychology," includes an online assignment in which students select a topic and search databases for an updated research article from among the course topics, present the research results in the course website and discuss them. In one "Psychopathology" assignment, students are asked to analyze a literary or historic figure from the perspective of the course study material and to use sources not provided in the course materials. In the four assignments pertaining to the research experience part of the course "Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance," students must plan a study, conduct it and write a complete report including the following sections: introduction, method, results and discussion. In the course "Reading Disabilities," students write assignments in pairs and upload them to the Internet using Wiki, and other students respond and provide feedback. In several advanced courses, students present several articles in class.

Seminar papers: Students are required to write two seminar papers, one of which must be based on an empirical study, stemming from knowledge they acquired in an advanced course.

The OUI psychology program offers a wide range of advanced courses (about nine each semester) in which students can write the seminar paper. After successfully completing the course, the student submits a seminar proposal to the course coordinator. Students can propose an independent topic for study or join an existing research study (referred by the course coordinator). The course coordinator approves the proposal and refers the student to a supervisor based on the topic. Seminar paper supervisors are experts in the topic and hold at least a PhD. Most of them are senior faculty members at other Israeli universities.

The nature of seminar papers varies: some are theoretical and include a detailed summary and an analysis of current research and references, while others are empirical. Some seminar papers also address applied aspects of theory. Students are required to add their personal perspective of the topic. Students receive a detailed guidebook for writing a seminar paper in all advanced courses in psychology (see Extras, "Seminar paper guide," in Hebrew). The booklet is posted on the department website and on the websites of advanced courses.

3.3.7.2   Methods for evaluating students' achievements

Assignments: As indicated above, students are required to submit assignments throughout the semester in every course. There are two main types of assignments:

- A **tutor assignment** is composed of open questions, enabling students to answer freely and demonstrate their writing, analysis and synthesis skills with respect to the topics studied. There are usually 5-7 assignments in a course, making up 15%-30% of the course grade. In most courses, students must submit at least three assignments. Tutors check the assignments on the basis of criteria provided by the course coordinator.
- A **computer assignment** is a multiple-choice questionnaire which students answer using the course website or a computer form. The process of checking and calculating the grade is entirely computerized.

Seminar papers: All supervisors (in most cases, senior faculty members in other institutions of higher education) recruited to supervise students writing a seminar paper receive an information booklet from the department describing the types of seminar papers, requirements pertaining to each type and the supervisors' responsibilities (see Extras, "Booklet for supervisors," in Hebrew). We recommend three possible evaluation methods that will contribute to reliability and validity of the paper checking process, and allow the supervisor to choose among them (for guidelines for evaluation and seminar paper criteria, see Extras, "Seminar paper criteria-evaluation").

The supervisor meets with the student prior to writing the paper and at least twice again to provide advice, feedback and to evaluate the paper. After the evaluation, the supervisor sends a copy of the paper, with his/her comments, as well as a detailed evaluation form and the final grade to the course coordinator. The paper is also subject to supervision processes by the course coordinator and one of the senior faculty members.

3.3.7.3   Average grades of papers, theses and projects

Over the past five years, 840 seminar papers were submitted, 647 of them (77%) based on empirical studies. The average grade was 87.5. See the distribution of grades in the histogram below. For more statistical details, see Extras, "Seminar paper grades."
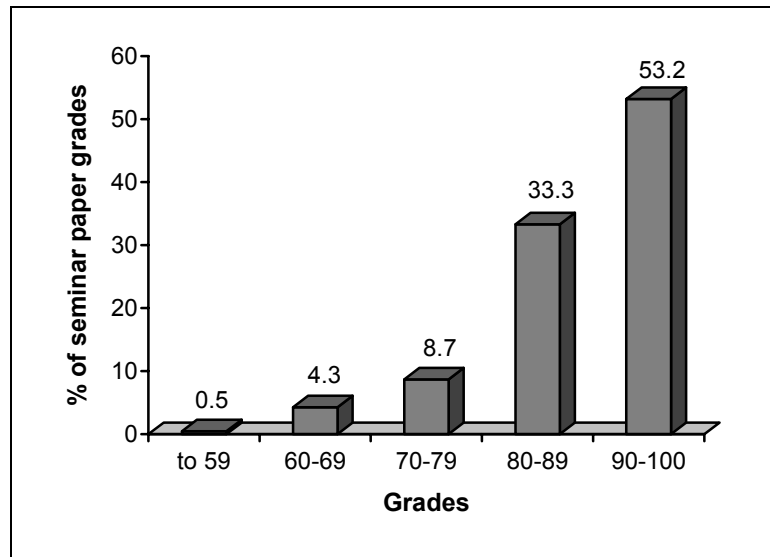
Distribution of seminar paper grades in the last 5 years (N=840)

The average grade of seminar papers based on empirical studies is slightly higher than of theoretical papers (88 and 85.6, respectively). The average time from course registration to receipt of the grade was 16.9 months for empirical papers and 12.2 months for theoretical papers. Students tend to begin the paper quite some time after registration, increasing the length of time of completing seminar papers.

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

No other methods are applied within the Psychology program.

3.3.9   Strengths and weaknesses of methods of evaluating students' achievements

The quality of evaluation of achievement can be viewed from two perspectives:
- Quality of evaluation tools (are they reliable and valid?)
- Quality of the evaluation process in terms of its effect on the student

The validity and reliability of evaluation processes are related to the design of evaluation tools (in this context, exams and assignments) as well as the application of these tools (for example, assessing students' answers).

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

- The academic teaching staff is trained in writing exams and assignments, checking assignments and grading exams (see section 3.3.2.1).
- 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 students' assignment grades, final exam grade and final course grade.
  - Consolidated results of multiple choice questions – the difficulty level, item discrimination, the proportion of students who chose each of the options, the correlation between each of the options and the overall exam grade.
  - Consolidation of grades of open-ended questions – the average grade and SD for every item, and the percentage of examinees who chose to answer the question. The report also shows the distribution of the exam grades.
  - Statistical data (means and SDs) on assignment grades, final exam grades, the correlation between the assignment grades and the exam grade, and reliability coefficients.

These reports can be generated very easily after the items are entered into the OUI database. They enable course coordinators to identify 'bad' items that could have affected students' success on the exam and to remove them from the grade calculation, and to improve future exams. In exceptional cases (when the student's grade is very close to a pass grade), the exam notebook is rechecked. This also contributes to the reliability of the checking process.

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 can, in combination with additional information, show the degree to which the assignments prepare students for the final exam.

Tools and statistical data provided to course coordinators with respect to assignments and exams are not available for seminar papers – course coordinators do not receive ongoing reports on seminar paper grades in their courses. Such a report should be produced for the course coordinators once a year.

The reliability and validity of the assignment, exam and seminar paper checking process is enhanced through monitoring of course coordinators by senior faculty members and the department head, course coordinators' monitoring of tutors' work, and the criteria prepared by the course coordinators for grading assignments and exams. The OUI's special exam system also creates uniform exam conditions for all examinees, preventing pressure on the course team to provide answers to students' questions during the exam. The questions are transmitted by telephone, not personally, by the exam proctor. The system also prevents copying since every student taking an exam sits with students taking exams in other courses.

The evaluation process makes an important contribution to students: because assignments are mandatory, students are required to study throughout the semester and not only before the

exam; every course includes a variety of assignments that expose students to varied skills; assignments include a range of tasks on different levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, integration, etc.

A possible weakness of the assignment system is the increased potential for plagiarism at the OUI compared to other institutions due to the fact that a number of study groups are conducted in each course. Tutors can uncover copied assignments in their study group, but not between students in different study groups. For this reason, assignments do not exceed 30% of the course grade, and, irrespective of their weighted grade, students must receive at least 60 on the exam in order to pass the course.

We continuously invest efforts to contend with the problem of copying seminar papers (from students at other universities or from the Internet). To this end we have already taken several measures:

- Together with the seminar paper, every student submits a written statement declaring that s/he wrote the paper (appended in Hebrew in Extras, "Declaration of original work"). We hope that this deters some of those who considered plagiarizing.
- Severe punishment by the Discipline Committee for plagiarism, if discovered.
- Tutors closely monitor work processes and stages.
- Suggested topics that are similar to topics of papers written in the past are not approved.

Alongside the strengths of the evaluation methods and processes at the OUI, there is an inherent weakness stemming from the nature of the University. Evaluation cannot be based on "softer" evaluation tools such as class participation or contribution to website discussions. The honors seminar that is taught by a senior faculty member to a limited number of students is the only course in which the grade is also based on participation and the student's contribution.

3.4 Students

3.4.1 Selection and admission procedures

One of the unique aspects of the Open University is open admissions to its undergraduate programs. The University provides an opportunity for higher education to all and has no selection or admissions process. Hence, corrective discrimination in admission neither exists nor is it needed.

The OUI has no criteria for accepting students with special needs. The policy is to accept all students. Students who for medical, physical or other reasons require special study conditions contact the Dean of Students for assistance (see below, section 3.4.5.1)

Unlike other academic institutions, OUI students do not enroll in an academic year within a specific academic department, but register for individual courses. Hence, there are no criteria for advancement from year to year, nor do students need to decide on a program of studies in the early stages of their studies. Instead, registration is conditional upon meeting all prerequisites specified for each course. In addition, before students can enroll in an advanced course, they must fulfill all English language (EFL) requirements, take a computer applications course, and take bibliographic training in the library (on bibliographic training, see section 3.6.4.1).

Number of Students: Due to the special structure of studies at the OUI, students are only required to submit their study program for approval at a relatively advanced stage of their studies. Thus, the definition of a "Psychology student" is not trivial. For the purpose of this report, we use the following definition: A "Psychology student" is a student who has taken and passed four required courses in psychology. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, in retrospect, we may find that the student is pursuing a general degree in the Social Sciences or

in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. The table below shows the number of Psychology students in various Psychology programs, as well as those with no approved study program, in the last five years.

	Psychology	Social Sciences with a focus on Psychology	Social Sciences *	Social Sciences and Humanities *	Other programs	No approved study program **	Total
2002	425	573	140	157	5	452	1,752
2003	549	552	126	159	6	565	1,957
2004	741	464	128	157	7	740	2,237
2005	895	382	134	149	8	1,003	2,571
2006	976	241	131	135	8	1,368	2,859

* These are students who probably began their studies intending to take a Psychology program, but later switched to a more general and less demanding program.

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

The tables and figure below summarize the distribution of psychology students (based on the above definition) between the years 2002-2006 by age, gender, area of residence and prior education.

Age: The age distribution of psychology students is presented below (in percentages): almost half are 26-30 years of age and slightly more than one-quarter are 31-45 years old. From the age perspective, the OUI meets its goal: the student body is relatively older than in other institutions and open to students of all ages.

Age	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Up to 18	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
19-20	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.5
21-25	27.8	27.8	27.2	24.5	22.5
26-30	45.0	43.5	45.0	45.4	46.0
31-35	14.0	14.6	14.5	16.1	16.4
36-45	8.5	9.5	9.1	9.5	10.3
Over 46	3.6	3.7	3.7	4.1	4.2
Unknown	0.4	0.2	--	--	--
Total (N)	1,752	1,957	2,237	2,571	2,859

Gender: The table below shows that the majority of students are females (about 83%), and this proportion has remained stable over the past five years**.**

Year	Female		Male		All Students
	N	%	N	%	N
2002	1,486	84.87	265	15.13	1,752
2003	1,656	84.66	300	15.34	1,957
2004	1,882	84.13	355	15.87	2,237
2005	2,124	82.61	447	17.39	2,571
2006	2,354	82.34	505	17.66	2,859

Area of Residence: The distribution of psychology students by residential area has undergone only minor changes in the past five years, so that, in general, more than one-third of the students live in the Tel-Aviv metropolitan area (37%), about one-fifth (about 20%) in the Sharon area, about 15% in the Coastal area, about 10% in Haifa and northern Israel, and about 10% in Jerusalem and its surroundings. The remaining students reside in the following areas: about 5% in the southern area (southern coast down to Eilat), about 2% are students from abroad and about 1.5% from the Shomron area (see figure below). It is significant that almost half of the students (46%) live outside of the major cities.
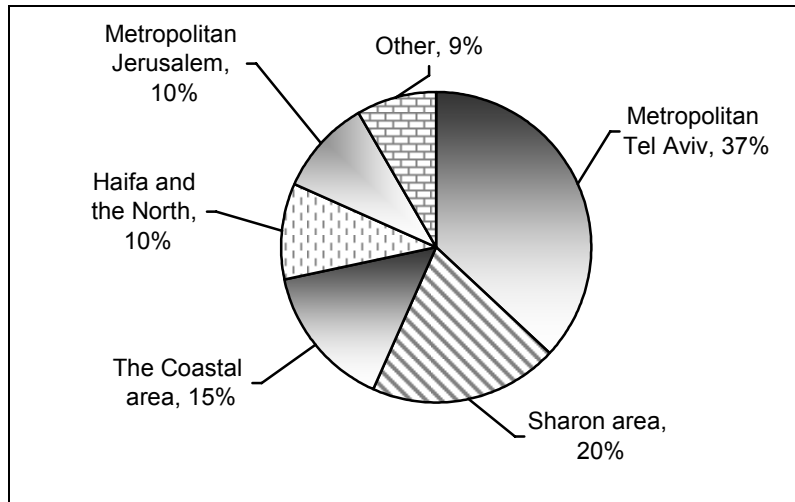
Prior Education: The table below shows that the majority of psychology students (about 87%) enrolling in undergraduate studies at the OUI have a matriculation certificate, and this situation remained stable between 2002 and 2006. But a remarkable 13% – individuals who did not complete high school – have been able to pass at least four required courses in psychology and are today pursuing academic studies. It also should be noted that the data pertain only to entitlement to a matriculation certificate, irrespective of matriculation grades.

	Have matriculation certificate	**Have no matriculation certificate**	**Unknown**	**Total**
2002	1,520 (86.8%)	203 (11.6%)	29 (1.6%)	1,752
2003	1,726 (88.2%)	210 (10.7%)	21 (1.1%)	1,957
2004	1,957 (87.5%)	247 (11.0%)	33 (1.5%)	2,237
2005	2,247 (87.4%)	291 (11.3%)	33 (1.3%)	2,571
2006	2,451 (85.7%)	345 (12.1%)	63 (2.2%)	2,859

Young Students and Soldiers: The number of high school students in psychology is very small (only 2 students in 2006) because the department does not encourage students of this age to study psychology, based on the belief that students in this field must not only have strong scholastic potential, but also maturity. Like all high school students who wish to study at the Open University, young students who wish to enroll in a psychology course are interviewed by a special academic counselor, and must receive numerous approvals. This policy explains the very limited number of young psychology students.

The difficulty of psychology studies may affect soldiers, and only very few choose to focus on psychology, as is clear from the table below.

Soldiers in compulsory military service

	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Soldiers (N)	6	6	12	9	12
Courses (N)	17	19	48	30	42

3.4.2   Publishing information about courses

The OUI course catalog, provided free of charge to all interested individuals and students, contains very detailed information about all teaching components, including detailed course descriptions. The information can also be found in Hebrew and English on the OUI website. A primary source of detailed information is the course website (see section 3.3.3.1). OUI academic advisors and representatives of the department teaching staff are available at all OUI study centers to provide updated information. Students also have access to the *Sheilta* system (interactive services to students, see section 3.3.3) and can contact the OUI Information Center to receive answers to their inquiries.

A course booklet is produced for every course each semester containing details of course prerequisites, the calculation of the final course grade, course assignments, the timetable, and sample exams. The booklet is mailed to students along with the study material.

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 tutorials and individual meetings, contact is maintained through visits of teaching staff at tutorial sessions. As part of these visits, students can provide feedback on the course and its administration, and the course coordinator can explain course requirements. These meetings help match expectations and facilitate adaptation required on both sides.

3.4.3   The drop-out rate

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

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

Furthermore, we encourage soldiers and others to enroll in one or several courses, not necessarily in the aim of pursuing a degree, but to enrich their knowledge, to create an additional challenge in their ongoing activities or to keep abreast of their profession while continuing their work. Some students are referred to the OUI by other universities in order to complete course requirements prior to their acceptance to graduate studies at these institutions. After completing several courses, these students discontinue their studies at the OUI. They are considered dropouts although they completed exactly what they set out to accomplish.

We almost 'encourage' students to drop out (while maintaining our goal of expanding access to higher education), as we invite students to take courses at the OUI that are the equivalent of one academic year and then, if they wish, to transfer to another university (see "Bridges to Other Universities," p. 4). Students choosing to do so are also counted as OUI dropouts.

To gain a picture of the perseverance and dropout rates of our students, we used the population of psychology students in 2002 (based on the definition specified above) as a reference point. We found that of 1,752 students who fit the definition in 2002, 647 (36.9%) completed a degree (442 in psychology and the remainder in other disciplines), 490 (27.9%) are still studying at the OUI and the remainder (615, or 35.1%) are no longer enrolled at the OUI.

While clearly, for the reasons mentioned above, OUI students harbor a dropout potential, the challenge of increasing student retention while maintaining high academic standards has accompanied the OUI since its establishment. Over the years, varied measures were taken to investigate the issue and contend with its implications. Based on these studies, it was decided to define a "dropout" as a student who discontinued his/her studies and did not renew them after three semesters. The Evaluation Department conducts a survey every two years (on average) among all students who did not enroll in courses over three consecutive semesters. The questionnaire is mailed prior to the registration period for the following semester, along with registration forms. The students are asked if they would be interested in receiving academic counseling in preparation for their possible return to studies.

The University is currently attempting to contend with the dropout issue and to increase student retention through a broad system-wide approach creating collaboration among all relevant entities in the system, involving as many staff members as possible in the process. In January 2006, OUI President, Prof. Gershon Ben-Shakhar established a Steering Committee to address all aspects of the issue. The website of the Dean of Students includes a link (http://www.openu.ac.il/Dean/220707-1.html) to the recommendations of the Steering Committee and the results of pilot projects that were carried out in various areas, in an attempt to increase student perseverance and reduce dropout.

3.4.4   Student participation in research conducted by faculty

As part of their degree requirements, students participate in research activity (see section 3.3.7.1). Senior faculty members in the department, as well as course coordinators holding a PhD and conducting research, act as supervisors to students writing a seminar paper based on an empirical study. Papers are often written as part of research projects conducted by these faculty members. Some of these are later published or presented at conferences.

3.4.5   Counseling systems

3.4.5.1   Counseling students before and during their studies

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

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

Field-specific counseling in Psychology: Academic counseling for psychology courses is provided by academic teaching staff and senior faculty members as well as by a limited number of general academic advisors with the appropriate background who were trained to provide counseling in the field. Academic counseling includes: (a) Guidance in choosing a study track, (b) Counseling regarding accreditation of previous studies and referral to the Committee for the Accreditation of Prior Studies, (c) Choosing the first courses in the selected study track, (d) Transferring from one study track to another, (e) Selecting courses during the course of studies, (f) Designing a study program to be submitted to the Study Program Approval Committee.

Once a year, prior to publication of the new course catalog, a meeting is held with all advisors to inform them about updates appearing in the new catalog such as new courses, updated courses, new study programs, updated procedures, and to discuss main issues concerning the Psychology programs.

Academic counselors hold two counseling hours a week in their office and primarily receive telephone inquiries. The counseling hours are organized in such a way that they are offered daily, in the morning and afternoon. Online counseling is also offered through the psychology website where students can send an inquiry and receive an answer to their email address. This service is provided by a psychology faculty member.

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 get 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 exams. Learning skills training along with help in the resolution of personal problems relating to learning are available to all OUI students, and are offered in workshops and individually at most study centers. The Unit also offers guidance in writing seminar papers. The Academic Counseling and Study Guidance Center also offers information get-togethers for prospective students.

Counseling and assistance to students with special physical needs
Special services are provided to students with special physical or emotional needs by the Dean of Students and by the Academic Counseling and Study Guidance center. More than 300 special needs students (most of them with visual, hearing or motor disabilities) studied at the OUI in recent years.

Students who indicate on the course registration form that they would like information on this issue receive a letter informing them how to contact the Coordinator for Special Needs Students in the Dean of Students' office. The information is also included in the registration kit. New tutors are encouraged to refer students with difficulties to the Dean of Students. At an acquaintance meeting with the Coordinator for Special Needs Students, students learn about the OUI study method and an initial inquiry is conducted about the adjustments they will need during their studies. After receiving the medical documents confirming the student's special needs and their implications, the necessary adjustments enabling full access to studies at the OUI are determined:

Physical access: In coordination with the Study Facilities Coordinator and the Center for the Organization of Exams, study and exam centers are adapted for students with motor disabilities. Those confined to their home receive special tutoring and take the exam at home.

Access to services: The Coordinator for Special Needs Students personally accompanies students with special needs and coordinates contact with entities within the University

(registration, academic counseling, library, etc.) as well as external entities (National Insurance Institute, Ministry of Defense, *Aleh*, *Shema*, *Bekol* and others).

Access to study material: Study materials are mailed to students. With advance notification, students with a legal blindness certificate or with a visual disability can receive the study material recorded on audio cassettes (coordinated with the *Aleh* Association and libraries for the visually impaired). Courses studied through the *Ofek* system as well as audio study units on course websites provide an effective learning mode for students unable to attend tutorials. The websites have been made accessible to special needs users in accordance with the WC3 standard (e.g., enables enlarging fonts, removing background colors, navigating the screen using the keyboard). Accessible discussion groups on websites enable many special needs students to communicate directly with the course coordinator, tutors and other students in the course.

Special exam conditions: In accordance with the students' difficulty, students receive special conditions in taking exams, including extended time, writing the exam using a word processor, assistance from a proctor (reads, writes, copies the exam), various aids (an enlarged or recorded exam questionnaire, using enlarging paper, Braille pages, closed circuit TV, an enlarging lens, etc.), activities during the exam (breaks, going to the lavatory, injecting medication, etc.), and even a special place in the exam room (a separate room, a room with few students, sitting in a lighted area, etc.). Academic adjustments such as a formula sheet, an exam written specifically for a student, dividing the exam into two separate dates or a take-home exam are coordinated with the Dean of Academic Studies.

Counseling and assistance to students with learning disabilities
Extensive efforts are invested in students with learning disabilities. At an orientation meeting, they receive information about assistance provided by the University:

Assistance in studies: Students with difficulties related to learning skills are referred to personal training provided by a tutor who specializes in learning strategies. Meetings with the tutor are conducted on an individual basis at study centers throughout the country. The individual training sessions focus on managing time, question analysis strategies, organizing answers, effective ways to summarize theoretical material, preparing for an exam and preparations during the exam.

Help in small groups (6-8 students) is offered in 9 courses in the psychology program and includes a two-hour weekly session with a tutor in the field, in addition to the ongoing tutorial sessions. Such reinforcement sessions were provided to 240 students in psychology courses in 2005-2006 (see details in table below).

Reinforcement sessions for students with learning disabilities

Fall 2005	# of groups	# of students
Introduction to Statistics I	6	31
Introduction to Statistics II	5	33
Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance	2	9
Research Methods in Social Sciences	2	11
Introduction to Psychology	3	22
Social Psychology	1	4
Cognitive Psychology	2	9
Psychological Testing	1	2

Spring 2006	# of groups	# of students
Introduction to Statistics I	7	25
Introduction to Statistics II	4	22
Research Methods in Social Sciences	3	10
Introduction to Psychology	2	12
Social Psychology	2	10
Psychological Testing	2	16
Physiology of Behavior (year-long course)	4	24
Total	**46**	**240**

With the aim of helping students with learning disabilities, the OUI is acting to expand the use of advanced technologies. This involves mapping student needs and identifying and applying suitable technologies. Students interested in enhancing learning processes by using computers and technology are referred to a counseling meeting at the Center for Assisting Technology to find the suitable technology, view a demonstration, train and practice using software and technological aids in their studies. The Center has four personal computers and a laptop with learning assistance software such as reading software in English and Hebrew, translation and editing software, etc. The Center offers additional technological learning aids such as a scanner, Quicktionary II, a Palm and more. The Center conducts individual training, primarily for students with difficulty processing and understanding texts in English, and in the future plans to offer workshops in small groups in study centers. New technologies are currently being studied in the aim of expanding services to students with additional needs; for example, students with difficulty in statistics, in reading and processing material in Hebrew, etc. In the future, students will be able to download some of the software and aids and to contact the Center independently through a website.

When there is difficulty understanding the nature of the student's disability and its relationship to academic tasks, the student is invited to sessions to clarify the relationship between the disability and difficulties in scholastic tasks, and is given emotional support.

The University offers anxiety-reducing assistance to students suffering from exam anxiety. Assistance to students with learning disabilities is also offered through the *Perach* Project. Like all other students with disabilities, the learning disabled receive special exam conditions.

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

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

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

Approval of programs of study
After accumulating 48 credits, students can propose a program for completing their studies, in accordance with the degree requirements. An inter-disciplinary committee, the Study Programs Approval Committee, examines the program and returns it with comments and

guidelines, or approves it as a program of study leading to a degree. The Committee reviews each student's record of studies to determine whether degree requirements have been met.

Approval of a study program is valid for a period of five years from the approval date. Students continuing their studies for a period exceeding five years after the program is approved will be required to reapply to the Committee for approval of their study program, due to possible changes in the program requirements.

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.

3.4.5.2   Counseling and guidance in choosing future career paths

The Guidance and Placement Unit in the office of the Dean of Students, also known as *Opjob*, serves as a coordinating body between Open University students and organizations providing academic and career counseling services as well as employment placement services. The Unit coordinates these services and ensures their operation on the Open University campus and at the study centers. The Career Guidance and Placement Unit offers the following services:

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

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

Placement – assistance to students in finding employment through:

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

Information published by the Guidance and Placement Unit can be found on the Dean of Students website, on bulletin boards at the study centers and in special leaflets accompanying study materials.

Counseling in choosing future career paths are also provided through:
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.

Individual counseling: 3 sessions provided by the counseling services of Tel Aviv University at a discount for OUI students.

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

3.4.6   Student inquiries and complaints

The Department of Education and Psychology, like all OUI academic departments, appointed an individual responsible for handling student inquiries and complaints. Most inquiries pertain to the following matters: Requests to take an exam after the entitlement date, to take an exam for the third time, to submit a course assignment after the specified date or to enroll in a course for the third time. Complaints may relate to tutoring or to the exam.

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

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

3.4.7   Identifying and rewarding outstanding students / Financial assistance

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.

Honors Seminar: As of Fall 2006, the department has offered a research seminar for outstanding students, conducted by a senior faculty member in the department.

Financial Assistance: The OUI grants scholarships to students with financial difficulties. Students can apply for a scholarship provided they have successfully completed at least one course and are registered for the semester in which their application is considered. Students studying at an accelerated rate are entitled to apply twice a year. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of socio-economic criteria. On the application form, students specify their financial and familial situation and attach necessary documents. The criterion "socio-economic situation" includes the following parameters: family status, number of children, number of siblings, place of residence, percentage of disability (if applicable), compulsory military service, assets (apartment, car), travel abroad, employment scope, income (student, parents, spouse), etc. The final decision also takes into consideration study rate and achievements.

The final distribution of scholarships is based on the weighted numerical value of all the parameters above and on total donations received for scholarships. Scholarships take the form of vouchers for course registration. A scholarship covers the basic tuition for a course at the OUI. In 2005-2006, the OUI awarded 1,432 financial assistance scholarships and an additional 187 scholarships to outstanding students.

3.4.8   **Maintaining contact with graduates and employers**

Maintaining contact with OUI graduates: The OUI has more than 20,000 graduates. The OUI Alumni Association publishes a newsletter twice a year and conducts monthly activities including trips, lectures, plays, musical evening, performances, etc. The OUI Alumni Association contributes scholarships to students every year.

The OUI is interested in maintaining contact with its graduates also in order to learn from their experience about the contribution of the 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.

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

For the purpose of this report, the OUI conducted a telephone survey in May 2007 among students who received degrees in psychology between 2002 and 2004 (373 graduates).116 graduates (31%) responded. Findings of the survey can be found in the figure below.
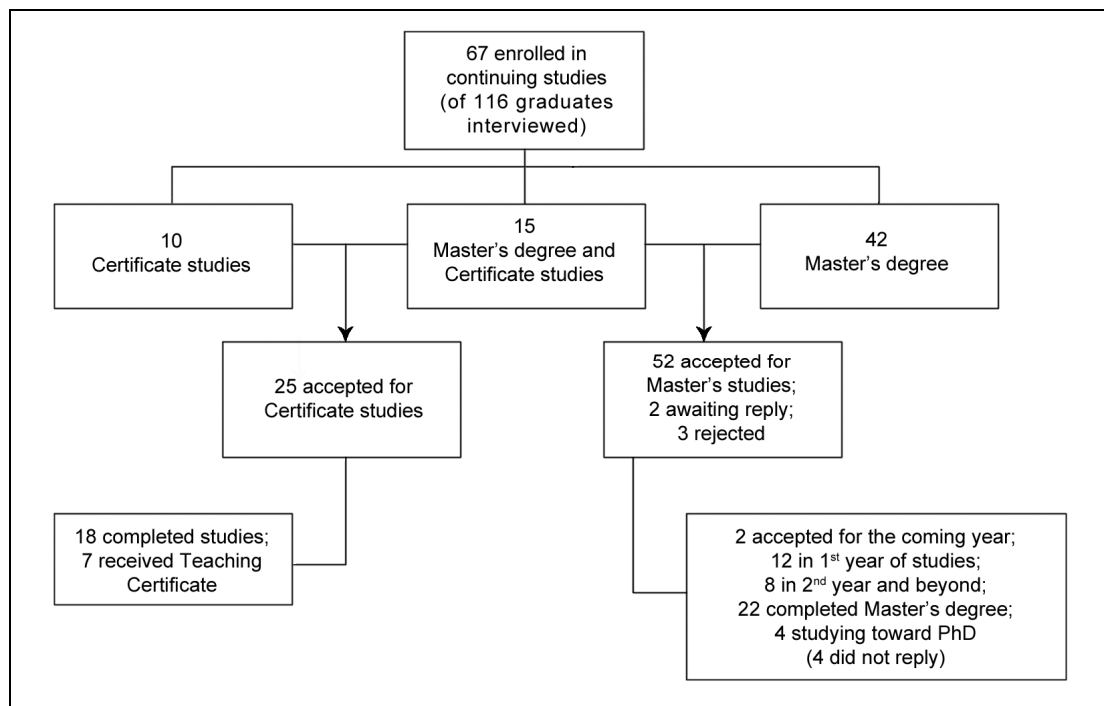
Enrollment, admission and completion of continuing studies

57% of the graduates enrolled in further education, 85% of them in master's degree studies. All but three students were accepted. The majority are enrolled in universities and several in colleges, most in the fields of psychology and education. Half have completed their master's degrees and 4 are pursuing a PhD. The full survey findings are attached in Extras, "Survey graduates."

In terms of employment, 17 of the graduates who responded work in the field of psychology and adjacent fields, 21 in teaching and education and the remainder in other fields. 75% of the respondents feel that their undergraduate studies at the OUI prepared them to a large extent or to a very large extent for master's degree studies. The graduates' comments indicate that they feel that the degree enhanced their personal potential, status and salary, enriched their knowledge, developed their abilities and independent study skills and provided a sense of satisfaction and pride, which is demonstrated in letters which we occasionally get from our graduates. One is appended below.

June 18, 2007

Dear Dr. Bogler,

…I began my studies four years ago, with minimal expectations, without taking the psychometric exam and with much anxiety. My studies at the OUI opened many doors for me – I learned to love the field of psychology, I combined my studies with work, published a children's book, volunteered, enriched my knowledge, and this year I applied for admission to a Master's program in psychology.

Yesterday I was informed that I was accepted to the Experimental Master's degree program at Bar-Ilan University. This was followed by a telephone call from the head of the program informing me that, as one of two outstanding students, I was accepted into the combined track to a PhD, and a President's scholarship for four years. Needless to say, I was overjoyed.

Now that I know that in October I will begin my studies at a "closed" university, I feel that I no longer represent Dana, the student, but rather I am an emissary of the Open University. I promise to represent us honorably, because we are worthy of respect. I wanted to express my immense gratitude. The OUI gave me one of the greatest opportunities of my life. I am proud to be a graduate of this academic institution….

Once again – thank you so much. I studied one of the most amazing fields and I also learned a lesson for life – with motivation, ability and belief, the sky is the limit.

Sincerely yours,

Dana

3.4.9   Summary – Strengths and weaknesses

The goal of the OUI is to expand access to higher education to all individuals who have suitable intellectual abilities. To ensure that this goal does not remain only on paper, the OUI places the student at the center of its endeavor. Therefore, the distance education method is supported extensively by counseling and guidance for self-study as well as innovative and friendly learning technologies aimed at compensating for the distance from tutors and the other students, financial assistance through scholarships, encouraging and rewarding outstanding students, support and intensive individual assistance to individuals with disabilities and by helping graduates find employment after completing their studies.

The Open University contends with the "weakness" of open admissions by strictly maintaining a high academic level of studies. The study material and assignments are prepared in advance and based only on academic considerations. Examinations are also based only on academic criteria. They are not written by the tutors who meet with the students, but by course coordinators and approved by senior faculty to ensure that they take into account the knowledge students must demonstrate and not only what the students have covered at

tutorial sessions. Furthermore, the OUI strictly enforces discipline measures during exams. In addition, to maintain students' dignity, the OUI established committees and mechanisms to ensure full confidentiality.

The significance of open admissions in psychology studies is even more far-reaching than in other disciplines because it stands in sharp contrast to the very high admission standards in other academic institutions that stems not only from supply and demand, but also from the high demands involved in psychology studies. The result of open admissions at the OUI is high student heterogeneity (from varied backgrounds, from the center and the periphery, of differing ages and with differing abilities), some of whom do not meet the scholastic demands of the OUI psychology programs. This diversity necessarily results in quite a high dropout rate in the first courses and considerable differences in student achievements (that can be seen in the normal distribution of the graduates' grades).

The psychology department emphasizes a high academic level and cultivates students' research abilities at each stage of their studies towards a degree. Students with learning disabilities or candidates for dropping out are identified through various methods and granted extensive assistance to help them reach the required academic level. At the same time, the department identifies outstanding students and offers them direct contact with faculty members as well as research knowledge relevant to advanced degrees in psychology. In fact, many of the graduates of the various psychology tracks are accepted to competitive graduate programs in psychology offered by universities in Israel and abroad. Others pursue a teaching certificate in psychology, advanced studies in other fields or a professional career that does not require an advanced degree.

3.5   Human Resources

3.5.1   Teaching staff

3.5.1.1   Profile of the teaching staff

There are three main categories of teaching staff in the Psychology programs: senior faculty members (headed by the head of field in psychology), academic teaching staff and tutors.

Head of the program: The head of the psychology program (Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom) works in close collaboration with the department head. She is responsible for development and updating the psychology program in close collaboration with the other senior faculty members. This includes initiating new study tracks, decisions concerning new course development as well as updating and revising existing courses. Together with the head of the department, the program head is responsible for recruiting senior faculty and course coordinators, and for initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching and services to students. She also represents the psychology program within the University.

Three **senior faculty members**: One associate professor and two senior lecturers. Senior faculty members are employed under personal contracts (identical to corresponding employment terms at other universities, except for tenure) that are renewed after a period of 3-10 years. The faculty also includes one guest lecturer. (This was the case in 2005-2006. Today, there are four senior faculty members.)

The **academic teaching staff** for the psychology programs includes 20 **course coordinators** (13 of whom are also tutors): 5 with PhDs and all the others with master's degrees. Some are doctoral candidates. Six are employed full-time (or almost full-time), with the remainder holding part-time positions ranging between 30%-77% of a full-time position (see details in Table 2B). Each of them is a specialist in the field of the course that s/he coordinates. Course coordinators are employed under contracts that may change from semester to semester based on the number of students enrolled in the courses they coordinate (though this seldom

happens). Most of the course coordinators have been employed for many years. Their specialties cover the full spectrum of fields in psychology.

There were 212 **tutors** in Psychology and Methodology courses in 2006 (the exact number changes seasonally based on the number of study groups opened). Most tutors hold a Master's degree and 25 have a PhD. Their expertise spans the entire spectrum of topics in Methodology and Psychology. Tutors (other than the 13 who are course coordinators) are employed under personal contracts for one semester.

Data concerning senior faculty and the guest lecturer are presented in Table 2A, appended at the end of 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 2A indicates the percentage of the position in the department (part-time position in terms of hrs/week is irrelevant at the OUI).

2. The column "Planned Courses" in the original table is irrelevant for senior OUI faculty members, as they engage in course development and not in ongoing teaching.

3. The part of full time job under "Additional Employment" is shown as a percentage of a full-time position or as weekly hours for each individual case.

4. The "No. of Students Receiving Guidance" column is irrelevant because at present the OUI does not offer an MA degree track or a doctorate in Psychology.

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

1. "Part of full time job in Institution" and "Part of full time job in Program": The "Part of full time job in Psychology" 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. They are hired for the semester in which they are required. 360 different tutors, with seniority of between 1 and 49 semesters, taught 3,931 groups over the last five years. Most tutors teach one or two groups each semester. Only experienced tutors teach more than two groups per semester. Data on the number of tutors and study groups between 2002 and 2006 are in Table 2C, appended below.

3.5.1.2   **Specializations and skills**

Because of the small number of senior faculty members, the range of specializations is limited and concentrated in specific theoretical fields. 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. Senior faculty members have many and varied responsibilities:

Research: Senior faculty members are expected to invest their efforts in scientific research on an internationally recognized level, demonstrated by publications in respected academic journals. Maintaining a high research level is essential for high quality supervision of the academic teaching and guidance of seminar papers in advanced courses (see chapter 4). Faculty members' research fields for the most part do not affect undergraduate courses since most undergraduate courses at the OUI, like in any institution of higher learning, are basic

and general. Many advanced courses reflect the fields of specialization of faculty members. These courses were developed by them and they are responsible for their updating.

Course development: Senior faculty members are expected to have excellent pedagogical writing skills, as required for Open University textbooks aimed at independent study. Development includes:

- Developing study material: writing new courses, updating and revising courses
- Academic responsibility for translations, material written by external experts, material written for course websites
- Initiating proposals for new courses and study programs

Six of the 12 advanced courses and 4 of the 5 methodology courses were written by senior OUI faculty members. In the intermediate courses (social psychology, personality, etc.), senior faculty members wrote parts of the courses or were academically responsible for the course development.

Teaching and overseeing teaching: Every senior faculty member is responsible overseeing and monitoring the work of several course coordinators whose courses touch upon their field of specialization. The senior faculty member approves the exams written by the course coordinator, reviews assignment feedback to students, occasionally observes tutorial sessions and monitors the course coordinator's overall performance as part of the annual course coordinator evaluation process (see details in section 3.3.2.2). All senior faculty members serve as supervisors to students writing seminar papers and rotate in providing academic counseling to students during weekly counseling hours.

Managerial roles: OUI faculty members are involved in university-wide management roles. Due to the small number of senior faculty members at the University, each carries a heavy managerial load. Senior faculty members in psychology are members of the Study Program Approval Committee, the Library Committee, the Research Authority, Appointment committees and various ad hoc committees. The myriad functions filled by faculty members require varied capabilities: senior faculty members must have research ability, academic writing ability, teaching abilities, the ability to build good relations with others and high-level administrative abilities. They must also be initiators.

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

- Expertise in the topic of the course: Course coordinators write the assignments and the examinations, help tutors prepare lesson plans and help students who have difficulties with the material 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 that enable students to ask questions, receive answers, conduct discussions, get answers to exercises, view lesson plans, etc.
- Management skills: This is particularly important in large courses with many study groups and tutors throughout the country. Coordinators handle logistical issues concerning classrooms, equipment, study materials, etc.

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

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

The **academic component**:

- Regarding **teaching**: Write the course booklet including a timetable for studying units and submitting assignments, write examinations and assignments; formulate criteria for assessment of examinations and assignments; check examinations
- Regarding **course material**: Prepare learning aids (in hard copy and/or on the course website), develop the contents of the course website and participate in updating course materials
- Regarding the **tutors**: Recruit and train new tutors and carry out their on-the-job training; supervise tutors, visit tutorial sessions and provide feedback; check a sample of assignments corrected by tutors and assess the quality of the evaluation
- Regarding the **students**: Provide individual academic counseling to students, answer their questions, and identify difficulties via telephone, mail, e-mail, the website and face-to-face meetings; deal with appeals concerning assignments and examinations
- Regarding **seminar papers**: In advanced courses, approve seminar paper topics, recruit and advise seminar paper supervisors, and check evaluation of seminar papers by supervisors and deal with appeals concerning seminar paper grades

The **managerial component**:

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

Alongside the advantage of recruiting course coordinators specializing in the field of a specific course (doctoral students or those holding a PhD and conducting research in the field), the disadvantage pertains to inflexibility – these course coordinators prefer to continue to coordinate courses in their field of expertise rather than take on additional courses.

Tutors meet with students at tutorial sessions. They must hold a master's degree. Some are doctoral students and PhDs. Tutors must be proficient in the relevant knowledge area and must demonstrate appropriate teaching abilities. In addition to their teaching skills, tutors are also selected on the basis of geographic constraints. In general, the OUI employs tutors who live in the area in which they tutor.

The roles of the tutors include:

- Run **tutorial sessions**: Organize course material, clarify complex topics, answer students' questions, and manage discussions. Tutors are responsible for presenting the material in an experiential manner and helping students meet the academic requirements of the course
- **Assignments and examinations**: Check assignments based on criteria set by the course coordinator and provide feedback; check exams based on criteria set by the course coordinator (tutors do not check exams of students in their groups).
- Interaction with **students**: Respond to students' inquiries during counseling hours by telephone, face-to-face or through the course website
- Activity on the **website**: In many courses, tutors conduct discussion groups on the course website

3.5.1.3   Steps to ensure that staff members are updated

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

Several of the **course coordinators**, most notably those among them who are studying towards a PhD or already have a PhD, are also active in research, and are similarly updated professionally. Moreover, each course coordinator is subject to the professional supervision of one of the senior faculty members, who is responsible for periodically updating the course contents, with recent articles to be added to the reading list, new resources to be put on the course website, etc. In selecting course coordinators, we select individuals whose areas of expertise and/or work correspond to the topics of the courses they will coordinate.

Some course coordinators work closely with course writers and are involved in course development, revision and updating. Through this process, the course coordinator is updated on relevant material.

In order to encourage course coordinators to keep abreast of their field of expertise, the Research Authority assists them through research grants and funding for travel to professional conferences. The OUI supports funding of advanced studies both monetarily and by offering a day off for studies. In addition, the OUI has decided to give course coordinators involved in research a 6-month exemption from teaching and course development in order to enable them to devote time to research.

Course coordinators are responsible for overseeing the **tutors' professional work** and for enriching their knowledge and skills. Some coordinators conduct professional discussions on the course website tutor forum, a channel that enables discussion, support and sharing of material among tutors. The coordinators send tutors grading criteria and answers to assignments. The course coordinators hold meetings with the tutors before the semester begins to discuss issues pertaining to the material and previous exam results and to address issues that arose in the previous semester. Some coordinators provide up to date articles and organize professional symposia that include lectures or workshops with experts in the field.

3.5.1.4   Rules, criteria, and procedures for appointments

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

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

Head of the program: The head of the department is the head of the program in his/her field. With respect to programs in other disciplines in the department (in this case, psychology), the President appoints an individual responsible for the program from among the senior faculty members in the field.

Senior faculty: For details on the appointment procedure of senior faculty members and their advancement in rank, see Rules and Procedures, "Appointments" (in Hebrew). The advancement procedure for senior faculty is similar to that at other universities. The research element is crucial in the promotion of senior faculty members. The length of time that a faculty member holds a rank is often longer than in other universities, among other things due

to the heavy administrative load carried by faculty members, the need to monitor teaching, as well as their obligation to develop written courses.

Academic teaching staff (course coordinators): After consultation with the head of the field and the senior faculty member responsible for the course, the department head appoints the course coordinator, subject to the approval of the Dean of Academic Studies and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. See recruitment, section 3.5.1.8, below.

Tutors: Tutors are employed based on a short-term (semester) contract, though many of them work as tutors for many years.

3.5.1.5   Credentials required of the head of the study program

When the head of the department is a senior faculty member in Education (as is presently the case), the President appoints an individual responsible for the psychology programs from among senior faculty members in psychology. Preference is given to a veteran senior faculty member who accompanied the development and operation of the programs. The position is currently filled by a veteran senior faculty member who established the department of psychology and was responsible for the psychology programs until 1996, when two senior faculty members joined the department. With the end of the term of the current department head, the next department head will be selected from among Psychology faculty members and this individual will be responsible for the psychology programs.

3.5.1.6   Definition of employment

The pedagogical component of **senior faculty members**' role typically involves the writing and development of new courses, advising students on seminar papers and overseeing all teaching components, and not face-to-face teaching. Hence, "number of teaching hours" is irrelevant to the definition of their employment.

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

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

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

3.5.1.7   Thesis and dissertation advisors

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

3.5.1.8   **Recruiting and absorbing teaching staff**

Senior faculty: Planned future recruitment and absorption of senior faculty members is discussed in the President's five-year plan. In September 2007, one senior faculty member transferred from Education to Psychology and another joined the department, replacing a faculty member who left. A tender for another senior faculty member is currently under way.

Academic teaching staff: The academic teaching staff is recruited according to teaching needs in the various courses. When there is a need to recruit a new course coordinator (because one is leaving or a new course is offered) a search is conducted to find suitable candidates both informally (through colleagues at other universities) and by publishing ads in newspapers. Candidates must hold at least a master's degree, with a preference for doctoral students. Requirements include acquaintance with the relevant field, teaching experience, management skills, good interpersonal skills and reasonable computer and Internet skills. Candidates submit a CV and undergo the following process:

- The program head in consultation with senior faculty members selects suitable candidates from among the CVs received
- The candidates selected are invited to an interview and are usually given an assignment characteristic of their future position; for example, to write an assignment on a study unit
- The program head recommends the most suitable candidate to the department head

The scope of their position is based on the number of courses they coordinate and the number of students in each course.

Tutors are recruited by the course coordinator. Similar to recruitment of course coordinators, the search is both informal and through ads in the paper. The coordinators receive recommendations and CVs and interview the candidates. In some courses, mainly the large ones, course coordinators conduct a selection workshop. At the workshop, candidates are asked to prepare a section of a tutorial session or to check and comment on an assignment. The workshop is a collaborative effort between the course coordinator and the OUI Training Department.

3.5.2   **Technical and administrative staff**

Three administrative coordinators in the department office fulfill two roles: administrative coordination of courses and secretarial services.

Administrative coordination of courses includes the following activities: organizing and coordinating departmental teaching services; preparations for the beginning of the semester in terms of study material and various University offices; coordinating the department's activities with other OUI departments; tracking performance of tasks, decisions and timetables; assisting new course coordinators; maintaining contact with institutions; handling reports and payments. Administrative coordinators also receive student inquiries and respond to inquiries on administrative issues. Academic inquiries are referred to the individual responsible for student inquiries or to the course coordinator in the relevant course.

General secretarial services include secretarial services to the department head and faculty members; organizing meetings and preparing protocols; preparing background material for the teaching faculty evaluation process; handling departmental human resource issues; filing; handling payments; ordering supplies and equipment.

3.5.3   **Summary – Strengths and weaknesses of the human resources**

The most prominent strength pertains to the motivation and dedication of all those involved in programs in psychology. All feel involved, have a strong sense of belonging and are highly

dedicated to their work. Faculty members, senior and junior, take part in various projects that are not part of their formal job descriptions.

Another strength is the serious attitude of all members of the department toward recruitment, training and evaluation processes and ensuring their full and complete execution. In a decentralized system such as the OUI, in which course developers do not teach the courses (it is the tutors who meet with the students), and with another central position holder between them (the course coordinator), the recruitment, training, overseeing, monitoring and feedback processes are critical to all involved. The University pays serious attention to these issues and as a result, the high academic level is maintained, the tutoring level is high, there is ongoing contact with students and an overall high satisfaction level from their studies.

As to the weaknesses, the **senior faculty members** oversee a remarkably high leveraged operation. In 2005-2006, three faculty members were responsible for all psychology programs, courses, course coordinators, and thousands of students. While the operation runs smoothly, there is an urgent need to increase the number of senior faculty members in order to ensure the continuous updating of courses, share the many responsibilities and allow the senior faculty members to devote more of their time to research.

Academic teaching staff members are devoted to their task, and carry out their professional and managerial duties with devotion and skill. At the same time, they suffer from lack of stability in the scope of their employment. The new system of remuneration, with 4 ranks, offers a horizon for promotion and more stability in employment terms. Nevertheless, even this new system does not completely alleviate the problems. A complete solution is apparently not feasible at the moment, since almost 80% of the university budget comes from tuition payments, and is thus highly sensitive to fluctuations – even if temporary and random – in enrollment rates.

Another problem concerns the double message transmitted to course coordinators: while the University encourages them to pursue doctoral studies and raises their salary and status upon completing these studies, this is not reflected in a significant change in their role or responsibilities. Two groups of individuals holding a PhD work alongside each other – one group is part of the academic teaching staff while the other belongs to the senior faculty – and the ramifications are not easy for the teaching staff to accept.

Tutors are hired on a per semester basis, even though some of them in fact work as tutors for many years. They are selected, trained and then reveal high academic standards in tutoring. Though not an inherent organ of the university – due to the temporary nature of their employment – they are the ones who maintain direct contact with the students. This tension, which is not likely to be resolved in the foreseeable future, causes dissatisfaction among some tutors. The OUI's low commitment to tutors necessarily engenders low tutor commitment to the OUI. In an effort to increase their sense of belonging and involvement, the department makes efforts to strengthen the relationship between tutors and the department by inviting them to symposia and other events, sending them the department bulletin, etc.

Table 2A: Senior Faculty

Name of Teacher			Employment Status	Part of Full Time Job	Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Additional Tasks in Institution
					Name of Employer	Part of Full Time Job		
First	Family	Title		Per Cent		Weekly Hours		
Ruth	Beyth-Marom	Prof.	Associate Professor	100%			▪ Intuitive judgment and decision making ▪ Personal Information management systems ▪ Statistical reasoning ▪ Learning technologies	▪ Psychology and Education subcommittee ▪ Department supervisor of CHE self-evaluation process ▪ Search committee
Sonia	Roccas	Dr.	Senior lecturer	100%			▪ Social psychology ▪ Self and Identity ▪ Cultural and Individual Values ▪ Group Processes	▪ Psychology and Education subcommittee ▪ Steering committee of the Research Authority ▪ Institutional supervisor, CHE self-evaluation process ▪ Search committee
Lilach	Shalev-Mevorach	Dr.	Senior lecturer (until 2007)	100%			▪ Neuropsychology of Attention and Attention Deficit ▪ Developmental Learning Disabilities ▪ Neuroimaging of Visual Perception and Attention	▪ Psychology and Education subcommittee
Gitit	Kavé	Dr.	Guest Lecturer	50%	Tel Aviv University Ben-Gurion University	4 hrs. 2 hrs.	▪ Language and Aging ▪ Morphology and Brain Damage ▪ Dementia ▪ Word Retrieval	▪ Head of Ethics committee
Eran	Chajut	Dr.	Lecturer (from 2007)	100%			▪ Attention ▪ Attention and Emotion ▪ Stress and Attention ▪ Friendship in the Internet ▪ Educational Technologies	▪ Psychology and Education subcommittee ▪ Program Approval Committee

Table 2B: Academic Teaching Staff

Name of Coordinator			Part of Full Time Job **in Institution**	Part of Full Time Job **in Psychology**	Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Courses coordinated (tutored)
					Name of Employer	Part of Full Time Job (%)		
First	Family	Degree	Per Cent	Per Cent				
Shahar	Ayal	Ph.D.	98	98	The Technion Tel Aviv University	50% (post doctoral fellowship) Adjunct lecturer - One course	Social cognition Heuristics and biases Risk perception	Critical Thinking: Statistical and Intuitive Considerations The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment Judgment and Evaluation under Conditions of Uncertainty
Ravid	Doron	Ph.D.	100	100			Drug addiction	Physiology of Behavior
Gal	Gorodeisky	Ph.D.	77	77	Kibbutzim College of Education	50%	Inter-group relations and helping relations	History of Psychology Identification with Groups
Alon	Lazar	Ph.D.	38	38			Behavioral science	Psychology of the Holocaust
Noga	Sverdlik	Ph.D.	77	77			Values priorities and value conflict	Attitudes and Persuasion Cross-Cultural Psychology
Aviv	Arian	MA	72	72			Clinical psychology	Psychopathology Field Experience in Psychology
Hana	Bahak	MA	100	67			Distance learning in higher education	Social Psychology
Nurit	Chalozin	MBA	100	100	Tel-Aviv University	50%		Introduction to Statistics I Introduction to Statistics II
Amir	Katz	MA	30	30	Ichilov Hospital Neuro-psychology private practice	50% 50%	Rehabilitation psychology	Visual Attention
Zvi	Lahav	MA	55	55			Clinical psychology	Personality: Theory and Research
Gili	Liviatan	MA	55	55			Psychological testing Personality disorder	Psychological Testing (Developmental Psychology)

Name of Coordinator			Part of Full Time Job **in Institution**	Part of Full Time Job **in Psychology**	Additional Employment		Area of Specialization	Courses coordinated (tutored)
					Name of Employer	Part of Full Time Job (%)		
First	Family	Degree	Per Cent	Per Cent				
Aviv	Nof	MA	72	72	Rambam Hospital Private practice	30% 40%	Clinical psychology Dynamic psychotherapy	Developmental Psychology
Ruth	Pazy-Goldberg	MA	100	100			Gender studies	Introduction to Psychology
Nehama	Rivlin-Beniaminy	MA	63	63			Clinical psychology	Research Experience Regression and Analysis of Variance
Kelly	Saporta	MA	100	100			Learning technologies Consumer cognitive behavior	Research Methods in Social Sciences
Lihi	Segal-Caspi	MA	55	55	Bar-Ilan University	50%	Clinical psychology Educational counseling	Reading Disabilities
Dekel	Shalev	MA	93	93			Cognitive psychology	Cognitive Psychology Visual Imagery and Dream
Liron	Tal	MA	55	55			Group facilitation	Psychology of Gender
Liat	Tikotzky	MA (doctoral student)	38	38			Clinical child psychology Sleep in children	Sleep and Sleep Disorders in Childhood
Gil	Vantura	MA	38	38			Vocational & organizational psychology	Human Intelligence

Table 2C – Tutors and number of study groups between 2002 and 2006

Note: "Employment Status" and "Yearly Teaching Units" in this case are reflected in the number of groups tutored.

With the exception of tutors who are also course coordinators (academic teaching staff), the tutors have no additional tasks in the institution. Those tutors who are also course coordinators appear in Table 2B. The OUI does not have data about the tutors' additional workplaces, if any, as they are external employees.

Tutor seniority (number of semesters)	Number of tutors	Total groups tutored	Mean number of groups per tutor per semester
1	43	58	1.35
2	49	137	1.40
3	38	143	1.25
4	20	96	1.20
5	15	108	1.44
6	18	149	1.38
7	19	170	1.28
8	11	139	1.58
9	19	243	1.42
10	13	170	1.31
11	13	214	1.50
12	8	105	1.09
13	11	191	1.34
14	10	149	1.06
15	5	121	1.61
16	6	149	1.55
17	6	76	0.75
18	12	240	1.11
19	5	146	1.54
20	1	26	1.30
21	3	31	0.49
22	5	130	1.18
23	3	140	2.03
24	4	51	0.53
25	2	52	1.04
26	5	195	1.50
27	4	203	1.88
28	2	68	1.21
29	3	107	1.23
30	3	73	0.81
33	1	26	0.79
35	1	13	0.37
39	1	30	0.77
49	1	72	1.47
Total	**360**	**4,021**	**1.23**

3.6 Infrastructure

3.6.1   Administration

3.6.1.1 Location of the Department

The Department of Education and Psychology is located in 36 offices (of which four are allocated to the In-Service Teacher Training Unit) on the third floor of the Academic Building on the Raanana Campus (see map below). Faculty members who live in Jerusalem and its vicinity were allocated several rooms at the OUI's center in Jerusalem and additional rooms were allocated in the Haifa center.

3.6.1.2 The Department office

The department office is located on the 3rd floor of the Academic Building, room 321. The office of the head of the department is in room 317, close to the department office and the offices of other faculty members.

3.6.1.3 Academic staff offices

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

The Open University Campus, Raanana

3.6.2   Classes

3.6.2.1 Classrooms, seats and equipment

Face-to-face study activities (tutorial sessions) in psychology courses are held in study centers throughout the country (see tables below). A limited number of study activities take place in ten classrooms on the Raanana campus. In most cases, classrooms are furnished with desks for two and sometimes with chair-desks, most without access to electric outlets or to the Internet. All study centers have a cafeteria and restrooms. All classrooms are used for all OUI courses, allocated according to the nation-wide dispersion of students at the OUI.

Study centers: The Open University functions in 52 study centers throughout the country. Not all study centers are opened every semester; study centers are opened each semester in response to the number of students enrolled in each course in each area. In the Fall 2005 semester, tutorial sessions in Psychology and Methodology courses (for all OUI students who took them) were held at 33 study centers and abroad (see table and map below). In that semester, 10,035 OUI students (including 144 students living abroad) took 24 of the 25 courses offered by the department (12,145 course enrollments).

Study Centers Offering Psychology and Methodology Courses, Fall, 2005

Study Center	# of Courses	# of Groups	# of Enrollments *	# of Students **
Carmiel, The Open University	4	4	98	90
Kiryat Haim, Eshkol Payis	3	3	94	88
Haifa, Beit Biram	12	23	676	556
The College of Management - the North	1	2	58	58
Tiberias, The Open University	4	4	51	39
Nazareth Study Center	2	2	23	22
Afula, The Open University	5	5	71	63
Givat Haviva, Wadi Ara	2	2	35	35
Givat Olga, Matnas Givat Olga	5	5	99	87
Electric Company, Hefziba, Hadera	1	1	45	45
Netanya	6	6	153	137
Ra'anana College	14	34	961	735
Petah Tiqva College, Gissin	12	22	609	510
Ramat Hasharon, Hakfar Hayarok	16	21	547	453
Tel Aviv, Seminar Hakibbutzim	5	8	247	245
Tel Aviv, Alliance High School	20	43	1,327	1,114
Tel Aviv, Tichon Hadash	9	10	336	322
Ramat Gan College, Armonim	19	110	3,458	2,676
Bat Yam College	8	16	435	383
Rishon Le'Zion, Avrutzky College	6	7	169	148
Nes Ziona	2	2	26	26
Lod College	2	2	24	24
Modi'in, Multidisciplinary Center	2	2	70	65
Rehovot College	10	17	330	275
Maale Adumim Regional College	1	1	18	18
Jerusalem, "Technological Garden"	14	33	1,030	829
Ashdod College	7	9	208	189
Kiryat Gat, Tichon Hadash	2	2	18	17
Beer Sheva, Beit Yatziv	9	13	372	291
Eilat, The Open University	3	3	53	50
Ofek (distance studies by satellite)	2	2	188	188
Special	3	3	9	8
Countrywide	1	1	105	105
Abroad	21	21	202	144
Total		**439**	**12,145**	**10,035**

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

** "Students" here are not what we defined in this report as "Psychology students," but rather all OUI students who took Psychology and Methodology courses in Fall 2005.
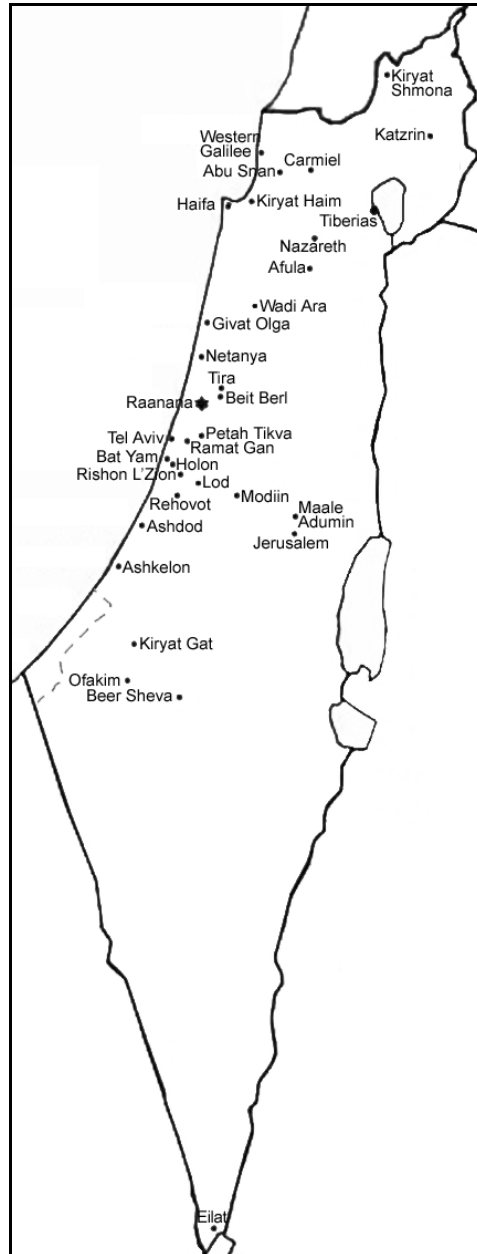
Distribution of study centers

The table on the next page shows the difference in the number of groups opened for the different categories of courses: the largest number of groups is opened in basic studies courses, offered to all students studying disciplines in the Social Sciences; fewer are opened for required courses in all programs of study in Psychology, and fewer still in electives, in which there is naturally a smaller number of students.

Distribution of Psychology and Methodology courses by study centers and groups, Fall and Spring semesters, 2005-2006

Type	Course (credits)	# of study centers		# of groups		Enrollments	
		Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Basic studies	Introduction to Statistics for Students of Social Sciences I (3)	28	25	103	77	3,256	2,620
	Introduction to Statistics for Students of Social Sciences II (3)	22	26	48	68	1,405	1,744
	Research Methods in Social Sciences: Guiding Principles and Research Styles (4)	21	17	45	37	1,339	1,034
	Research Experience, Regression Analysis and Analysis of Variance (3)	11	10	12	12	181	195
Required courses	Introduction to Psychology (6)	21	24	44	45	1,520	1,311
	Social Psychology (6)	16	17	28	34	723	1,009
	Cognitive Psychology (6)	10	13	15	18	381	441
	Developmental Psychology (4)	14	16	23	25	618	751
	Personality: Theory and Research (4)	11	15	14	20	357	565
	Psychological Testing (4)	8	9	12	13	226	297
	Physiology of Behavior (6) *	15		26		709	
	Psychopathology (4)	13	8	15	12	433	375
	History of Psychology (6)	8	7	13	9	289	155
Electives	Human Intelligence (3) **	3	–	3	–	36	–
	Psychology of Gender (3)	8	7	9	8	217	212
Electives (advanced)	The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment (6) **	3	–	3	–	36	–
	Visual Imagery and Dream (6)	3	5	4	7	71	107
	Attitudes and Persuasion (6)	3	2	3	2	33	49
	Visual Attention (6)	1	2	1	2	12	21
	Cross-Cultural Psychology (6)	4	6	6	7	117	121
	Identification with Groups (6)	5	5	5	5	80	98
	Reading Disabilities (6)	1	2	1	2	18	39
	Field Experience in Psychology (0) *	1		2		23	
For students of other disciplines	Critical Thinking: Statistical and Intuitive Considerations (3) **	–	1	–	1	–	33
	Judgment and Evaluation under Conditions of Uncertainty for Students of Management and Economics (6)	3	4	4	5	65	76
Total	**25 courses**	34	34	439	409	12,145	11,253

* Year-long course
** Course offered only in one semester: Fall or Spring

Over the last five years, psychology studies were carried out in every one of the Open University's study centers throughout the country. In 23 of the centers, study groups in psychology and methodology courses were opened in each of the last five years; in 14 centers, study groups were opened in two to four of the last five years. The rest of the study centers opened groups in one of the last five years. These figures indicate that psychology studies are accessible to students throughout the country.

3.6.2.2 Computer layout

Psychology students use personal computers. The OUI provides software to students according to the requirements of the various courses. All students taking "Introduction to Statistics II" get SPSS on loan. The software programs are licensed and usually downloaded from the Internet. The academic teaching staff provides support on content issues. The OUI Support Department provides general computer support. Computer classrooms located in the large study centers are available for students' use.

The institutional computer system

Communication: A three-layer Local-Area-Network (LAN) (backbone bandwidth rates of 2-4 giga bits/second) spread over the buildings on the campus: edge switches (at layer II) on the users' floors, aggregation switches (at layer III) at the building level and core switches (also at layer III) at the campus level. Fast Ethernet links (100 megabits/second) connect end-users' workstations. A Wide-Area-Network (WAN) (1/4-2 megabits/second) to the area activity centers. The OUI is connected to the Israel Academic Network (ILAN) and through this network to the Internet via two 34 Mbps lines. The OUI provides remote access secure private communication (VPN – virtual private network) to all employees that need such communication. The OUI is in the process of installing a local wireless network (WLAN) that will provide authorized users access to specific computer services through a personal computer with a wireless adapter. The wireless coverage is limited and focuses on public areas such as the library, classrooms, laboratories and lecture halls.

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

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

3.6.2.3 Additional facilities

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

3.6.3 Laboratories

The psychology lab was established in December 2000 in 1.5 rooms on the old OUI campus in Ramat Aviv. In the beginning, it served education and psychology faculty

members conducting research, and later also psychology students who chose to conduct computerized experiments as part of the empirical seminar paper degree requirement.

Beginning in 2001, as one of the prerequisites for enrolling in Cognitive Psychology, students were required to participate as subjects in research studies. Students who participated in a minimum of three research hours received a document specifying that they had completed this requirement. Research days have been held in the laboratory since March 2003, at which several studies are conducted simultaneously and students come to the laboratory to take part in them. A computerized system for registering students for research days was introduced in 2005.

With the move to the Raanana campus (September 2004), the laboratory also transferred to its new location – 80 sq. meters that include a central control room, an observation room and experiment rooms. The new building and the advanced control systems enabled the department to increase the number of studies, improve research quality and expand technology-based studies. The laboratory currently has two computers used for the laboratory office and six computers located in the five experiment rooms. Monitoring cameras, microphones and speakers are installed in the rooms and are used to monitor experiments or other activities taking place in the laboratory. Laboratory activities are facilitated by three experiment-generating software programs and a software program for writing, distributing and processing questionnaires on the Internet.

In the last quarter of 2006, computerized questionnaires were introduced as an optional alternative to traditional questionnaires, and to this end, a computer classroom near the laboratory is used to expand research activities during research days.

The laboratory serves two groups for three purposes:
- Faculty members who use the laboratory for their research needs
- Students conducting research as part of their empirical seminar paper requirement
- Students fulfilling the requirement to participate in research as part of the experience they gain in their studies

Students register for participating in research through the laboratory website: http://telem.openu.ac.il/lab-psy/.

The table below shows the scope of laboratory activities in terms of the number of students who completed their research participation requirement, the number of student-conducted studies and the number of faculty-conducted studies.

Scope of laboratory activities

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of participants in studies	101	248	401	791
Number of studies by students	1	12	14	39
Number of studies by faculty	0	11	17	31

3.6.4   The Library

3.6.4.1 Description

The Open University's central library offers reference, loan and information services to students and to academic faculty and administrative staff. The library holds all OUI publications (study units, video and audio cassettes); collections of books, journals and CDs; a digital collection of 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.

Training: In light of the special character of the studies at the Open University, in the early stages of their studies students do not need bibliographic training because the study material and textbooks are sent to them. However before the students take advanced courses they are required to participate in bibliographic training. This training focuses on the general use of the library and on searches for material when writing seminar papers. The training includes use of all library components and emphasizes searching in catalogs and electronic databases. It is offered in two formats – face-to-face training (at the Raanana campus and large study centers throughout the country) and training at home through courseware developed by the library. The courseware includes tests on the material and calculates the student's grade and updates the student's record for purposes of tracking and recording student participation.

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

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

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

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

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

The collection available to psychology students and faculty:
- 1026 print books (maximum number of copies per title – 3)
- 26 multi-volume Open University course books in the field of psychology (maximum copies per title – 6)
- 7 print journal subscriptions (2006)
- 93 electronic books
- 4 special psychology databases
- Access to 193 electronic journals in the field of psychology
- 13 multi-disciplinary databases that include material in the field of psychology

Psychology faculty and student use of the library facilities over the past year (searches and loans):
- E-books: 131 searches
- E-journals: 16,482 searches in different psychology journals
- PsycINFO database: 856,828 searches
- PsycARTICLES database: 29,306 searches
- Print books: 206 psychology books and 433 Open University course books in psychology were loaned
- 223 print journals were loaned

Clearly, the psychology databases are heavily used by students and faculty.

3.6.4.2 Access

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

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

3.6.5   Strengths and weaknesses of the physical infrastructure

The Open University's central control over study centers and computer services provides operational flexibility and the ability to offer tutorial sessions (throughout the country) and computer services, based on need – with significant financial savings. For the most part, rooms on campus are large and have new furniture and modern equipment; however, the meeting rooms on each floor are often too small for gatherings of a large number of participants. OUI computer services meet the needs.

With respect to the library, the option of connecting to a wide range of leading psychology journals and to receive the full text of articles electronically is extremely important for a University that serves students throughout the country. The inter-library loan service facilitates access to articles in journals that the OUI does not receive digitally. Agreements with most other University libraries provide students with access to these libraries for reference and loan services

Chapter 4

Research

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

The Open University Research Authority (see chapter 1) encourages research among faculty members by helping them find external sources of funding and submitting applications to these funds as well as providing grants, scholarships and enrichment courses from the internal research fund. The RA budget in 2006 was NIS 1,128,000.

4.1 Research Output

In the last five years, full time senior faculty members in Psychology included Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom, Dr. Sonia Roccas, Dr. Eran Chajut (since January 2007) and Dr. Lilach Shalev (until December 2006). In addition, we benefited from the presence of a visiting scholar, Dr. Gitit Kavé. Five members of the academic teaching staff recently obtained their PhDs, enlarging our research community: Dr. Shahar Eyal, Dr. Noga Sverdlik, Dr. Alon Lazar, Dr. Gal Gorodeisky, and Dr. Ravid Doron.

Publications: In the last five years, faculty members published numerous papers, many of them in top tier journals including *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Review, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Nature – Neuroscience, Neuropsychologia, European Journal of Social Psychology*, *Journal of Social Issues*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Learning Disabilities, Computers & Education, European Journal of Cognitive Psychology*, and many others. In addition, faculty members published chapters in books (see faculty CVs).

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

4.2 Service to the Professional Community

Senior faculty members in Psychology referee papers in peer-reviewed journals, and proposals for competitive grants. They also act as readers of graduate theses and dissertations by psychology students at other universities.

4.3 Grants

Achievements in research are also apparent in the rate of success in applying for competitive grants: In the last five years, senior faculty members submitted four proposals for competitive grants (Israel Science Foundation), and three of these applications were successful. Faculty members also routinely submit research proposal for Open University research grants.

4.4 Psychology Laboratory

The psychology laboratory supports the research of students and faculty (see section 3.6.3). The laboratory has state of the art equipment for conducting studies in social and cognitive psychology (e.g. experiment generators such as e-prime and superlab; audio-video digital recording; central lab control system). The university supports the laboratory by funding the cost of employing a laboratory manager (NIS 85,000 per year).

4.5 Challenges to Psychology Research

Conducting research in psychology at the Open University poses some unique challenges. In this section, we describe these and steps undertaken to meet them.

Supervision of graduate students: The psychology department does not yet offer a graduate program; however, faculty members supervise the research of students at other universities. In the last five years, faculty members have supervised, jointly with faculty members of other universities, the work of 24 MA students and 2 PhD students. In addition to acting as formal supervisors, faculty members work with graduate students from other universities in cooperative research projects.

Departmental and area-specific colloquia: Research of general interest to faculty members is routinely presented at the department forum. The department is too small to offer forums for the presentation and discussion of research in more specific research areas but faculty members visit such forums at other universities.

Research cooperation in Israel and abroad: Because of the very small faculty, collaboration with colleagues from Israel and abroad is especially important and enables testing whether theories developed in the Israeli cultural context are also valid elsewhere. Faculty members collaborate with colleagues from the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, The Technion, the University of Pennsylvania, NYU, La Sapienza, the University of Birmingham and The New School for Social Research. This has resulted in co-authored publications and co-supervision of graduate students.

Research assistants: Because the Open University does not have on-campus students, the recruitment and employment of research assistants is difficult. At the Open University, research assistants come to the campus especially to conduct experiments. This lowers the flexibility of their schedule, and raises the costs of their employment.

Participation in international conventions: Senior faculty members fund participation in conferences through the government granted funds (such as the International Science Linkages program). The Research Authority grants funding to the academic teaching staff for travel to international conferences to present papers. Members of the psychology teaching staff routinely present their research at international conventions.

4.6 Summary and Evaluation

Faculty members at the Open University view research as an important part of their role. Their small number severely limits the overall impact of their research. However, they seek to achieve individually high research standards. Conducting research at the Open University poses unique challenges that faculty members find creative ways to overcome. Research output is less impressive among the academic teaching staff. This is because in the past, research was not defined as part of the duties of course coordinators, and there were no explicit incentives for carrying out research. In order to improve this situation, three major steps were recently taken:

1. A new scale was set for the academic teaching staff at the Open University in which research output is an important criterion for promotion from one rank to the next (see Extras, "Course coordinators").
2. When recruiting new course coordinators, preference is given to candidates holding a PhD (or about to complete a PhD) and active in research.
3. The OUI has decided to give course coordinators involved in research a 6-month exemption from teaching and course development in order to enable them to devote time to research.

Chapter 5

The Self-Evaluation Process
Summary and Conclusions

5.1   Routine self-evaluation at the Open University

Evaluation at the OUI is routinely conducted in several areas by two main entities: (a) **the students** (the consumers) and (b) **the institution** (the service provider) that evaluates study materials, teaching processes and those involved in these processes, as well as special projects.

5.1.1   Evaluation of student satisfaction

As described in section 3.3.2.2, the Open University Evaluation Department conducts an ongoing teaching survey among students at the end of every semester. The survey, attached in Extras, "Teaching survey," is conducted via the course website. It includes questions about all components of the course (study material, assignments, the tutor, tutoring, the course website and all other course activities). Students can also add comments as they see fit. The Evaluation Department submits the results of the teaching survey to the course coordinators and the department heads. Survey data analyses provide information on each course as well as a comparison of department and University mean scores on each aspect surveyed.

The course coordinators' evaluation of tutors focuses mainly on each study group's teaching survey, and on observations of tutorial sessions. The department head receives a consolidated report, per course. The survey results may lead to changes in the structure of assignments, serve as the basis for feedback discussions with tutors, and sometimes even lead to discontinuing employment of tutors who received unsatisfactory evaluations.

Along with the surveys among active students, the University also conducts feedback surveys among new graduates, among veteran graduates (as described in section 3.4.8) and among dropouts (as described in section 3.4.3).

5.1.2   Self-evaluation by the institution

5.1.2.1   Evaluation of the quality of study materials

Quality of new study programs, new course proposals, and updates of existing courses: Every new study program, new course proposal, course update or revision (irrespective of whether it is part of a new or existing study program) is initially sent to senior academics in relevant fields for external review. After receiving their comments and the response of the initiator of the program or course, the issue is discussed by the appropriate disciplinary subcommittee. Following approval of the subcommittee, discussions are held in two additional OUI forums (the Faculty Council and the Academic Committee). After approval by the Academic Committee, new study programs are submitted to the Council for Higher Education. Approved course proposals are submitted to the OUI President who authorizes the development of the course. Every unit written is sent to senior faculty members at the OUI and at other universities for evaluation.

The study program approval procedure is attached in Rules and Procedures, "Program approval" (in Hebrew); course development is described in section 3.2.4 and attached in Rules and Procedures, "Course development" (in Hebrew). This exacting process ensures the high level of programs of study and written course materials. Accordingly, quality control at the OUI with respect to course contents and materials is stricter than quality control customary at other universities.

Evaluation of the quality of teaching materials: Towards the beginning of every semester, the course coordinators write the assignments that students submit during the

course. They also write three versions of the course final exams (two for the first exam sitting and one for the second exam sitting), and update the course website.

A senior faculty member, or a member of the academic teaching staff holding a PhD, examines and approves exam questionnaires every semester. Thus, every OUI exam is examined by an expert in the field who did not write the exam. The assignments and other course contents are also examined once a year by the department head or by a senior faculty member.

The quality of assignments and exams is also monitored on the basis of responses to the teaching survey and item analyses. The average grades of assignments and exams, from the item level to the study group level are analyzed each semester (see section 3.3.9). The main parameters examined in this analysis are unusually high or low grades on specific items, low correlations between the mean exam grades and the mean assignment grades, and unexplained variation in grades among the different study groups. The course coordinator and the department head receive results of the analysis.

The course website contents are updated continuously by the course coordinators, and routinely evaluated as part of the teaching survey. Student comments in the discussion forums are another source of changes and additions to the site that contribute to students' learning.

Evaluation of multimedia material, films and recorded lectures: Technology-based materials undergo quality control that begins at the planning stage. Multimedia material is often developed by a team of experts from the OUI and other institutions. For recorded lectures, the OUI engages preeminent experts in a specific content field. For example, for lectures in the revised version of "Psychological Testing," we recruited the assistance of experts from the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation. *Shoham* – The Center for the Integration of Technologies in Distance Education – is responsible for the technological quality control of these materials.

Evaluation of special projects: In addition to the ongoing teaching survey, the University also conducts surveys among students on an ad-hoc basis to examine specific components of the teaching process or study materials. In the case of significant change in course material or their instruction, students enrolled in the course in the first and/or second semester following the change answer both a routine and expanded survey specifically addressing the change and its components. For example, following a decision to add special courseware specifically developed for the advanced course "The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment," students received special questionnaires about the courseware with the aim of evaluating its components. Student feedback about new components involving new learning technologies is often used in research conducted about the integration of technologies in distance education in OUI courses. This research is presented at conferences and published in journals on distance education and on educational technologies.

Special evaluation projects are also conducted when particular needs arise on various levels: courses (is the material on X sufficiently clear?), programs (did adding an experiential research component in a specific course shorten the length of time students needed to write a seminar paper?), special groups (the ultra-orthodox, learning disabled, dropouts), or pertaining to any other issue.

5.1.2.2   Evaluation of teaching processes and those involved in them

Senior faculty evaluation: The senior faculty is evaluated annually. At the end of every year, all senior faculty members submit a detailed report to the OUI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of Studies about their activities during the

year on research, development, teaching and administrative activities. This allows for greater transparency regarding senior faculty activities and for payments based on standard criteria. In order to make informed decisions about extending employment contracts and academic promotions, senior faculty members are asked to submit a detailed curriculum vitae, a list of publications, and a description of their contribution to the OUI. External and internal committees decide on their continued employment and/or academic promotion (on procedures for promoting senior faculty, see Rules and Procedures, "Appointments," in Hebrew).

Annual evaluation of course coordinators: All course coordinators in the department are evaluated once a year by the department head and the senior faculty member responsible for the field. The evaluation relates to several parameters: the quality of assignments written by the course coordinator in the past year, the course website, student satisfaction as reflected in the teaching survey, and the distribution of grades on assignments and exams over the past year. The evaluation also touches on the course coordinator's contributions to revisions and updating of course material, administrative functioning and contribution to the department. The evaluation process and the ensuing feedback are detailed in section 3.3.2.2.

Tutor evaluation: The course coordinators evaluate the two main components of the tutors' work: their tutoring and how they check assignments. The evaluation is followed by detailed feedback (see section 3.3.2.2).

Evaluation of seminar paper supervisors: Supervisor evaluation is conducted through monitoring of seminar papers. After the supervisor grades the seminar paper, it is reviewed by the course coordinator and a senior faculty member in the department (see section 3.3.7.2).

Evaluation of administrative staff: Once a year, the Human Resources Department conducts an evaluation of all OUI administrative employees. The administrative coordinators in the Department of Education and Psychology are also evaluated through this process.

The evaluation of people cannot be detached from other processes. We view staff evaluation as one element in a three-stage process that includes training (before beginning to work and while working), evaluation and feedback. In this section, we addressed only evaluation processes, but we believe that they will not fulfill their function unless they are preceded by training processes that result in pertinent and informative feedback (discussed in section 3.3.2.1).

5.2. **The self-evaluation process**

5.2.1   **The self-evaluation process on the institutional level**

With the announcement by the Council of Higher Education of its intent to implement a process of quality self-evaluation in institutions of higher education, the President of the OUI, on the recommendation of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (Prof. Ora Limor) appointed Dr. Sonia Roccas as the individual responsible for dealing with quality evaluation at the Open University. Dr. Roccas is a senior faculty member in the Department of Education and Psychology.

Dr. Roccas's role includes:

- Collecting information pertaining to the self-evaluation process (participating in CHE symposia) and transmitting the information to relevant OUI entities (Vice President for Academic Affairs and the head of the department under evaluation).

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

In our opinion, the fact that a senior faculty member is responsible for quality evaluation in the University is important 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.

5.2.2 The self-evaluation process on the departmental level

Upon receipt of the guidelines from the Council of Higher Education for performing the self-evaluation, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Prof. Ora Limor, appointed a senior faculty member, Prof. Ruth Beyth-Marom, to lead the evaluation process regarding Psychology. Prof. Beyth-Marom set up a steering committee composed of three veteran course coordinators, Aviv Nof, Nehama Rivlin-Beniaminy and Lihi Segal-Caspi, who, together with her, would be responsible for the entire process.

At the first meeting of the steering committee, responsibilities were divided as follows:
- One individual was responsible for development and maintenance of the internal department website for quality evaluation (http://telem.openu.ac.il/psy_evaluation)
- One individual worked with the representative of the Evaluation Department that provided the statistical data needed for the report
- One individual was responsible for gathering material (CVs, course syllabi) from the department staff and for preparing them in a suitable format

It was decided that the Steering Committee would meet on a monthly basis to track progress.

Following a meeting with OUI management, Dr. Roccas and Ms. Gila Haimovic (the editor responsible for the evaluation reports), a meeting of the entire psychology team in the department was convened on 22 January 2007 with the department head and the representative of the Evaluation Department. At this meeting, Dr. Roccas and Prof. Beyth-Marom presented the quality evaluation issue, the faculty was asked to cooperate, the initial version of the goals of the department and of the psychology programs were presented and the entire team was asked to comment on them within a specified period.

Over the next two weeks, five work teams were established and the chapters of the report were divided among them. The Steering Committee prepared a folder for each team that included a letter from the steering committee (appended in Extras, "Letter on self evaluation"), the guidelines for the quality evaluation report, previous reports submitted by the University (in Management and History), the goals of the department

and the psychology programs, and a detailed timetable. In the first stage, the work teams were asked to submit requests for data needed to compile the report.

All relevant material for preparing the report, including statistical data, was posted on the report website, and the entire psychology faculty was notified.

The first version of the chapters was submitted to Prof. Beyth-Marom at the beginning of May 2007. After review, the chapters were returned to the teams for revisions. The updated versions were received at the beginning of June. Following additional review, they were posted on the report website. Three faculty members were asked to read each part and to comment within two weeks. Prof. Beyth-Marom compiled the full version of the report. The report was submitted to the three members of the steering committee for additional review. After this stage, the report was submitted to the editor. When it was completed to her satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the Steering Committee, it was submitted to Dr. Roccas, to Prof. Limor, and to OUI President, Prof. Gershon Ben-Shakhar, for their comments.

5.3 Conclusions of the University and the Department of Education and Psychology concerning the self-evaluation process

5.3.1 The contributions of the self-evaluation process

Due to the nature of distance teaching, involving three groups of teaching staff (course developers, course coordinators and tutors), the OUI has developed quality control mechanisms for almost every product, process and function (as specified above). These mechanisms enable the University to continuously examine its strengths and weaknesses and to address problems when necessary. As noted, these University-level control procedures are conducted separately with respect to the various development, teaching and research components.

The innovation in the current process of quality evaluation stems from the fact that it was conducted on the disciplinary level: for every development, teaching, and research component in psychology. This enabled the department to examine all its components holistically and from this unique perspective to derive the necessary lessons. Moreover, unlike institutionalized monitoring processes conducted by different entities and passed on to various interested parties, the disciplinary process allowed for collaboration among all bodies with respect to all evaluation processes. We view the collaborative work of the entire faculty of the discipline as a prerequisite for realizing the potential of the quality evaluation process. Every department has faculty members who are more involved than others. The quality evaluation process offers an opportunity to involve all faculty members in the activities of the department and to hear all their voices. It is for this reason that we designed an organized process that included the involvement of the entire psychology faculty at all stages of the report process.

Aside from the statistical data, the report includes the ideas and feelings of all faculty members, not only of a select group of writers. We believe that the report preparation process we chose to implement contributed to the authenticity of the report, to the departmental atmosphere and to the involvement of all faculty members in the activities of the department. We recommend that those who write reports in the coming years find ways to involve the entire faculty in the evaluation.

Parallel to the importance we attribute to the collaboration of all faculty members in preparing the report, it is also important to involve the senior faculty member who is responsible for quality evaluation. Maintaining contact with the Council of Higher Education and with the various OUI departments can be the responsibility of this senior

faculty member. To ensure that the knowledge and experience gathered through the work of the self-evaluation teams is accumulated and organized in a way that will enable OUI management to implement and internalize the conclusions emerging from the work of the various teams, a permanent quality self-evaluation committee should be appointed. The committee should include members of the Evaluation Department, the Computer Center and the Dean of Academic Studies. It can be accompanied on an ongoing basis by the individual appointed by the department as responsible for the quality self-evaluation.

While we were aware of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the psychology programs and of the department through the routine evaluation processes conducted, the onetime focus of the evaluation and the holistic perspective focused our attention on several issues we had not identified before. A prominent example is the issue of defining the goals of the department and of the psychology programs. In developing study programs and teaching methods, we were always guided by goals that were implicit but never clearly defined and formulated. The requirement to define these goals and to formulate them posed a serious challenge when we began working on the report. The fact that there were no significant disagreements about these goals (defined in section 3.1.2) indicates that there was silent agreement about them, but they had never been put in writing in an organized fashion. Formulating these goals into a binding document is a significant contribution to developing study materials and teaching at the Open University. Following formulation of the goals, we suggest that the subcommittee that approves course development review the goals of the department and the psychology programs, in order to assess how each new course will contribute to realizing the goals.

5.3.2   Summary of strengths and weaknesses

The rationale for offering an undergraduate program in psychology stemmed from the desire to provide a response to the demand for psychology studies and to expand access to this field to individuals who cannot study at other institutions of higher education, while maintaining high academic standards.

The varied psychology programs impart knowledge, skills and qualifications in the main areas of psychology. There are also programs that combine psychology studies with other fields in the Social Sciences and in other disciplines. These programs consist of core studies in both disciplines enabling program graduates to find employment or continue to advanced studies in each of the disciplines studied.

The department is satisfied with the results of its academic endeavor, which meets the goal of enabling graduates to find their place in both the labor market and the academic world. The programs offered by the department also answer the needs of its students, primarily employed individuals who require flexibility in their studies in order to integrate their studies with additional demands on their time.

Study materials developed in accordance with strict rules and procedures, along with rigorous academic quality control, from the course proposal stage to the final product, enable the department to produce outstanding materials, widely used by other universities.

The OUI's unique pedagogic model, based largely on independent study, helps to promote intellectual ambition and to develop strong will, perseverance, responsibility and self-discipline. These qualities and abilities equip graduates of the department and of the OUI in general with a relative advantage in the employment market and advanced studies.

The Open University and the Department of Education and Psychology conduct on-going evaluation of all teaching components each semester. The contents of courses are examined continuously and faculty members are updated in many ways, in both subject matter and pedagogic aspects.

The fact that experts from academic institutions in Israel and abroad contribute to course development is an advantage, since the development of courses and study programs is not biased towards the fields that interest a specific faculty member, but rather are based on the needs dictated by new programs of study and the goals of the department.

The OUI pedagogic model combines distance teaching with face-to-face components. The method is used in all OUI courses, including those in the programs offered by the Department of Education and Psychology. The components of the method include:

A **course book** that is the primary source of knowledge for learning and preparing assignments; a **study guide** in courses based on existing textbooks or readers; optional **tutorial sessions** at the study centers intended to provide guidance and support; **assignments** or **projects** submitted during the semester; **seminar papers**, and **exams** conducted at OUI study centers throughout the country, and integrated with **distant learning technologies**. And finally, a rich **course website,** for every course in the program.

The OUI offers students a wide and varied range of elective courses that are not dependent on the availability of senior faculty members. Furthermore, the number of students in a course is not limited.

The OUI study method is congruent with the goals of the University and shaped accordingly: it enables individuals unable to study in a regular framework to complete an academic degree in their free time and at their own pace. This approach enables individuals who work, have a family, are serving in the army, or discontinued their studies in the past, to pursue academic studies.

Furthermore, this approach corresponds to the department's goals: self-study qualifies our students to continue their studies independently, as required in a continuously developing field such as Psychology; textbooks and assignments are selected in order to impart advanced academic knowledge, enabling graduates to pursue advanced degrees.

More than thirty years of accumulated institutional experience in distance education enables the OUI to effectively take advantage of learning technologies that have become accessible to most students in recent years, and indeed the OUI is a leader in the development and application of technological tools for distance teaching and learning.

The strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in the Department of Education and Psychology are similar to those of the OUI teaching method in general. For most students, independent study is more difficult than group study through lectures. We are investing efforts in integrating technologies aimed at facilitating distance learning, without foregoing tutorial sessions. Surveys indicate that students are satisfied with the online systems, feel that they significantly contribute to courses and help them understand the course material and prepare assignments, and they actively participate in asynchronous discussions. However, they are divided with respect to whether the online systems are a suitable alternative to classroom learning, and are usually unwilling to forego face-to-face tutorial sessions.

The OUI allocates significant resources to overcoming the difficulties stemming from the distance teaching method. The University devotes the utmost attention to students and accompanies them from their initial interest in studies at the OUI, up to receipt of

their degree. In their feedback, students for the most part praise the OUI's personal and warm attitude towards students, as well as the level of teaching, study materials and learning technologies.

In summary, the teaching approach is congruent with the goals of the OUI and of the department. It enables the University to expand access to higher education to all interested individuals, and offers an opportunity to pursue academic studies to those working for their livelihood, raising a family or involved in other pursuits that prevent them from studying at other academic institutions despite their intellectual abilities.

The academic teaching staff believes in the OUI as a unique institution with a social mission, and this belief serves as the main motivating factor for their work, despite difficulties and problems. Coordinators and tutors at the OUI are highly experienced teachers who view their teaching work as a mission rather than as a constraint. The course coordinators are also excellent managers, able to manage a course successfully, even a course with many tutors, study groups and students. Senior faculty members also have high management abilities reflected in the friendly and family-like atmosphere in the department.

We also acknowledge the **weaknesses** and have considered ways to remedy them:

Issues regarding human resources
The **senior faculty** carries a heavy load due to fact that, in addition to research demands and university administrative tasks, the few faculty members need to closely monitor all courses, and supervise updating, revising, and rewriting them when necessary.

With respect to increasing the number of senior faculty members, an additional faculty member has already been recruited (to replace a member who left) and we are in the process of recruiting two additional faculty members. One course coordinator in psychology (holding a PhD and involved in research) has received the rank of level 4 in the new ranking system for course coordinators. The significance of this rank is that this course coordinator can help to fill several functions usually filled by senior faculty, thus slightly reducing their workload.

Regarding **tutors**, the report indicated the gap between the importance attached to their work and their professional status. We recommend that the department head establish an ad hoc team to examine ways to strengthen the relationship between tutors and the department, consider ways to reward outstanding tutors and look into additional issues related to their work.

Teaching issues
Course update rate: The small team of senior faculty members finds it hard to handle course updating on a regular basis (even the managerial aspect of the process). We hope that additional personnel will enable us to accelerate the course update rate.

We discussed the difficulty pertaining to **seminar papers**. A university committee is examining ways to improve the supervision aspect as well as the number of students who complete their seminar papers. With respect to seminar papers, in contrast to other study components, we do not receive feedback from students. We need to ask students who have completed their seminar papers for feedback concerning the training process and the advisors. This request was transmitted to the Evaluation department, which is examining the issue. We also believe that each semester, or at least once a year, each course coordinator should get a report on the status of seminar paper preparation, including, for each advisor, a list of students who finished during that period (noting the

title of the paper, how long it took the student to complete it, and the grade given), as well as a list of students currently being supervised.

We noted the difficulty stemming from the sharp **transition** from intermediate to advanced courses. A departmental ad hoc committee is addressing the issue and considering a number of possible solutions such as including articles in Hebrew and English in intermediate courses in psychology in order to prepare students for advanced courses.

With respect to most of the weaknesses identified, we initiated an examination of these issues prior to the current report. However, the report illuminated them more strongly. It is premature at this stage to determine whether the way they were addressed to date brought about a significant change, yet such an examination should undoubtedly be conducted regularly, and we plan to do so concerning all problems on a case-by-case basis.

5.4 **Mechanism for continued monitoring of the handling of problematic issues**

In an article published in October 2007 in *The American Psychologist*, "Quality benchmarks in undergraduate psychology programs" (Dunn, McCarthy, Baker, Halonen & Hill, 2007), performance benchmarks are proposed to enable undergraduate psychology programs to define their goals and measure their effectiveness. The authors define eight broad domains which should be assessed: curriculum, assessment issues, student learning outcomes, program resources, student development, faculty characteristics, program climate, and administrative support. For each domain, the authors suggest measuring performance on a number of attributes that would characterize "underdeveloped, developing, effective, and distinguished achievement for undergraduate programs." Though we were not aware of these benchmarks since the paper was published only recently, we were glad to see that our program satisfies many of them. We now intend to review them thoroughly and define appropriate strategies to improve our performance in those areas in which we are weak.

At the same time, in order to deal with problematic issues that arose in this report, we plan to take the following steps:

- A team from the department should prepare a document describing the short and long-term approaches to handling problematic issues highlighted in this report. The department head, in collaboration with the Vice President for Academic Affairs, should ensure that the proposed approaches for 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 problem type (semester, annual or five-year basis).

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

A copy of the report is posted on the quality evaluation website that was developed for the project. This is open to all members of the department. A copy will also 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.