

Darryl Egnal explains why an Israeli higher education gives new olim a boost

On the right course for life in Israel

STUDYING IN Israel has many benefits for new immigrants (olim), not least of which is meeting people and making new friends in the country you've chosen to make your home. The options are numerous and every city and area in Israel has choices that will give you the start in life you need.

Choosing to go on aliyah before you start your tertiary education or your postgraduate studies will give you many advantages over the alternative. Studying in Israel enables you to learn Hebrew and eventually study in the language, become accustomed to the culture and lifestyle, make potential business or professional contacts that will stand you in good stead for the rest of your career and make friends that will last a lifetime.

There are eight major universities in Israel, more than 30 other institutions of higher education (publicly and non-publicly funded) and nearly 30 teacher-training colleges. These institutions all offer undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses and/or diploma courses in a variety of disciplines. The options are extensive.

Although the language of instruction in most of the institutions of higher education is Hebrew, several offer

a few courses and/or programmes in English. Every student who wishes to continue his or her higher education in Israel has to participate in one of two pre-academic preparatory programmes for new immigrants: a university preparatory programme (Mechina) or a pre-academic programme (TAKA).

The Mechina programmes are meant for students with non-equivalent Israeli high-school diplomas who wish to enter universities that require Mechina. The duration of the programme is one academic year – two terms and a summer ulpan (Hebrew language school). Some universities require students to complete a Mechina before they can register for regular studies and will only accept students from their own Mechina programmes.

The TAKA pre-academic programme is meant for students with equivalent high-school matriculation or an academic record that exempts them from Mechina, as well as candidates for Masters studies. The duration is between one and two terms of five to 10 months.

The Israel Student Authority, operating through the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption in collaboration with the Jewish Agency for Israel, grants tuition scholarships for up to three years of higher education to eligible new immigrant students. The grant is dependent on academic achievements and the



Studying in Israel will help you make lifetime friendships and valuable business contacts

fulfilment of a volunteer community work requirement in the last year of the scholarship.

To qualify, students must study at a recognised institution and be a new immigrant (or a returning minor or citizen born abroad) and begin academic studies within 36 months of going on aliyah (or receiving this status). This does not include any time that is spent in the army or national service.

The Student Authority will also evaluate academic documents (such as degrees, diplomas, transcripts) and confirm the young person's eligibility for financial assistance.

Before going on aliyah, young adults can receive information and advice on study options in Israel from the shaliach at the Jewish Agency in the UK or from the Student Authority in Israel (see contacts on the front of this supplement).

Below is a brief overview of a few of the universities and colleges in Israel.

● ACADEMIC CENTRE OF LAW AND BUSINESS

(formerly Ramat Gan College of Law) What began as a small college, started by Hebrew University's Law faculty 15 years ago, has evolved into a recognised and respected non-profit academic institution. About 600 students enrol in the Academic Centre of Law and Business (CLB) every year.

CLB is a leader in the development of legal clinics in Israeli law schools and was among the first to create a legal clinic for human rights and one on corporate social responsibility.

The law graduates of CLB are exceptionally successful at passing the Israeli Bar Exam – an average of 90 per cent passes over the last five years.

In the professional arena, CLB's graduates earn among the highest salaries in the State of Israel.

● ASHKELON ACADEMIC COLLEGE

Ashkelon College was established in 1965 on the initiative of Bar-Ilan University's founders. Since then, the branch, which started with about 100 students, has become one of the largest colleges in the country, with more than 5,600 students registered in 2010 and about

15 undergraduate study programmes. In 1991, Ashkelon College was recognised by the Ministry of Education as a regional college and in 2000, Ashkelon Academic College was founded. It was granted permission to provide independent degrees in 2004 and was given recognition and accreditation by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) as an Israeli institution of higher education in 2007.

Today, the college offers BA degrees independently and through Bar-Ilan University. By the end of 2010, the college expects the CHE to empower it to offer MA and MSc degrees.

● BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY, RAMAT GAN

Bar-Ilan University is the fastest growing academic institution in Israel, with a community of students numbering 33,000.

Bar-Ilan's mission is to conduct cutting-edge research while training its students to become highly qualified professionals in the sciences, humanities, law, engineering, business and the arts – all within a unique learning environment that fosters Jewish values and continuity.

From its globally-recognised leadership in nanotechnology, biblical archaeology and brain science, as

well as its English-language graduate programmes in business administration and creative writing, to the recent launch of Israel's newest faculty of medicine, Bar-Ilan University is leading a national initiative to stem Israel's brain drain by repatriating outstanding Israeli experimentalists from abroad.

● BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev was recently selected as the number one choice of Israeli students in a survey conducted by the National Students Union, thanks to its unique atmosphere and internationally recognised academics.

English-language programmes like those in the Medical School for International Health and the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies, attract a fascinating mix of students from around the world.

In addition, BGU was the first in Israel to offer bioinformatics through the Department of Computer Sciences, and is one of the few universities in the world to offer a bachelor's degree in emergency medical services (paramedics) through the Faculty of Health Sciences.

BGU has three campuses in the south of Israel: the main campus in Be'erSheva; the Sde Boker campus and the Eilat campus.

● IDC HERZLIA

IDC Herzlia, Israel's first private university, has attracted 1,300 students from 77 countries to the Raphael Recanati International School (RRIS). It is the only academic institution in Israel that offers three-year bachelor degree programmes in the social sciences taught entirely in English. IDC accepts students based on the requirements of the top universities in their own countries.

BA degrees are offered in business administration, communications, economics, government and psychology. Graduate studies include: MBA; MA in government and an MA in organisational behaviour and development (OBD). In addition, students are invited to take part in the wide array of extra-curricular activities.

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