

AL- Quds Open University

Al-Quds Open University is an administratively, academically and financially independent public university. It was established in Amman by a decree issued by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and started operating in Palestine in 1991. QOU also works on integrating IT in the educational process by suitable means and gradually. As the University adopts the Open Education System, it is willing to widen its relation internationally with other Open Education institutions to exchange experience, research and other things as well.

Due to the flexibility and to the quality of its educational system, the number of learners Registered in the University has increased in 2009-2012 to reach more than 67,000. The university has twenty-two branches and Study Centers spreading all over the country, in addition to two branches in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and an office in Amman, Jordan.



- Al-Quds Open University (QOU) is the only academic institution in Palestine which has been intensively implementing all modes of e-Learning into its teaching and learning practices. QOU adopts the open learning approach for its educational policy and has an enrolment of more than sixty thousand students in five educational programs. Over the past years, QOU mainly managed its academic programmes through Moodle, a Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment. The open source community-based tools for learning enable the management of student's online activities for some courses, which begin with learning practices and ends with assessments and evaluation of students work. In addition, QOU uses the LMS platform as a container for some self learning online courses.

Learning activities at QOU consider collaborative and socio-constructivist approaches, and include activities not only for individuals but also for communities of learners. To this end continuous support to learners and communities engaged in the learning process is needed to get assistance on how to select, find, recognize, organize, integrate, and self-assess new knowledge. At the same time, tutors need support to define these appropriate learning strategies as well as developing the new assignment methods these require. This includes, for instance, how to support explicitly the development of skills needed (e.g., self-directed, self reflection, social skills), how to support flexible learning activities for meaningful learning, or how to support

personalization considering heterogeneity of participants.

Al-Quds Open University has the most important tools for effective course development – motivated, enthusiastic, and expert's staff including academic specialists, an instructional designer, and technology specialists in online development, video and audio production, and multimedia production.

Mission of Al-Quds Open University

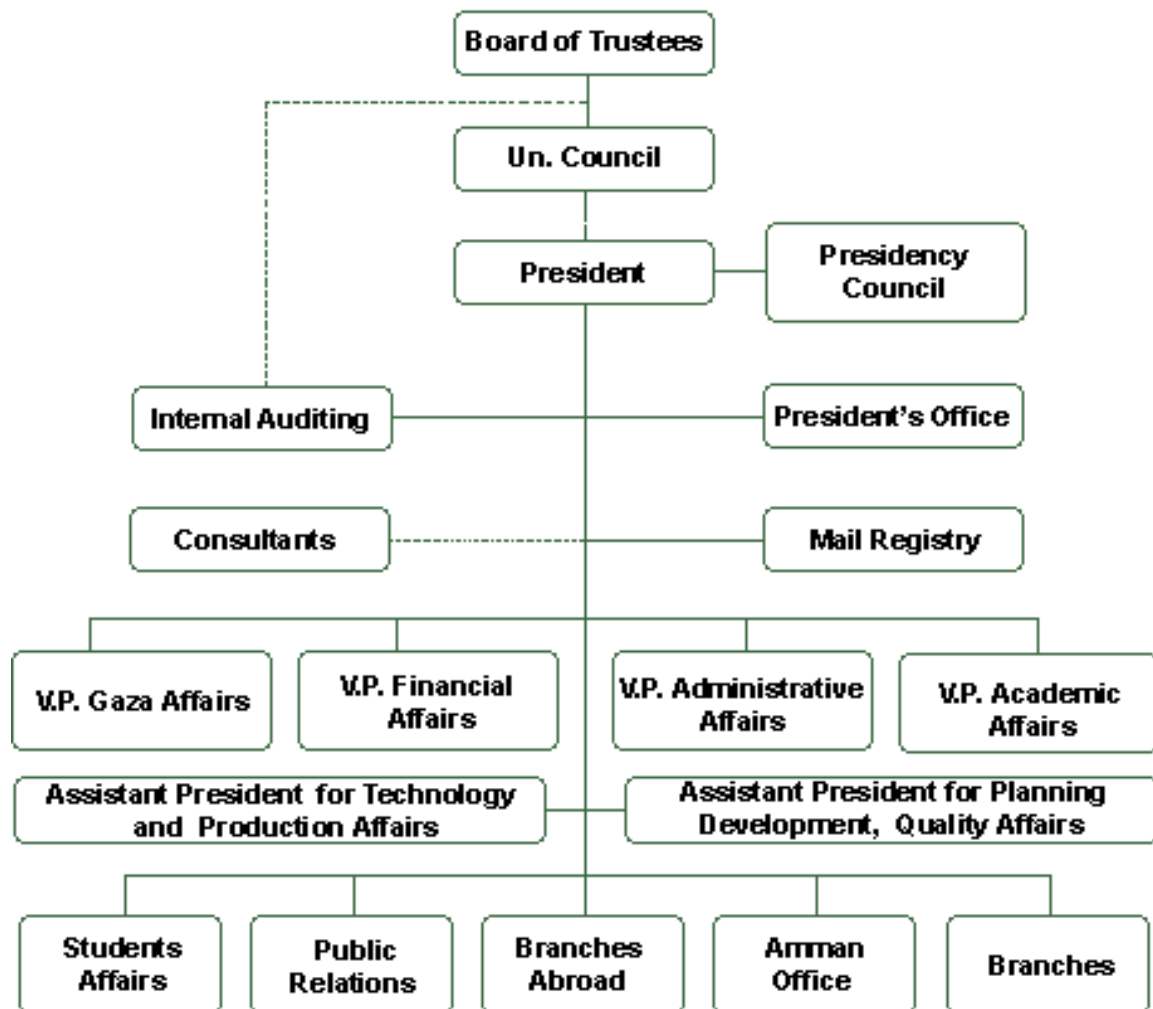
QOU offers its services based on the philosophy of open learning. The aim is to prepare graduates to meet the needs of the community and labour market and give them the skills and ability to compete in local markets with the use of up to date educational techniques and technology.

QOU also concentrates on the role of academic research and expanding its relevance to the community. This will result in overall growth without compromising quality.

General Goals of QOU

The under-mentioned goals spring from the University's vision and mission and form a work guide to the University. These goals tackle continuing activities, which started since the establishment of the University, and seek to develop and improve them. They also tackle new axes and activities that should be achieved. These goals have been formulated in a general, non-behavioral pattern, which focuses on organizing work in the form of desired quality activities. In order to facilitate monitoring, these goals were divided into fields, which cover the different aspects of the University.

Al-Quds Open University Chart



The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the highest authority which governs the University. It is appointed by the President of the State of Palestine for a four-year term.

The trustees are chosen based on their qualifications, talents and abilities which will enable them to fulfill the University's objectives.

According to QOU laws and regulations, President Mahmood Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued a decree in 2014 appointing the following 14 people as the new members of QOU Board of Trustees:

1.	Eng. Adnan Samarah	Former Secretary of the Revolutionary Council of FATAH; Chairman of the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence; Chairman of the Board of Trustees
2.	Prof. Reyad al-Khudary	Member of Executive Committee at PLO and Head of PLO Department of Education (Vice Chairman)
3.	Prof. Abdul-Fattah Abu Shukor	Professor of Economics at An-Najah National University (Member)
4.	Dr. Aziz Shawabka	Lecturer of Physics at Birzeit University, (Member)
5.	Dr. Sulayman al-Khalil	General Director for Scientific Research Centers and Lecturer at An-Najah National University, (Member)
6.	Dr. Abdullah Abdul-Mun'em	Former Deputy Minister for Higher Education (Member)
7.	Prof. Hani Najem	Coordinator of International Bank Project for Developing Higher Education (Member)
8.	Dr. Husein al-Aaraj	Head of President's Office. (Member)
9.	Dr. Nuha Khoury	Vice President of Academic Affairs/ Dar Al- Kalima Culture - Betlehem & University College for Arts ((Member
10.	Mr. Hatem Abdul-Qader	Member of FATAH Revolutionary Council; Former Minister for Jerusalem Affairs; Secretary of Qatar Committee for Supporting Jerusalem
11.	Mr. Azzam Shawwa	Palestine Commercial Bank Manager (Member)
12.	Mr. Akram A. Jrab	Chief Board of Al-Quds Bank
13.	Mr. Yousef Dajani	Head of Administration Council at Jerusalem District Electricity Company (Member)
14.	Prof. Younis Amro	President of Al-Quds Open University, (Member)
15.	Dr. Odeh Masharqa	General Secretary of Board of Trustees, President Assistant for Finacial and Community Resources

National and International Projects:

- **Alleviate the digital divide in higher education along the Mediterranean basin – Avicenna (UNESCO funded):**

Avicenna project [March 2003- September 2006] is an ambitious project that aims at creating new community of universities sharing best practices and pedagogical innovation through a network of eLearning centers across the Mediterranean. With 15 countries involved, it attempts to accelerate the adoption and the best use of ICT-assisted Open Learning (OL). The output of the project is a virtual library of 120 online modules produced by the 15 partners. Avicenna Knowledge center in Palestine has produced 22 modules including one for the blind students. These were among the best productions as rated by the UNESCO.

Main Achievements:

AKC Palestine has produced 22 modules and those modules were used by 23000 students at the end of the academic year 2006/2007. It is currently installed on Moodle Platform, see the link <http://avicourse.qou.edu>.

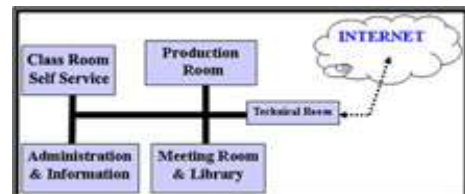


During Phase 1 to Phase 3, QOU has organized 10 workshops for authors and 3 for tutors. In addition, it organized a nation-wide ICT day (Nov 2005) attended by large number of dignitaries- where the first batch of produced courses were officially opened. In all, 50 authors and more than 100 tutors were trained.

Avicenna Knowledge Center (AKC) - Palestine

Hosted by Al-Quds Open University (QOU). QOU highly appreciates the need for e-Learning or open learning as has one of the biggest WAN networks in Palestine.

Transfer of know-how gained from the Avicenna project allowed the production of new courses and the adaptation of existing ones. It also allowed every student (QOU Student or students from other universities) to use the labs and to enter the virtual campus thus benefiting as many students as possible, Most of Part-time instructors at QOU work are full-time instructors/tutors at other Palestinian universities thus reaching a wider sector of the community. Those tutors would carry skills and expertise learned while at QOU to other colleagues and students at these Palestinian universities.



The AKC has been involved with a communication plan to acquaint the university staff and the Palestinian public with the Avicenna. This plan includes publishing articles in the university magazine, posting materials on the website, and holding working sessions and training for academic supervisors, faculty members and production centers staff.

- **Inter-University Network for Open and Distance Learning - RUFO (Tempus-MEDA funded)**

It is an e-learning project which comprises a consortium of five universities in the West Bank, three in France, two in Spain and one in Belgium. Each of the five Palestinian universities was to develop an on line course jointly with another university in the West bank. Al-Quds Open University was involved in five projects as follows :

- Remedial English : Al-Quds Open University & Birzeit University.
- Science and Tecnology: Al-Quds Open University & Birzeit University.
- Remedial Computing: (PPU) Polytechnic, Hebron & Al-Quds Open University.
- History of Jerusalem Al-Quds University & Al-Quds Open University.

In this project the QOU has improve the infrastructure and capacity building in e-learning at Al-Quds Open University. We used flash technology with XML and e-learning standardization (SCORM) to build Remedial English course and we used Moodle as Course Management System (CMS), also you can access this course using this link (<http://rufo.qou.edu>) and login as a guest.

- **Open Digital Space For the Mediterranean - e-OMED (an initiative of the European Commission)**

Al-Quds Open University represents Palestine in Open Digital Space For the Mediterranean” project, the project offers the opportunity to progressively build a digital space widely open to all actors of the UPM (countries, institutions and individuals), that are able to make a valuable contribution to the above mentioned goals.

- **Open Digital Space For the Mediterranean - e-OMED (an initiative of the European Commission)**

Al-Quds Open University represents Palestine in Open Digital Space For the Mediterranean” project, the project offers the opportunity to progressively build a digital space widely open to all actors of the UPM (countries, institutions and individuals), that are able to make a valuable contribution to the above mentioned goals.

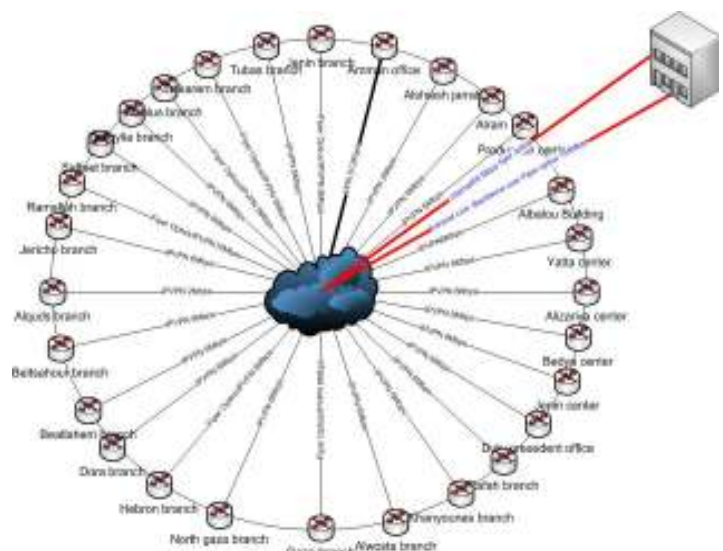
- **Educational video library (funded by the European Commission (EC) and the World Bank(WB).**

So far, 61 short educational videos have been produced with a duration of 5-10 minute for each film. Nevertheless, the intention of increasing the number of these educational videos is very probable in the near future.



Al-Quds Open University has a complete infrastructure with Laboratories and equipments available in its twenty-two Educational Branches spreading all over the country, The QOU IT staff has successfully developed and maintained the IT infrastructure, security, and applications that provide services to more than 65.000 students, educators and staff.

Al-Quds Open University is highly appreciates the need for e-Learning or open learning as has one of the biggest WAN networks in Palestine too connect all QOU sites together, and the speed of the links between ICTC and other branches. Besides, The Figure below represents QOU-ICTC WAN backbone and with the 25 branches.. Virtual Private Network



(VPN) was established to connect the QOU site in Jordan with the intranet in Palestine.

The QOU connecting with internet through two separate main internet sources:

- Leased line from local ISP with 25 Mbps as a main link.
- Another redundant Leased line with 25 Mbps as a backup link.
- A third 15 Mbps of the Internet service dedicated for the WebTV service

▪ **Computer laboratories :**

Al-Quds Open University intends to establish E-learning laboratories in its campuses in all cities in Palestine to allow students from these towns to access the available E-learning resources:

- **Computer labs:** 51 computer labs used for education purposes, student practice training and doing assignments, besides some practical lectures in IT subjects. The mechanism for providing computers in computer lab (1computer for 40 students). See appendix for detailed statistics for Educational Regions and studying centers.
- **Internet labs:** 21computer labs for internet usage and to login to QOU Portal System, email, etc. The Mechanism for providing computer in the internet lab (12 computers for 1000 learners).
- **Multipurpose labs:** 13 computer labs were established to enable students to use multimedia that contains the educational material prepared on CD's, Tapes, etc, and for deploying and training on e-service. Besides instructors can use these labs for course training.
- **Continuing Education labs:** these labs are used for some IT training courses such as a support for other labs mentioned above, especially in Educational Regions where there are many training courses organized for the local society.
- **Computer Labs for visually impaired students:** Three computer labs for visually impaired students were established in three Educational Regions (Jenin, Ramallah and Hebron). QOU is planning to establish more labs in other Educational Regions for its students and local society.
- **ICT Labs:** 7 labs contain electronic and communications training kits, components, and measuring equipments. These labs are used by students in practical courses in the



Information and Communication Technology specialization- Technology and Applied Science Program.

▪ Video Conference

As a rule of thumb, open and open learning are key elements of QOU philosophy, while the implementation of this philosophy on a wide range costs a lot. Since we are all aware of the difficulties facing our University Council these days in their meetings on one side, and facing our students to attend the academic meetings on the other, some Video-Conference (VC) rooms are prepared for administrative and academic purposes. Moreover, due to the shortage of academic supervisors in many educational fields, we found that the VC can be a possible alternative. The objectives of using Video-Conference system can be summarized as follows:

- Interconnecting the main Educational Regions with video conferencing connectivity.
- Increasing the efficiency of lecture's delivery in some subjects through enabling students and instructors to interact through video conferencing system.
- Facilitating the administrative workflow.
- Enable the university to interact with its partners all over the world and with other universities for cultural exchange

In House Developed software's

The QOU IT staff has built the universities systems using the cutting edge technologies, These systems were designed from the ground up to handle the load of more than 80,000 users who are located across the West Bank and Gaza. All QOU Software is in house developed by senior certified developers which can be summarized but not limited to the following :

• QOU Academic Portal:

QOU Academic Portal is a system that has been launched to serve the student, tutors, e-learning purposes, and other sectors in the university by offering the user required information via internet. This system is developed to meet the open learning philosophy adopted by the university. In addition, it supports the educational process in against all the difficulties that faces students living in the West Bank or Gaza strip, which prevent them from reaching



their educational centers. The number of portal users exceeds 65,000 users.

The system provides students with their all needed academic information (student grades, term summary, major sheet, courses' schedule, exams' schedules...etc.). For tutors, it provides them with many services like (tutor courses schedule, classes, students, and grades reviews...etc).

This is in addition to the internal communication system and course management services presented for tutors and students and other services provided for student affairs, public relation and registration department at QOU.

- **QOU Questions Bank (Assignments and Exams).**

QOU IT Staff has successfully developed Questions bank for Al-Quds Open University that provide Services, QOU spends every year a large amount of money and tutors spends significant time in preparing final exams that match the scientific standards, as a result QOU decided to facilitate the process by developing the questions bank system which ensures the following:

1. Examinations quality, content and credibility.
2. Examinations confidentiality.
3. A correct and distributed selections of the exams.
4. Reducing human errors.
5. Speeding up the exams generation time.
6. Facilitates the process of distributing exams papers to the regional centers

In addition, the The QOU IT staff has developed the following software's guarding administration, financial, academic, and community service. It links the university to the most up-to-date technological resources:

- **Admission , Registration, Students Accounting and Book delivery System (online Admission and Registration).**
- **Financial System.**
- **Human Resources System.**
- **Payroll System.**
- **Stock & Purchases Control System.**
- **Exam Evaluation Control System (EECS).**
- **QOU Website.**
- **Attendance signing System.**
- **Alumni Portal.**
- **E-Survey System.**
- **Library System**

Media Production

The establishment of the Educational Media Production Center (EMPC) is based on an international agreement, signed between the German government and the Palestine Liberation Organization on May 12th, 1997; where the EMPC joined the elite group of centers at Al-Quds Open University.

The center embraces an Audio/Video Studio, a Full Sound System Studio, PC-based Video Editing Units, and a Central Graphics Workstation. Their main function is the production of high quality Audio/Video educational material that assists the learner in his/her pursuit of higher education based on the Open Education and Open Learning Systems.



The center provides services for Al-Quds Open University and its students in the field of educational media to support the content of Al-Quds Open textbooks. The educational media is developed and produced in close co-operation of our media personnel with the academic advisors of QOU. The production process utilizes the latest and state of the art technologies, where the MPC provides the educational media on VHS and DAT tapes, as well as CDs, VCDs and DVDs. Moreover, the MPC using a powerful methods and technologies to broadcasting the educational lectures to the students as follows :

- **WebTV:**

Al-Quds Open University has launched the Web TV as a powerful method to anciently deliver quality communication and education to its students and the local community as well, QOU is using Web TV for broadcasting the Lectures related to University courses in addition to broadcasting educational, scientific & documentary films.



- **Video Streaming:**

-

QOU using Video Streaming to deliver courses to the students through the live streaming lectures via the university portal. It has been offered a solution to a wide variety of problems: how to connect students and faculty at QOU and how to deliver core course content with proper consideration of the receiving audience.