



Birzeit University

Building a better Palestinian future

From Rural School to Distinguished University

Founded as a small school for village girls in the town of Birzeit in 1924, Birzeit University (BZU) is now a distinguished Palestinian university with a newly-built modern campus on the outskirts of the city of Ramallah. Throughout its existence, BZU was established, built and developed by Palestinian labor, minds and resources, its development responding to increasing demands for higher education in the Palestinian society. Against all odds -- including severe restrictions on academic development and freedom imposed by the Israeli military occupation -- the University embodies a story of success that is an inspiration to all Palestinians.

BZU became a member of the Association of Arab Universities in 1976 and the International Association of Universities in 1977. It works in cooperation with other Palestinian universities and educational institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to develop an educational system that can provide Palestinian students with the knowledge, skills and awareness needed to serve their society in a changing global environment.

Mission Statement: Excellence, Development and Democratic Values

BZU strives to promote excellence in higher education by providing quality academic teaching, research, training, and relevant community programs within the context of sustainable development, social awareness and adherence to democratic values in a free Palestinian civil society.

Sources of Funding

BZU functions on the basis of cost-sharing, whereby students pay fees that cover around 40% of the cost of their education. With a firm commitment to assuring access to education for students from all sectors of society, the University has an active program of scholarships and student aid. In addition, the University receives a modest portion of an annual subsidy provided to Palestinian universities through the Council of Higher Education. BZU also runs a limited dual-track education program and engages in private fundraising in order to cover the deficit in the running costs and provide resources for developmental plans.

BZU's continuing success in soliciting funds from private donors (mainly Palestinians and Arabs) to build and develop its impressive new campus is a recognition of its distinguished academic reputation and its vital role in community development.

International Relations: Participating in the Global Academy

BZU has developed academic relations with a number of distinguished international universities, encouraging joint research activities, guest lecturers, and faculty and student exchanges. In addition, the University is linked to a number of European universities through the multilateral Palestinian-European Academic Cooperation in Education (PEACE) program. The University is likewise active in a number of EU-sponsored Tempus programs and competes actively for grants available through these channels. Alongside partners in various European universities, members of BZU faculty participate in individual academic as well as departmental curriculum development projects.

BZU also enrolls around 50-70 international students every year through its Palestine and Arab Studies (PAS) Program, in addition to holding an annual summer camp for international and Palestinian students.

Since the 1970s, BZU lecturers, staff and students have been harassed, arrested and detained in Israeli prisons and detention centers. Since then, the University has provided legal assistance in defense of these individuals' human rights and, in 2002, the Right to Education Campaign was started to continue this work and also reach out to students, teachers, human rights groups and social movements worldwide, raising awareness of other issues such as the struggle for academic freedom by Palestinian academics, and the debilitating effect of the pervasive checkpoint system on the ability of Palestinian students to access higher education institutions. Through its up-to-date research and cooperative initiatives, the Campaign is an extension of the University's long-standing commitment to protect the rights and freedoms of its faculty and students, so often compromised by the arbitrary measures of the Israeli occupation.

Faculties and Departments

BZU offers various undergraduate and graduate programs through its seven faculties:

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Commerce and Economics
- Faculty of Information Technology
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Sciences
- Faculty of Law and Public Administration
- Faculty of Graduate Studies.

All undergraduate programs award Bachelor degrees upon the completion of a four-year course of study, while Engineering Bachelor degrees require five years. The Faculty of Graduate Studies offers Master degrees and postgraduate diplomas in a wide range of fields. The University's official language is Arabic, although many courses are taught in English. The University follows the semester system, with two four-month semesters beginning in autumn and spring, and a shorter two-month session in summer.

Community Outreach

BZU has an impressive record of sustained community involvement, ranging from literacy programs and the promotion of primary and rural health care in the 1980's to media training, legal reform and civic education in current times.

The research institutes and centers and community-oriented programs at BZU were established in response to specific needs within the community and work with and serve the community through a unique blend of quality research and community involvement. Their mission is to expand scientific and social frontiers in their areas of specialization.

They provide training, workshops, professional and research skills, post-secondary courses and graduate programs. They facilitate community discussions on pertinent topics and also conduct policy-oriented research, which is instrumental in the overall development of Palestinian society.

Community Institutes and Centers

The University is home to the following institutes and centers:

- Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH)
- Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (IALIIS)
- Institute of Law (IoL)
- Institute of Women's Studies (IWS)
- Water Studies Institute (WSI)
- Center for Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences (CEOHS)
- Center for Continuing Education (CCE)
- Center for Media Development (CMD)
- Development Studies Program (DSP)

Library and Technical Facilities

BZU's main library (the Yusuf Ahmed Al-Ghanim Library) houses 135,000 volumes. In addition, specialized branch libraries in public health, law, gender studies, international relations and development studies are housed in the University's institutes and serve students and researchers. The main library and its branches have high-speed Internet connections and subscribe to many academic databases and online journals.

The Helen Kattan Computer Center at BZU provides the needed technical assistance to the various university units, in addition to providing technical support for running the university's academic and administrative portal (Ritaj).

Art and Culture

The Ethnographic and Art Museum: The Museum houses and exhibits the University's valuable ethnographic and art collection, in addition to its important role in promoting and protecting Palestinian cultural heritage. The Museum also regularly hosts art exhibitions which are open to both students and staff as well as the community at large.

The Paltel Virtual Gallery: A specialized website for the promotion of contemporary Palestinian art, features prominent exhibitions, artist portfolios, and contains a comprehensive library of images and texts. The website also promotes online credited courses on Palestinian art for BZU students as well as other courses for the community.

Student Life: Promoting Democracy and Diversity

BZU students come from diverse backgrounds and the University is committed to enhancing student dialogue and democratic discussions, as well as promoting cultural and educational extra-curricular activities. All student activities are coordinated by the annually-elected Student Council, which is run by an eleven-member executive committee supervised by a 51-member student parliament.

Since 1972, every undergraduate student has been required to complete 120 hours of community service in order to fulfill graduation requirements, making voluntary community work an integral part of student life at BZU.

Alumni: Serving Society with Skills and Civic Awareness

BZU is proud of providing the Palestinian community with qualified university graduates, who often occupy leading positions within the public and private sectors, as well as in the civil society. University alumni also occupy distinguished positions in regional and international organizations and institutions.





BIRZEIT

UNIVERSITY



General Contact information

Birzeit University, P.O. Box 14, Birzeit
West Bank, Palestine

Telephone: 972*-2-298-2000 / Fax: 972*-2-281-0656

* From Arab countries, use country code 970

Public Relations Office

Telefax: 972*-2-298-2059

E-mail: PR@birzeit.edu

* From Arab countries, use country code 970

Liaison Office (Jordan)

BZU Liaison Office, P.O. Box 950666, Amman, Jordan

Telephone: 962-6-552-7181 / Fax: 962-6-552-7202

BZU Websites

- University website: <http://www.birzeit.edu>
- Birzeit Academic Portal: <http://ritaj.birzeit.edu>
- Right to Education Campaign: <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu>
- Paltel Virtual Gallery: <http://virtualgallery.birzeit.edu>

