



# QOU's Newsletter

Issued by the Department of Public & International Relations & Media  
Al-Quds Open University

#1/2020

**Al-Quds Open University** is an administratively, academically and financially independent public University. In 1991, the University commenced its educational services, establishing a new headquarter in Jerusalem, and gradually introducing branches in major Palestinian cities.

**Al-Quds Open University** adopts the blended education system that combines the traditional education system and the e-learning system that knows no time or location barriers. It provides the opportunities for high quality education and learning at a convenient cost. This system depends on printed textbooks and materials, in class and face-to-face lectures and exams, besides self-learning tools. It gathers modern technology in the learning process especially e-learning with its tools to aid the learner using programmed education method and practical and training activities to support the learners' independence and to support the face-to-face meetings based on the modern and traditional learning enrollment standards.

## Graduate Studies at al-Quds Open University: High-Quality Majors for Innovation and Development of Scientific Research

Al-Quds Open University has recently added new master's degree programs to its offerings. The new academic programs include, Leadership & Strategic Management, Management and Public Policy, Educational Administration and Supervision, Psychological and Educational Counseling, Arabic Language and Literature, as well as Accounting and Finance. In addition, the University is currently seeking to obtain accreditation for the first doctoral degree in Psychological and Educational Counseling from the Palestinian Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission.

The University is taking major developmental steps within an insightful vision, laid by the University's Board of Trustees and its Presidency, with the help of a distinguished academic staff. By offering new specializations, the University seeks to match the requirements of the labour market, promote development, and change the conventional approaches, taking into account the new digital transformations around the world.

### Eng. Adnan Samara Chairman of QOU's Board of Trustees

Eng. Adnan Samara stressed the importance of the latest steps taken by the University stating, "The University is focusing on obtaining accreditation for the master's and doctoral degrees. It follows up on this matter with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The University is a firm believer that the future lies in the Open and Blended Education."

He added, "We predict that in the coming decades, the Education sector will witness major digital transformations as indicated by the studies on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The University, as a pioneer in this type of education, has the right to offer graduate programs for its graduates in addition to the graduates of other local universities. The University is distinguished by its high-quality academic programs."

### Prof. Samir al-Najdi Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Prof. Samir al-Najdi, the Vice-President of the University for Academic Affairs and the Chairman of the Council of Graduate Studies, considered the new Master's degree offerings to be a quantum leap for the University and a distinguished academic achievement.

The University also offered new majors at the undergraduate level, such as Learning Resources and Educational Technology, Hebrew Language and Literature, Libraries and Information Technology, as well as Public Relations & Advertising. Currently, the University offers 31 majors.

These programs will provide the graduates with adequate cognitive and performance skills that are consistent with the requirements of the labour market. The distinctiveness and quality of these programs will empower QOU's graduates in the labour market. In addition, these programs were designed to specifically match the needs of the institutions in the community.

Graduate Studies at al-Quds Open University:  
High-Quality Majors for Innovation and  
Development of Scientific Research

### Prof. Younes Amr President of al-Quds Open University

The University President, Prof. Younes Amr, stated that the administration of al-Quds Open University has been making great efforts over the years to obtain the necessary licenses from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to accredit the new graduate programs.

### Dr. Moamar Shtewi Acting Chairperson of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission

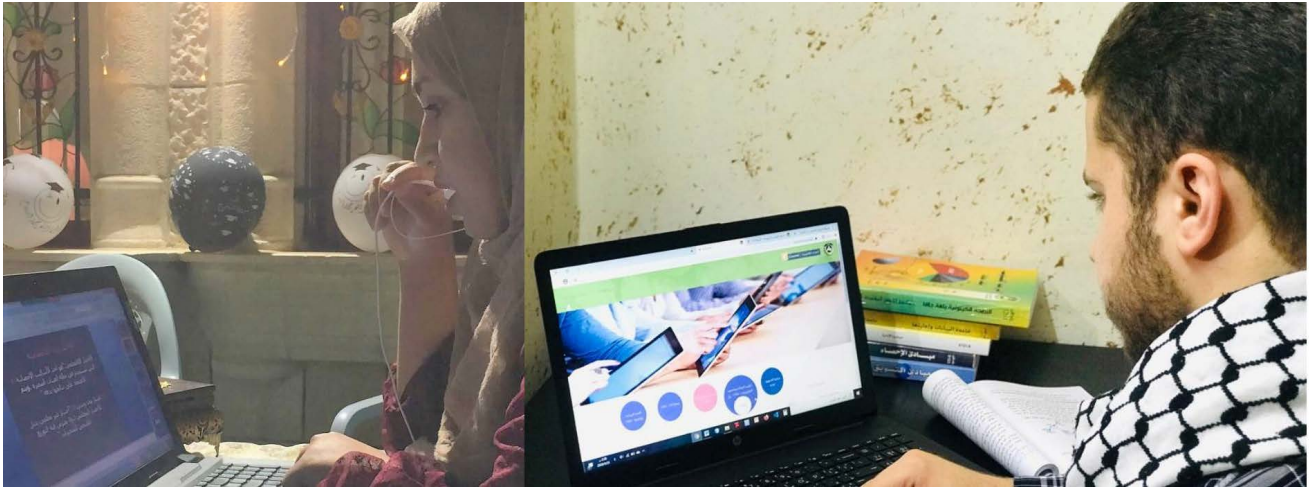
Dr. Moamar Shtewi, Acting Chairperson of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission, stated that the standards, adopted by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for granting accreditation to new graduate programs, "eventually seek to advance the higher education sector in Palestine by improving the quality of the educational institutions and the academic programs they provide." He indicated to the importance of establishing integration among the academic programs within the same institution, as well as among the programs of the different institutions within the same geographical region. He added that the Commission prioritizes accreditation for the programs that are offered in partnership with one or more local universities, and for new distinguished programs that differ from others within the same geographical region.

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## With Advanced Educational Technology at QOU, the Educational Process Continues and the Second Semester Proceeds under Coronavirus Crisis



Al-Quds Open University overcame the challenges imposed by the state of emergency in Palestine to fight COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic, in addition to the closure of schools and universities. The Presidency of the University and all its departments combined their efforts to develop alternative plan that ensures the progress of the educational process with high quality, while maintaining the safety of the students and staff. Therefore, QOU converted conventional lectures into e-lectures, and conducted mid and final exams online with unprecedented attendance by students. Academic, administrative and technological steps were made, leading to the progress of the educational process of the second semester for the academic year 2019-2020 with unparalleled success. The final exams began on May 2, 2020.

Prof. Younes Amr, President of the University, stated that the University's blended education philosophy aligned the educational process with the current state of emergency. The University invested in its technological, academic and administrative resources to ensure healthy educational environment that is in line with the emergency procedures announced by President, Mahmoud Abbas, and the Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh.

Prof. Amr stated that because of the outbreak of Covid-19, the University administration held an urgent meeting and issued recommendations and instructions to the various departments of the University, on the necessity to proceed with the educational process while maintaining the high quality of education. Prof. Amr also mentioned that most of the University's concerns were focused on proceeding with the educational process while ensuring the safety of students and staff. Therefore, the face-to-face lectures were replaced by entirely e-lectures, aided by the already present technological infrastructure of QOU, which is advanced and ready to face such scenarios. Moreover, electronic exams were developed in a way that guarantees credibility of its outputs.

Prof. Samir al-Najdi, Vice President of the University for Academic Affairs, said that the deanships of the Faculties, in partnership with the Information and Communications Technology Center and the Open Learning Center, expanded the base of e-learning through several measures and steps. The University held virtual classes, taught 267 courses in the second semester 2019/2020 over a period of five weeks, recorded lectures for 35 courses and broadcasted them via al-Quds Educational Satellite Channel, besides uploading all lectures on YouTube at al-Quds educational Channel. Moreover, self-learning courses were designed and approved for this purpose, and consisted of short videos to clarify challenging concepts. Continuous communication was available between teachers and students to answer questions and inquiries.

Prof. Jamal Ibrahim, the Dean of Admission, Registration and Examinations stated that it was not possible to hold face-to-face exams within the current situation, so the University developed technological tools that enable students to take exams and complete the second semester while keeping up the high quality of education. Fundamental changes were made to the nature of exams to adapt to the current circumstances by providing a mid-term e-exam that followed the style of open book examinations, so student were given questions that bear open answers, to measure the student's understanding of the educational subject and improve his/her analytical skills, investigation and scientific research. This style of examinations was applied on the courses which mid-term exam were not held due to the state emergency. Meanwhile, final exams consisted of 30 questions that had closed answers (multiple-choice questions) to be answered in a specific time (60 minutes), taking into account that each students had different questions than his/her colleagues.

For his part, Dr. Eng. Islam Amr, Assistant to the President of the University for ICT and Multimedia Production Affairs, explained that lectures were converted to be fully electronic. Additional sectors were allocated to the infrastructure, and the number of servers for this

process was doubled. Moreover, infrastructure capabilities were enhanced to withstand the huge load of virtual classes and electronic activities. It is worth mentioning that the student attendance rate reached 98%. Dr. Amr added that more than 250 technical support groups were created on WhatsApp, working around the clock to provide support and assistance to our students.

Dr. Mohammad Al-Kahlout, Vice President of the University for Gaza Affairs, explained that several measures were taken in the University's branches in Gaza, amid the current crisis to overcome the difficulties that students and faculty members face in order to make the educational process successful. Branch managers created an emergency committee for each branch to manage the crisis and address some urgent issues related to the students. Moreover, technical support committees were established to guarantee the quality of the educational service provided to the students. These committees sought in all branches of the University to facilitate the tasks of students and faculty members alike.

Prof. Muhammad Shaheen, Assistant to the President of the University for Student Affairs, indicated that the Deanship of Student Affairs communicated with all cases that encountered problems in the e-learning process and provided the required facilities for them to integrate with the e-learning process.

Dr. Issam Khalil, Vice President for Financial Affairs, indicated that the Financial Department was able to pay the salaries of March 2020 and is continuously communicating with the banks to follow up on checks and payments issued by the university to various payees. In addition, the Department followed up with bank balances to develop scenarios of the financial situation regarding the salaries of the month of April, in light of the financial crisis that the University is enduring. He also talked about the adoption of additional payment mechanisms to be offered for the students in the summer semester, to facilitate paying their fees online, through mobile phones and Palpay.

For his part, Ziyad al-Wawi, Head of the Regional Student Council, expressed his satisfaction with the progress of the educational process at the University, despite the emergency state and the closure of the universities. Al-Wawi praised the measures taken by QOU to convert the traditional lectures and exams into e-lectures, which enables students to complete the requirements of the second semester in full, while keeping up the high quality of the educational process.

### **Al-Quds Open University and Palestine Polytechnic University Sign an Agreement for a Joint Doctoral Program in Psychological and Educational Counseling**



Al-Quds Open University (QOU) and Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU) signed an agreement for a joint doctoral program between the two universities in Psychological and Educational Counseling.

The agreement was signed by Prof. Younes Amr, on behalf of al-Quds Open University, and by Prof. Imad Khatib, on behalf of Palestine Polytechnic University, at the office of the President of QOU in Ramallah.

Under the agreement, the two universities will implement a doctoral program (PhD) at both, the Faculty of Graduate Studies at al-Quds Open University and the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Palestine Polytechnic University. The two universities will make their libraries, laboratories and training centers related to the program available to the students of the program. The two universities shall be committed to observe the intellectual and literary rights of the research papers resulted from the joint program.

Eng. Adnan Samara, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of QOU, expressed his excitement for cooperating with the Palestine Polytechnic University and the agreement, which is as a step towards launching a doctoral program at the University. He noted that blended education is the foundation of the future of education that the world is heading towards.

The two parties expressed their excitement over the agreement and wished for more cooperation in other vital fields in the near future.

### **Researchers from al-Quds Open University Design a Computerized Mathematical Model to Predict the Number of Cases Infected with Covid-19 in Palestine**

A research team, consisting of Dr. Muhammad Abu Omar, Head of the Department of Computer Information Systems at QOU, Dr. Imad Shtayyeh, Adviser to the President of the University, and Dr. Osama Maree, a faculty member at QOU, designed a computerized mathematical model that is able to predict the expected number of cases infected with COVID-19 in Palestine. The model is based on the number of cases previously recorded, the way the virus spreads in the country and the government's plan to prevent the spread of the epidemic, taking into consideration the social and cultural structure of the Palestinian society. The research is entitled, "Palestine Radar Model (PRM) for Predicting the Number of Infected Cases of COVID-19 Virus in Palestine."

The results of the research expected the constant rise of the infected cases with COVID-19 during the month of April. The research has two main results; the first is negative, which is the continuation of recording infected cases with COVID-19 during April; the second result is positive, which is the decrease in the growth rate of the virus in Palestine by more than 15%. This is considered a positive and clear indication to the beginning of the decline in the spread of the virus in Palestine. This is attributed to the efforts made by the Palestinian Government according to the decree declaring the state of emergency in Palestine since the very beginning of the spread of the virus in Palestine on March 5, 2020, in addition to the preventive strategy based on social distancing. Social distancing included closing schools and universities, preventing gatherings, restricting movement, isolating cities and towns, the closure of the crossings, staying at homes, in addition to raising ongoing awareness and holding education campaigns among the Palestinian citizens and society.

It is worth mentioning that the research was accepted for publication in the USA Global Journal of Computer Science & Information Technology.

### **A Study by Researchers from al-Quds Open University Measures Emotional and Behavioral Response to Anxiety amid the Corona Pandemic**

Prof. Mohamed Ahmed Shaheen, Mr. Abdul Rahman Tamouni and Mr. Muhannad Dameer, faculty members at the Graduate Program in Psychological and Educational Counseling at al-Quds Open University, conducted a scientific study that measured emotional and behavioral response to anxiety among the Palestinians amid the Corona pandemic.

The study relied on a random sample that included 520 Palestinians from all the governorates of the West Bank in the period March 24-29, 2020. It included various segments of the society, especially the governmental sector, in addition to students and workers from educational institutions.

The anxiety response scale consisted of and measured two dimensions; the emotional dimension and the behavioral dimension. The results indicated that the level of anxiety responses from the Coronavirus was high at 67.6%, and anxiety responses at the behavioral level was high at 72.4%, while the level of anxiety responses at the emotional level was medium at 62.8%. Moreover, 85% of the respondents stated that they avoid crowded places and adhere to the official instructions in order to stay safe from the virus. 82.0% of the respondents said that the news about the number of people who have died due to the virus disturbed them, while the lowest percentage were afraid of dying due to the virus and wearing a mask when they leave their houses. The results showed that females have a higher level of anxiety in the emotional and behavioral dimensions compared to males; anxiety level among females was at 68.2%, while it reached 65.4% among males. The results of the study also indicated that the members of the sample under the age of 20 were the least concerned compared to the older ones.

## AI-Quds Open University Obtains a Special Global Certificate to Teach the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals



The Head of the Computer Information Systems Department at al-Quds Open University, Dr. Eng. Muhammad Abu Omar, received a distinguished international certificate entitled, "Special Global Certificate in Teaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Dr. Abu Omar indicated that this certificate authorizes him to carry out academic

and professional activities in Palestine and the rest of the world to teach the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN SDGs). These goals aim at developing human societies towards sustainable development in its various sectors.

It is noteworthy that Dr. Abu Omar was also selected as one of 100 experts and academics in the world, who will attend a series of consecutive international workshops, organized by the International Council for Business located in Washington, in cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), for three consecutive days on May 7-9, 2020.

## An Engineer at QOU Establishes a Home Studio and Broadcasts Lectures to Overcome the Corona Pandemic Lockdown

Eng. Abdullah Riyadh Al-Khudari, a faculty member at the Faculty of Administrative and Economic Sciences at Gaza Branch at al-Quds Open University, was able to create an integrated home studio through using internet, simple tools, some mobile applications for design, montage, and a room in his house. The studio was used to broadcast lectures through YouTube directed towards university students in Gaza Strip and West Bank, so that they can attend the lectures at any time and from any device connected to the Internet. This falls within the University's efforts to cope with the lockdown caused by the outbreak of COVID-19.

It is noteworthy that QOU was the first to use e-learning systems through virtual classes and broadcast lectures via al-Quds Educational Satellite Channel, affiliated to QOU. Al-Khudari stated, "We at al-Quds Open University carry one mission, all Palestinian students have the right to equal opportunities in education, so we reach the students and make the distance closer to them.

## PNCECS: UNESCO Supports the Promotion of Media Research in Palestinian Universities

The Palestinian National Committee for Education, Culture and Science PNCECS, and al-Quds Open University, announced the launch of a research project in the fields of journalism and media in the Palestinian universities. The project is part of the UNESCO International Program for Development Communication, funded by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO). The project aims at developing a cooperation framework for the Media faculties in Palestinian universities, through establishing a network that includes journalists and professors to implement specialized training in journalism at the local level. The project's outputs are positively reflected in improving the student capabilities in journalism and its research.

The project seeks to establish an association for the Media faculties in Palestinian universities with the aim of developing a research core that attracts researchers, academics and students of journalism, public relations and communication sectors. It also supports the furnishing of the headquarters of the Media and Communication Research Center at the Faculty of Media. This Center will serve as the headquarters for the desired association, in addition to implementing a training program for media students from various local universities.

Prof. Younes Amr, President of al-Quds Open University, praised this fruitful cooperation between the University and PNCECS as well as the UNESCO, emphasizing the importance of strengthening the role of media and its education in the Palestinian universities through electronic platforms and distance learning, especially in light of these difficult circumstances imposed by the Corona pandemic. Prof. Amr also stressed the importance of strengthening the partnerships among Media faculties in Palestinian universities to draft working mechanisms that would advance the process of education and training. He noted that al-Quds Open University, with support from the UNESCO office and in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education, implemented a project to develop a self-learning course in the Arab countries (Jordan and Palestine).

For his part, Dr. Dawas Dawas, Secretary General of the Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, stressed the importance of the UNESCO International Program for Development Communication (IPDC), which falls within the UNESCO's efforts to assist countries in developing media capabilities. He extended his appreciation to ISESCO, represented by its Director General, Dr. Salem bin Muhammad al-Malik, and all of its staff, including the efforts and support of the ISESCO Representative Office to UNESCO in Paris for this project, as well as the efforts of the National UNESCO Office in Palestine, which follows up the stages of implementing the project. He stressed that strengthening partnerships among Media faculties in Palestinian universities will contribute to developing the Palestinian media and maximize the benefit of modern technologies in this field.

## QOU Wins in the 9th WSIS 2020 Competition in Palestine



Al-Quds Open University participated in the WSIS 2020 competition organized by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The University won through submitting an App to teach Arabic Language to non-native speakers. This App was selected as one of the ten winning projects at the national level. These projects will represent the State of Palestine in the international competition that will be held in Geneva from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020.

Eng. Hussein Younes, the director of the Open Learning Center at al-Quds Open University, stated that the App seeks to provide high quality education in the field of Arabic language in accordance with the latest international standards and best practices in language learning and teaching. The App includes interactive content that takes into account the different types of learners, with video, audio and images and various interactive components that enable learners to develop their different language skills. He added that this App is the result of the collective work at al-Quds Open University, pointing to the cooperation between the University's Open Learning Center, the Educational Satellite Channel, the Faculty of Arts and the Center for Continuing Education and Community Service.

#### **Al-Quds Open University Receives an Academic Delegation from the University of Texas**

Dr. Imad Hodali, Assistant to the President of al-Quds Open University for Public and International Relations and Media, received an academic delegation from the University of Texas. The meeting took place at the University's branch in Nablus, in the presence of the Chairman of the Building Committee and the Palestinian Businessman, Mr. Muneeb al-Masry, Prof. Mazouz Alawneh, the Academic Assistant, Eng. Ammar al-Sadder, member at the Building Committee, Dr. Marwan al-Kouni, a Faculty Member, and Ms. Diana Salah, a PR coordinator. This visit aimed at enhancing relations and signing an academic exchange agreement between the two universities.

It is worth mentioning that al-Quds Open University will sign a MOU with the University of Texas, the Munib and Angela Masri Institute and the al-Quds Academy for Scientific Research, on the provision of postgraduate scholarships and fellowships at the University of Texas to QOU researchers and students, in order to develop their competencies and scientific capabilities.

#### **Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, Honors QOU for Winning Projects under Erasmus+ Program**

Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, honored al-Quds Open University (QOU) for winning two projects under Erasmus+ program.

This took place during the Information Day of the Erasmus+ program, which was organized by the Palestinian-European Cooperation Mission, under the patronage and presence of Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Prof. Mahmoud Abu Muweis, in addition to representatives from universities, ministries and related institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Prof. Younes Amr, President of QOU, mentioned that the University won "Promoting Creativity and Research in Precision Agriculture" project, with the participation of a number of Palestinian and European universities. QOU headed the management of the project and led 10 other universities for achieving its objectives. Prof. Amr emphasized that QOU will continue its cooperation with Erasmus+ program for the coming year through submitting a number of projects in partnership with Palestinian, Regional and European universities. Prof. Amr praised Erasmus+ program for providing support to QOU and other Palestinian universities.

## Events and reunions

### The Vice President for Administrative Affairs Participates in an International Symposium on Distance Learning



Prof. Marwan Darwish, the Vice President for Administrative Affairs at al-Quds Open University, participated in an international symposium on "Distance Learning: Readings in Comparative Experiences," which was organized by the Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences at the University of Ibn Zahr in Agadir, Morocco, on May 9-10, 2020.

The symposium tackled several issues on distance learning, including its infrastructure, electronic equipment, the necessary resources to compensate for the face-to-face learning, faculty members role, psychological and technical readiness to engage in distance learning, in addition to other issues. Moreover, the future prospects for distance learning were discussed in light of the sudden emergence of the Corona epidemic that led to the closure of colleges and universities.

Prof. Marwan Darwish, contributed to the symposium with a presentation entitled, "Online Learning amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Experience of al-Quds Open University." The presentation tackled the experience of QOU on the technological level, the provided technical support, the efforts of the technical teams to accommodate all educational aspects to the electronic system, electronic exams and the technical support groups on WhatsApp. Prof. Darwish also talked about the followed mechanisms for completing the semester through virtual classes and broadcasted lectures through al-Quds Educational Satellite Channel. He also indicated to QOU's self-learning courses, in addition to the mechanisms of evaluation and assessment of the students through electronic activities and final exams.

### Dr. Eng. Muhammad Abu Omar Participates in an International Workshop Organized by Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park

Dr. Eng. Muhammad Abu Omar, Head of Computer Information Systems Department at al-Quds Open University, participated in an online workshop organized by Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park. The workshop, which was held via Webinar technology, was entitled, "Explore New Business Opportunities, Innovation Ecosystems and Partnerships in the Middle East"

The workshop tackled several important topics that focused on the mechanisms for discovering business opportunities, establishing technological and economic trade partnerships in the Middle East, and excellence and creativity in entrepreneurship.

It is noteworthy that the Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park is an attractive and sustainable environment, and a global destination for innovation and technology with excellent infrastructure and services. It supports business growth and invites international companies to be part of its growing ecosystem.

The workshop was organized with the aim of taking advantage of the rapid growth of the digital sector in the Middle East. This would promote an economic and technological prosperity in this region. The workshop also reviewed the strategies for creating environmental systems that promote innovation and engaging companies that communicate, work and prosper to achieve sustainable development and prosperity.

### The Faculty of Technology and Applied Sciences Participates in the forum, "Artificial Intelligence and the Fight Against Covid-19: Between Challenges and Opportunities"



Dr. Walid Awad, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Technology and Applied Sciences, Dr. Raed Basbous, Assistant Dean, Dr. Nael Abu Halawa, Advisor at the Information and Communication Technology Center, Prof. Yousef Abu Zir, Head of Libraries and Information Technology, and Dr. Muhammad Abu Omar, Head of Computer Information Systems Department, participated in a virtual forum. The forum was organized by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), in partnership with the Civic Forum for Artificial Intelligence "AI Civic Forum." It was organized under the title, "Artificial Intelligence and the Fight Against Covid-19: Between Challenges and Opportunities", via zoom technology, on Monday April 27, 2020.

The Forum, which was attended by Dr. Salim M. AIMalik, Director General of (ICESCO), and international experts and academics, discussed different topics, such as AI applications to help tackle the Corona pandemic, the ethical challenges posed by communication tracking applications, as well as the current and future challenges and lessons learned from the epidemic. It also explored artificial intelligence potentials in countering natural disasters and health crises, including Covid-19, in addition to a strategic foresight in this field.

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### Al-Quds Open University and Amman Arab University Hold the Second International Conference on Social Responsibility of Universities



Al-Quds Open University and Amman Arab University inaugurated the Second International Conference on Social Responsibility of Universities, Regulations and Commitment. The conference was held under the patronage of Prof. Amr Ezzat, the Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities. The two-day conference was held at the campus of The Amman Arab University.

The Royal Jordanian and Palestinian National anthems inaugurated the start of the conference. It was attended by Prof. Mahmoud Abu Mowais, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the State of Palestine; Prof. Hamidi al-Khamisi, Assistant Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities; Prof. Maher Salim, President of Amman Arab University; Prof. Younes Amr, President of al-Quds Open University; Prof. Abdul Rahim Hunaiti, Assistant Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities; Prof. Ahmed Nuseirat President of al-Isra University; Prof. Mashhour al-Rifai, President of Princess Basma University; Prof. Najib Abu Karaki, President of Al-Hussein Bin Talal University and Prof. Maher al-Wahabneh, Secretary General of the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The participants recommended the inclusion of social responsibility in the university strategic plans and the development of performance indicators, so that there is a clear strategic tendency towards activating the community partnership. They also recommended setting policies, procedures and standards for social responsibility in universities that commensurate with the culture and needs of society, creating a national and institutional legal framework as an umbrella for social responsibility, and enacting laws, legislations and regulations obliging institutions to participate in and support social responsibility.

Participants stressed the need to update the internal regulations, instructions, regulations and laws governing the work in universities to suit the need of activating social responsibility. The participants called for developing the concept of social responsibility in universities from mere participation in charity, donations and voluntary campaigns to the actual contribution to sustainable development. The participants also stressed the need to activate the community partnership between universities and community institutions, and work on proposing appropriate professional solutions to the economic and social problems facing these institutions. They also called for designing training programs to develop the capabilities of university leaders according to best practices of transformational leadership, enriching them with professional values and ethics, and encouraging faculty members to practice and apply them in their work. Participants stressed the importance of intensifying interest in scientific researches that addresses social issues and contribute to solving the problems faced by the community and its various institutions, and to develop incentive programs for them. They called for the establishment of specialized joint social responsibility funds in universities to be funded by contributions from community institutions to support activities, programs and projects related to social responsibility. They also called for enhancing the spirit of social responsibility among the leading cadres in universities, therefore, encouraging it to be considered as one of the responsibilities of the executive management and under its supervision. In addition to enhancing the role of the media in spreading awareness of the importance of social responsibility for universities, their proper principles and related fields, as well as the value-return on the institutions leading them and the society. The participants stressed the importance of strengthening the governmental role in directing funding towards the developmental aspects of the social responsibility programs offered by higher education institutions, and



separating charitable activities from them. They also called for promoting the culture of creativity and innovation so that universities become business incubators for small projects, inventions and discoveries, organizing exhibitions to attract donors, and calling for more conferences related to social responsibility in universities.

#### The President of QOU Receives a Delegation from the Italian School "Tilgher"



The President of al-Quds Open University, Prof. Younes Amr met a delegation from Tilgher school from Naples in Italy, at his office in Ramallah.

Prof. Amr welcomed the delegation and praised the Italian positions towards our people and cause.

For her part, Ms. Emma Graziola, Head of the delegation, thanked al-Quds Open University and its President for the hospitality and reception, stressing that this visit is part of the program of cultural exchange with the Palestinian people.

Graziola spoke about the importance of the visit as it conveys a different picture than what the media reports about the Palestinian people and cause pointing out that the visit came to embody the bonds of solidarity with the State of Palestine.

The Italian delegation visited a number of Palestinian cities and archaeological sites, including Bethlehem, Nablus and Jericho.

#### The President of QOU Discusses with the Russian Ambassador Ways to Strengthen Cooperation



President of al-Quds Open University, Prof. Younes Amr, discussed with Dr. Goatse Buachidze, The Russian Ambassador to Palestine, ways to enhance cooperation between the two sides. The meeting was held at the office of the President of the University in Ramallah.

Prof. Amr said that al-Quds Open University (QOU) has established cooperation relations with a number of Russian universities, including Ural Federal University, Tambov State Technical University and Chelyabinsk University, and has signed academic cooperation agreements with these universities, He said, "We hope to strengthen this cooperation by establishing a Russian Language department at the Faculty of Arts."

Dr. Goatse Buachidze, talked about the strong Palestinian-Russian relations and added that they seek to strengthen the relationship in the academic and educational fields between Arab and Russian universities, where more than 50,000 Palestinians have studied in the Soviet Union since the establishment of relations between the PLO and Russia.

The Executive Director of The Vladimir Potanin Foundation, Mr. Motaz Mezher said that a program named Russia Palestine is being developed in cooperation with al-Quds Educational Satellite Channel, and this contributes to strengthening cooperation between QOU and Russian institutions operating in Palestine.

## Palestine's Ambassador to Belgium Visits the University in the Gaza Strip



The Palestine's Ambassador to Belgium, Dr. Abdul Rahim al-Farra, visited al-Quds Open University (QOU) in the Gaza Strip. He was received by the Vice President of the University for Gaza Strip Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Kahlout, and the Directors of the university branches in Gaza.

This comes in the context of strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the University and the Ambassadors of the State of Palestine abroad. Dr. al-Kahlout welcomed the Ambassador and expressed the University's willingness to cooperate with the Embassy of Palestine in Belgium in all that has a positive impact on the service of the University and higher education in Palestine, stressing that QOU is open to the world and welcomes all cooperation opportunities aimed at development.

Ambassador al-Farra, praised the University's educational system that has reached every Palestinian house, stressing his endeavor to open ways of cooperation between the University and its Belgian counterparts in all academic and student exchange programs.

## QOU Ranked First Regionally in the Threat Hunters Competition for 2019



Mr. Khalil Shreiteh, a member of al-Quds Open University team, ranked first regionally for the attackers category in the 2019 Threat Hunters Competition. The competition was organized by the Arab Regional Cyber Security Center of the International Telecommunication Union and Silensec Co., in cooperation with the Palestine Computer Emergency Response Center-PALCERT, at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

Several Arab countries participated in this competition to tackle a series of challenges in the areas of ethics of piracy, protection of ICT infrastructure systems, malware analysis and digital evidence.

It is noteworthy that al-Quds Open University won the first ranks in the three categories of the Palestine Threat Hunters Competition for 2019 at the national level, enabling it to participate at regional level.

The competition aimed to test participants' abilities to detect security bugs, counter cyber-attacks and respond to information security incidents by introducing complex practical scenarios and solutions by contestants.

Dr. Eng. Islam Amr, The Assistant to the President of the University for Technology and Production, Director of the Center for Information and Communications Technology praised the performance of the University team, which has won the highest ranks at national and regional levels. Dr. Eng. Amr also pointed to the aim of the University to enhance the knowledge and culture of information security among its students and graduates, which constitutes a distinction among university students in the field of computer science.

Dr. Eng. Amr pointed out that this topic has become the main pillar in the science of technology in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the globalization and spread of data, hoping to strengthen work in this field nationally to lead to the establishment of a national (effective) team, since this topic is recently becoming of strategic global importance.

## QOU and the University of Jordan Sign a Memorandum of Understanding to Develop Academic, Research and Cultural Cooperation

Al-Quds Open University and the University of Jordan signed a memorandum of understanding which aimed at promoting cooperation in academic and research fields.

Under this memorandum, the two parties agreed to carry out and support joint research and studies, as well as exchange of faculty members for specific periods of time, as well as organizing mutual field visits to academics, technical staff and students.

The Memorandum of Understanding also stipulates cooperation to start joint bachelor, master and doctoral programs, and to organize joint academic, research and cultural activities that serve the quality of higher education.

## Active Participation of al-Quds Open University in the Second General Assembly Meeting of the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean Academic Network (BSEMAN)



Al-Quds Open University, represented by Dr. Eng. Imad Hodali, Assistant to the President of QOU for Public and International Affairs and Media, concluded its active participation in the Second General Assembly Meeting of The Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean Academic Network (BSEMAN), which was held at Rostov State University of Economics in Rostov-on-Don.

The meeting tackled the executive report of the Network for the past year and its endorsement, the approval of new members, the executive plan for the next year, the preparation for the third General Assembly meeting,

which is expected to take place in the University of Nicosia in Cyprus, in addition to the fundraising for the network through European Erasmus+ projects.

On the sidelines of the meeting, a conference was held, in which Dr. Eng. Hodali presented a paper entitled, "The Role of al-Quds Open University as a Pioneer in Open Education in the Region and its Contribution to the Achievement of the Vision of BSEMAN." Dr. Eng. Hodali presented the experience and the expertise of QOU in blended education, modern technology and its utilization for educational purposes. Moreover, Dr. Eng. Hodali gave a lecture to the students of Economics at Rostov State University of Economics, emphasizing the philosophy of blended education, adopted by QOU, as one of the peaceful means to resist the occupation by promoting education through modern technology.

It is worth mentioning that the conference discussed the technological initiatives of universities to achieve the sustainable development goals in the region, especially in social and economic fields.

The meeting was also attended by Birzeit University represented by its President, Dr. Abdul Latif Abu Hijleh, in addition to representatives of member countries of the network: Russia, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Cyprus, Belarus, Ukraine, Turkey, and Czech.

It is worth noting that BSEMAN seeks to enhance academic cooperation between universities of Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean countries through the development of joint research projects in various scientific disciplines. It also seeks to establish communication and databases for member institutions, issue scientific journals, organize workshops and scientific conferences, organize events for academics, and develop academic cooperation in higher education and vocational training, in addition to launching social, academic and vocational initiatives for youth in the region.

QOU, officially joined BSEMAN as a founding member, through its participation last year in the founding conference of the network, which was held at the Aristotle University in Greece. Dr. Eng. Hodali was elected as a member of the Coordination Committee of BSEMAN, representing QOU and Palestine, and as a member of the Editorial Board of the Network's web page.

## The Faculty of Educational Sciences Participates in a Scientific Research Visit to the University of Canterbury



The Faculty of Educational Sciences at al-Quds Open University participated in a scientific research visit to the University of Canterbury in the period between 6/11/2019 - 12/11/2019. The purpose of the visit involved discussion on "Enhancing Research Capabilities in Teachers' Education in Palestine" within the project, "Global Challenges Research Fund", which is implemented by the University of Canterbury, over three years with three Palestinian universities, al-Quds Open University, Hebron University and al-Quds University. The project, funded by the British Development Assistance Fund, seeks to develop the research capacity among faculty members at Palestinian universities.

QOU was represented by Dr. Khaled Dwiekat, the Coordinator of the "Graduation and Practical Education Project" at the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Dr. Monther al-Zyoud, a Faculty member at the Jenin branch.

Dr. Dwiekat and Dr. al-Zayoud, participated in a conference organized by the University of Canterbury on 7/11/2019, entitled "Culture, Language and Global Research in Education". It included researchers from Britain, Japan, Algeria and Sweden, in addition to Palestine. Al-Quds Open University participated through a research entitled "Strategies Used by the Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, Who Participated in the Project of Improving the Preparation and Qualification of Teachers for Grades (1-4)," funded By The World Bank. This qualitative research is the fruit of the Faculty of Educational Sciences participation in a three-year training project, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and British experts from the University of Canterbury.

## Prominent Participation of al-Quds Open University in the French-Palestinian Academic Meetings



Al-Quds Open University (QOU) concluded its participation in the French-Palestinian academic meetings organized by the French government through Campus France institution. The meetings were held in cooperation with the French Consulate General in Jerusalem.

It is noteworthy that 15 Palestinian experts and academics representing Palestinian higher education institutions and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research participated in the academic meeting. Dr. Eng. Imad Hodali, President Assistant for Public and International Relations & Media represented QOU in the meeting.

The meeting was also attended by the representatives of France as well as public educational institutions specialized in higher education and scientific research, with the aim of promoting and developing French-Palestinian cooperation in this field.

During the scientific session, Dr. Hodali presented a paper on "The Opportunities of Digital Teaching and Learning Tools to Achieve Democracy in Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, QOU as a Model." Dr. Hodali also met with representatives of French universities, most notably, Jean Moulin Lyon University, The University of Franche-Comté (UFC), Rennes University, Lille University and the University of Political Science in Aix-en-Provence.

Dr. Hodali also participated in the three-day meeting of the Board of Directors of the International Association "Open Digital Space for the Mediterranean" the e-OMED, as an elected member of the Board of Directors of the organization, representing QOU. The meetings discussed the organization's orientations for the next phase and its web page, which is being developed by QOU.

Dr. Hodali together with Prof. Francois Henn, President of e-OMED, Dr. Gilani Lamloumi, Vice President for Development and a former President at Tunis Virtual University, met with Dr. Catherine Mongenet, President of the governmental organization FUN, specialized in digitizing French higher education. The meeting discussed ways of cooperation between the two organizations on one hand, and with QOU on the other.

## "Child Well-Being" Symposium at QOU



Prof. Ravinder Barn, Royal Holloway, University of London, presented a lecture on children well-being in the world and the means to provide it to Palestinian children. The lecture was held in cooperation with the Faculty of Social and Family Development at al-Quds Open University.

Dr. Eng. Emad Al-Hodali, Assistant to the President of the University for Public and International Relations and Media, opened the

symposium and pointed out that this event comes within the framework of cooperation between QOU and the international academic institutions, including the University of London.

Prof. Eyad Abu Bakr, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Social and Family Development, said that the Faculty aims to develop its members by providing them with knowledge and experiences of lecturers from other countries, in the field of research and projects on childcare. Dr. Abu Bakr pointed out that Prof. Barn is specialized in childcare and has interest in researches and projects on the welfare of children, noting that QOU seeks to benefit from her expertise in this field.

Prof. Barn talked about the challenges facing students. She also talked about the complex situation in Palestine, which has its negative impact on the Palestinian children, their well-being and the need to study the welfare of the Palestinian children living under occupation.

## Student Affairs News

### Mr. Eyad al-Souqi, a graduate of al-Quds Open University, Selected as an MIE Expert for 2019-2020

Mr. Eyad al-Souqi, a graduate of al-Quds Open University, was selected as a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIE Expert) for the year 2019-2020, and received recognition for his leadership in innovative learning with technology and his desire to reach all educators.

It is worth mentioning that al-Souqi is the first Palestinian to receive such award. He commented, "I dedicate this achievement to my parents, my family, my University, al-Quds Open, my students, the Jenin Basic Boys School, the Directorate of Education in Jenin, and the Ministry of Education." He wished to increase the representation of Palestine in the MIE Expert Award for the current year by joining the Microsoft community, the incubator of creativity, excellence and professional development. Al-Souqi stated that he and the Palestinian Microsoft team are willing to provide support to those who wish to register for this award during the period 01/05/2020 to 15/07/2020.

It is noteworthy that the registration for this award begins in May 1st of each year to mid of July. The results are announced in August. Microsoft will choose 330 experts, from different countries around the world, to participate in the Microsoft World Conference, after a competition between Microsoft experts in all countries around the world.

### A Student and a Graduate of al-Quds Open University Obtain Two Patents from the Ministry of National Economy



Two projects developed separately by a graduate and a student of al-Quds Open University, obtained patents from the Ministry of National Economy, among eight other winning projects. This was announced in a ceremony held by the Ministry of National Economy, in the presence of His Excellency Minister of National Economy, Khaled al-Osaily, and the Chairman of Higher Council for Innovation & Excellence, Eng. Adnan Samara, in addition to representatives from the public and private sectors.

The first winning project was developed by QOU Graduate, Ibrahim Zawahreh, who obtained a patent for inventing a smart bed for bedridden patients. It enables them to change the positions of the bed to the left and right automatically and independently. The bed uses a timer that can turn the patient over to the right or left every two hours. The device continues to perform this task unless the person in charge turns it off.

The second project was developed by Mahmoud Masaeed, a student at the Faculty of Agriculture, who obtained a patent for his work "Integrated Environmental Agricultural Machine," a machine that saves time and effort by multitasking. The machine ploughs and prepares the soil to start the cultivation process. It also collects plastics from the soil, levels the land, and sets a mechanical and non-mechanical irrigation network to increase productivity.

## QOU Participates in the 21st Creative Student Forum 2019 in the UAE



The Faculty of Agriculture at al-Quds Open University (QOU) participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Creative Student Forum 2019, which was held at al-Ain University of Science and Technology in the United Arab Emirates. The forum was organized by the Arab Council for Student Training and Creativity.

QOU participated with a research paper entitled, "The Role of Entrepreneurship and Scientific Innovation among Arab University Students in Developing the National Economy." Moreover, Engineer, Yara Abu Salim, a graduate of Agriculture at QOU's Jenin branch, presented her graduation project, which was supervised by Dr. Maen Sheqwara. The project was under the title, "The role of Propolis in Combating Coronary Tuberculosis on Almonds," which is one of the bacterial diseases that attack and damage almond trees, whether in nurseries or land, causing a significant financial loss for the Palestinian farmers and fruit trees projects.

## A Student of QOU Obtains a Patent for an Innovative Agricultural Machine



Mr. Mahmoud Yousef Ahmed Masa'eed, a student at the Faculty of Agriculture, specializing in Plant Production and Prevention, obtained a patent from the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy for his invention "Integrated Environmental Agricultural Machine."

The machine, which is attached to a tractor, plows and prepares the soil and collects plastic from the land. It also levels and compacts the soil, as well as installs the irrigation network in mechanical and non-mechanical ways. This invention saves time and effort, increases productivity, and provides solutions to the most important agricultural problems, including salinity, plastic residues in the soil and gravels that hinder agriculture.

## A Graduate of al-Quds Open University is Chosen as One of the Top 100 Teachers in the World



AKS Education Awards in India has selected Mr. Iyad Ahmed al-Souqi to be listed among the top 100 teachers in the world.

Mr. al-Souqi graduated from al-Quds Open University in 2005, with a major in Computer Information Systems. He currently works as a teacher in Jenin Boys Primary School. The competition, which was held in Delhi, included 72 countries, to choose the best 100 teachers around the world. The competition followed selection criteria set by the Foundation, focusing on the achievements of the teacher.

Mr. al-Souqi has a long history of achievements. He represented Palestine at the al-Faateh Technology Conference in Ankara. He was also a previous ambassador at CoSpaces Edu, which

focuses on the production of interactive educational content, working on the integrated cube to enhance creativity and excellence among students. Mr. al-Souqi was also awarded the Microsoft Expert Award (MIE Expert). He will participate in the Microsoft conference next year in Sydney.

## A Student of al-Quds Open University Develops an Agricultural Machine: Towards a Pollution-Free Green Environment

Mr. Mahmoud Masaeed, a student of Agriculture at al-Quds Open University, succeeded in developing an environmental agricultural machine to contribute to a pollution free green environment. The project was implemented under the supervision of Faculty Member Eng. Wajdi Bsharat.

The student explained that his project is an integrated agricultural machine capable of performing a set of operations for soil preparation, such as cultivation, leveling, creating terraces, and installing drip irrigation pipes. The machine has a second loosening system in case the soil is still stiff and has not yet reached the required efficiency. The machine can also be used to harvest tuber crops such as potatoes.

## A Student Invents a Remote Control Device at al-Quds Open University



Mr. Hani Khamis Mohammed Nasser, a student of Communication and Information Technology, at the northern Gaza Strip branch of QOU, invented a remote control device for his graduation project. The student developed a smartphone application connected to the internet to operate electrical appliances from a distance.

The idea of the project is to control all electrical appliances in the house and turn it into a smart house in two ways. First, controlling the house through the application. Second, controlling the house through voice commands, using Google Assistant, programmed by the student.

The project provides great help for people with special needs. For example, people with visual and mobility impairments. The system can control air conditioning, television and other electrical devices in the house. Mr. Nasser applied for a patent, hoping the project will go global.

### Graduates of al-Quds Open University Develop a Smart Traffic Management System



A number of graduates of al-Quds Open University succeeded in developing an integrated automated system for organizing the traffic in the Palestinian cities. The project was accomplished within their graduation project and under the supervision of Dr. Yousef Sabah.

The system was developed by the University graduates, Ehab Hamdan, Yousef Salameh, Mohammed Fawaz Salmiya, Ahmad al-Najar, and Salah Badwan, in collaboration with the researchers, Nizar Barakat from the Ministry of Transportation and Jamil Shehadeh from the Palestinian Police Traffic Department. The project developers stated that the project is a direct and comprehensive application of smart cities through utilizing "Internet of Things".

The idea of the project stems from the urgent need to address the problems resulting from traffic congestion and the subsequent traffic violations, taking into consideration the widespread of vehicles and the inadequate infrastructure in the Palestinian cities.

Some of the most important problems are serious road injuries and casualties, in addition to private and public properties damages.

The system consists of two basic parts. First, electronic devices which are made of sensors and controllers to monitor violations as they occur. Second, a computerized system and a database to record these violations. The system combines hardware and software to issue on-the-spot electronic tickets to the drivers, who receive these tickets via a short message that dictates the time, nature and amount of fine.

The project supervisor Dr. Yousef Sabah, said that the system will be applied on a sample of violations in a number of Palestinian cities. Its efficiency will be tested and measured through a field and technical survey to check its capacity to detect and monitor violations compared to the automated system, and its contribution to limiting traffic accidents.

Dr. Sabah indicated that the project is one of the best participating projects in the Fourth National Forum for Excellence and Innovation, held by the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence for the year 2019 under the title, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution." Currently, the project is a research project funded by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research; a research grant was provided to the Palestinian universities.

### Three Students of al-Quds Open University Develop a Sensory Room Project to Monitor and Facilitate Caring for Children with Autism



Three students from al-Quds Open University in Jenin have succeeded in creating a sensory room for children with autism to facilitate their parental care. The project, which was developed by the students, Maram Abu Obaid, Amna Badarneh, and Baraa Qasim Suleiman was supervised by the instructor Mr. Laith Ibrahim in the Jenin branch.

The students explained that the system monitors the behavior and performance of the child easily through a live broadcast camera, allowing access to parents and maintaining the child under surveillance.

The sensory room will also have a sport room to give opportunity for the child to play sports safely in an enthusiastic and encouraging atmosphere, along with applause sounds and beautiful lights to urge the child to follow and develop physical work. The behavior of the child will be monitored through the camera. The system also monitors the child acoustically and reacts to changes in the behavior. For example, when a child goes through a tantrum, the system detects this change in behavior through the sound sensor and calms the child down immediately by turning on quiet music to relieve stress. In addition, it illuminates the room in colors that attract the child's attention and distract him/her from the cause of stress.

Instructor Laith Ibrahim said that this project attempts to promote cognition in autistic children and enhance their communication and interaction skills. In this project, students studied the behavior of autistic children and tried to integrate them with other children.



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### Students of al-Quds Open University Develop a Smart Bracelet to Track and Monitor Children and the Elderly



Students from al-Quds Open University in the Jenin branch developed a smart bracelet to track and monitor children and the elderly.

The smart bracelet is designed for remote tracking of seniors and children, to monitor their movements and location, especially, in schools and public areas, protecting them and preserving their safety.

The system consists of a set of different electronic parts, where Arduino Nano is the main piece. It determines the location of the target person, who is wearing the bracelet, through GPS (GY-NEO6MV2). It then sends the location to the Android application, using the Mini GSM A6 module. The system will reduce the risk of loss or kidnap of children and the elderly, in addition to providing a mean of communication between the target person and his/her family regardless of the location.