

Raising the bar

The College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan has recently inaugurated a program that is the first of its kind in Israel – a law degree taught jointly in Hebrew and English, whose graduates will be able to take both the Israeli and New York bar exams ■ Rebecca Kopans

The new program, which opened in February 2014, is a perfect solution for anyone interested in studying law in Israel but whose Hebrew skills aren't adequate to do so in an all-Hebrew program. Although during the first year most of the courses are conducted in English, the foreign students are gradually integrated into classes taught in Hebrew. The goal is that by the end of the three and a half year program, they will have improved their Hebrew skills so significantly that they will succeed in passing the Israeli bar exam – which is administered exclusively in Hebrew.

"The world of law is changing," explains Professor Moshe Cohen-Eliya, Dean of the Law School at the College of Law and Business. "Unlike fields such as business or medicine, law is difficult to make global, since it is closely connected to culture and language. However, in recent years, law has also become much more international, with large American law firms going global and even opening branches in Israel."

A natural outcome of this trend, according to Prof. Cohen-Eliya, is that law schools are adopting a more international approach. In fact, in countries such as India, China and Spain, there are already global law schools taught entirely in English. This global outlook is replacing the traditionally insular, country-based legal education.

Advantages of studying in Israel

The College of Law and Business (CLB) was founded in 1995 in Ramat Gan's business district by top law professors from the Hebrew University and offers a first-class academic degree. The college offers degree

programs in law, business administration and accounting, providing students with a high quality education alongside practical, hands-on experience.

CLB is dedicated to championing human rights and serving the surrounding community, which it does through its legal clinics, tutoring programs and petitions to the High Court on matters of social justice. It is an independent, non-profit organization that is completely self-supporting and non-reliant on government or public funding.

CLB was the first of all Israeli academic institutions to apply to the Council for Higher Education to open a four-year Law and Business degree to be taught entirely in English. The bilingual program that was recently inaugurated is the first step in realizing this vision. Prof. Cohen-Eliya is optimistic that the all-English degree program will be approved in the next few months, in which case it will be launched in October 2016. CLB intends to offer a double degree in law and business which will be an elite program designed to appeal to an international student body made up of foreigners and *olim*.

Prof. Cohen-Eliya believes that English-language and bilingual academic programs have a special appeal to the North American Jewish community. "College is extremely expensive in the United States, and law can only be studied at a graduate school level after four years of college. In Israel, you can study law as an undergraduate degree, and tuition is significantly cheaper. Instead of spending seven years – and around

\$40,000-50,000 a year – in the U.S., one can come to Israel, where annual tuition is only around \$10,000, and study for just three and a half years," he says.

In addition to the huge savings in both time and money, many Diaspora Jews are eager to strengthen their Jewish identity by coming in Israel. "I believe in 'open door Zionism,'" asserts Cohen-Eliya. "People can come to our Law School even if they're not sure they want to stay here in the long-run. If they want to return home after a year, they can apply the credits they receive here and continue their law degree at one of the prestigious law schools with which we have an arrangement." Furthermore, those who complete the program are eligible to take both the Israeli and the New York bar exams, which is a very significant benefit for future lawyers who aren't sure where they will settle down and for those seeking an international career.



Professor Moshe Cohen-Eliya

First class

The initial class of 17 students who just began studying in the new bilingual program is a heterogeneous group. Although they are mainly new immigrants from North America, others hail from France, Germany, Belgium, Slovakia and other countries, representing a range of ages, backgrounds and Hebrew proficiency.

The program is taught by first-rate lecturers, many of whom are from top universities in the United States. While most of the first-year classes are taught in English – including Jurisprudence, Israeli



Constitutional Law and Legal Systems – there are also several classes in the first year conducted in Hebrew, such as Contract Law and Criminal Law. There is also a special Legal Writing course, which is effectively an *ulpan* to teach the foreigners legal writing in Hebrew.

During the classes taught in Hebrew, a special tutor is available for the English speakers to help them understand the lecture and to provide support. Students in the bilingual program are also able to submit papers and exams in English.

During the second and third years of the program, as the students' Hebrew improves, the proportion of classes taught in English will diminish and most of their classes will be in Hebrew. Overall, half of their credit units will be in English and half in Hebrew.

Prof. Cohen-Eliya envisions the new program to be an integrative track which will enable the Israeli students to improve their English skills just as the foreign students improve their Hebrew. "It is a win-win model," he notes. "Israelis are also encouraged to take classes in English and we would like to pair English speakers with native Hebrew speakers so that they can help each other."

The program will also offer students a variety of possibilities for studying and training abroad, including a course on copyright in the Internet era held at Oxford,



Students from CLB's new bilingual law program

Photos: Louise Green

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Netanel Kimchi (left) and fellow students in class

a course on international commercial arbitration at the headquarters of the ICC in Paris, clerkships at the immigration clinic run by Harvard University and more. Students will also be eligible to participate in the prestigious Clara Barton International Humanitarian Law Competition funded by the International Red Cross.

"Happy to be here"

Netanel Kimchi, 24, grew up in Montreal,

Canada and knows Hebrew from his Israeli parents. He recently moved to Israel in order to join the pioneer class of CLB's new bilingual law program. Having always been involved in pro-Israel activism in North America, Netanel plans to formally make aliya. "My goal in life is that when I'll be 40 I'll represent Israel on an international level," he says.

Very interested in both law and politics, he believes that an international program such as the one at CLB can be

extremely beneficial to his career. "I will have the opportunity to take both the Israeli and the New York bars, which is very rare," explains Netanel, "and I am sure that it will open up doors for me internationally."

"I am very happy to be here," he continues. "The professors are top-notch and I enjoy listening to them. In fact, I just sat through a three-hour class without going on Facebook even once!"

Another student who just started the program for English-speakers is Ruth Cohen, 29. She grew up in London and made aliya eight years ago.

Ruth already has several academic degrees, including both a B.A. and M.A. in English Literature, and works as a corporate finance project manager for an Israeli technology company. She is interested in studying corporate law and believes that a law degree from CLB "is a great way to open my horizons."

Like Netanel, Ruth says that she is "very happy" with her decision. "It is nice to be with an international group, and the standards are very high. There is also a lot of support from the administration and I like the fact that the dean has an open-door policy," she notes.

For more information about the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan and the new bilingual law program, please visit www.clb.ac.il or call 03-6000888.

LEGAL CLINIC AT HARVARD

One of the great perks of studying law at the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan is the opportunity to participate in international exchange programs. Kayla Zecher, 25, a third-year law student at CLB whose family immigrated to Israel from Pittsburgh 11 years ago, was the first Israeli student to attend Harvard Law School's Immigration and Refugee Clinic last summer. "For eight weeks I worked with refugees and asylum seekers from Uganda," she says. "At Harvard, they are experts on refugee law, which is a young field that is not yet well-developed in Israel. I worked with an amazing supervisor and it was a great experience."

Kayla plans to pursue the field of immigration law after she completes her degree. For the past five years, she has been involved with the African Refugee Development Center in South Tel Aviv and she currently works for a task force on human trafficking.

Although she enjoys her studies at CLB, Kayla says that she is "jealous of those in the new bilingual program, since I am much more comfortable with English." After her experience at Harvard, she already has her eye on other exciting opportunities at CLB partner universities in the U.S. for next summer.



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