



From our past heritage and present  
creativity we build the future

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# **Birzeit University**

## **Building a Better Palestine Future**

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### **From Rural School to Distinguished University**

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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 success story that is an inspiration to all Palestinians.

BZU became a member of the Association of Arab Universities in April 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

Birzeit University an independent, not-for-profit institution of higher education overseen by an autonomous Board of Trustees. The University seeks to maintain excellence in teaching and learning, to advance knowledge through research, and to contribute to community service. It believes firmly in freedom of thought and expression, democratic practices, intellectual pluralism and civilized discourse. The University endeavours to produce leaders who hold themselves to high standards of personal integrity, and are committed to critical and innovative thinking and lifelong learning. The University strives to contribute to human civilization issuing from the Arab-Islamic heritage.

## Vision

Birzeit University would endeavour to remain the foremost Palestinian University, recognized for distinction in education, research and community service, and the institution of choice for the most promising students and academics in Palestine. The University would seek to maintain its preeminent role as a higher learning institution graduating leaders in all walks of life. The University would strive to become one of the best universities in the Arabic region in the medium term and a world-class University in the longer term.

## Values

**Excellence:** Birzeit University seeks to achieve the best in everything it does: education, research, leadership of opinion, artistic expression and community service.

**A University atmosphere based on mutual respect, academic freedom and freedom of expression:** Birzeit University seeks to treat all individuals, and for members of its community to treat each other, with respect, dignity, fairness, understanding and transparency and to celebrate differences in perspectives, beliefs, traditions and experiences; all in an atmosphere of academic freedom and freedom of expression.

- **Diversity of student body:** Birzeit University seeks to have a student body that is representative of the whole of Palestine, socially, economically and geographically; and to marshal the resources needed to admit qualified students, irrespective of economic status or physical challenge.
- **Civic, social and humanitarian responsibility:** Birzeit University is committed to using its creative intellectual energies to address responsibly local and regional, thereby contributing to the development of society, environment

and heritage. The University also is committed to instilling into its students the spirit of voluntarism, service and professionalism.

- **Integrity:** Birzeit University cherishes personal responsibility, integrity, impartiality, fairness, accountability and honesty, and seeks to uphold them in practice.
- **Concern for the environment:** Birzeit University seeks to disseminate and promote environmental awareness and respect for nature and to ensure that this is reflected in all that it practices.
- **Professional Ethics:** Birzeit University seeks to hold all members of the University community: faculty, students and workers, to the highest standards of professional ethics, and strives to instill ethical sensitivity in its students.
- **Lifelong learning:** Birzeit University seeks to enable its graduates to love and celebrate life, through lifelong quest for knowledge, understanding and professional development.

## 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 ensuring 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 cost 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.

For more information, please visit the website of the Advancement Office: <http://giving.birzeit.edu/>

## International Relations: Participating in the Global Academy

BZU has developed academic relations with a number of distinguished international universities, encouraging joint research activities, guest lectures, 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. The External Academic Relations Office (EAR) of Birzeit University (BZU) manages the growing links of the University with the external academic world and its increasingly influential participation in local, regional and international fora. The mission of EAR is to create supportive academic relationships between Birzeit University and key external constituencies, in support of the mission and vision of the University, helping forge productive long-term partnerships that enhance the global presence, relevance and prominence of the University.

## Goals

- Foster strategic institutional partnerships with local, regional and international universities and academic institutions.
- Bolster the efforts of BZU in identifying, establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships that enhance academic cooperation with institutions worldwide.
- Solicit and manage international linkages for faculty and student exchanges, grants and fellowships.
- Facilitate drafting memoranda and agreements of understanding, as well as proposals for joint institutional collaboration.
- Identify external events /activities/ conferences beneficial to faculty and students, while encouraging them to take part and serve as BZU ambassadors.

## PAS

BZU also enrolls around 120-150 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.

## Right to Education Campaign

Since the 1970's, 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 contribute to 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 through its eight faculties:

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Commerce and Economics
- Faculty of Engineering and Technology
- Faculty of Graduate Studies
- Faculty of Law and Public Administration
- Faculty of Nursing and Allied Health Professions
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Education

The eight faculties of Birzeit University offers 47 academic programs for undergraduates in several fields of knowledge, that lead to a Bachelor's degree.

These programs include individual disciplines and interdisciplinary majors and minors, as well as many subspecialty areas that students have the option of exploring during their time at the university. These faculties have also established a number of graduate programs leading to Master's degrees.

Birzeit University was the first institution of higher education in Palestine to develop graduate studies by offering a Master's degree in Education in 1976. Starting with the academic year 1994-95 other graduate programs were gradually introduced. Currently the university offers 25 Master's degree programs: Applied Chemistry, Applied Statistics; Arab and Muslim History; Arabic Language and Literature; Business Administration; Clinical Laboratory Science; Community and Public Health; Community Psychology; Computing; Contemporary Arab Studies; Democracy and Human Rights; Economics; Education; Gender and Development Studies; Geography; International Studies; Law; Mathematics; Physics; Sociology; Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture; Water and Environmental Engineering; Water and Environmental Sciences; Israeli Studies and Sustainable Engineering in Production.

Graduate students registered in specific faculties of their specialty are also considered students in the Faculty of

Graduate Studies. The university is always working to upgrade the infrastructure and human resources in order to develop and advance its programs and adapt to changing needs in the community.

## Doctorate in Social Sciences

The Faculty of Graduate Studies is offering a study program that leads to a doctorate in social sciences - a program in which fields of social sciences are interdisciplinary.

These interdisciplinary fields of social sciences are based on the premises that individual cognitive fields are unable to provide necessary analytical tools for understanding the intricate social, economic, political and cultural phenomena.

One of the main objectives of this academic program is to foster a generation of scientists and researchers in social science, which is able to produce new knowledge about the Arab world and Palestine from an Arab and Palestinian perspective.

## 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. 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 institutions and centers:

- Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH)
- Institute of Law (IoL)
- Institute of Women's Studies (IWS)
- Media Development Center (MDC)
- Birzeit University Testing Laboratories (BZUTL)
- Center for Continuing Education (CCE)
- Center for Development Studies (CDS)



- Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (IALIIS)
- Institute for Environmental and Water Studies (IEWS)
- Najjad Zeeni Information Technology Center of Excellence (NZITCE)
- Ethnographic and Art Museum
- Sina Institute

## University Libraries

The BZU Main Library (Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim Library) has over 147,000 volumes. The Main Library has been a depository of UNESCO publications since 1979, a Regional Center for World Bank publications since 2005, and a support center in Palestine for the MINISIS library software since 1998.

The Main Library coordinates and cooperates with its branches, which include: Institute of Community and Public Health library, the Institute of Law library, the Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies library, the Center for Development Studies library, and the Institute of Women's Studies library.

The Main Library offers to its patrons, students and researchers various services among which is access to academic databases of e-books and full-text journals, 14 of which are fee-based and five are accessed for free.

## Computer Center

The Helen Kattan Computer Center is a key support center with its main focus on providing an optimal technology infrastructure and services oriented towards addressing the IT related needs of the University.

Established in 1982 with a mission to provide access to a fully integrated set of information technology solutions both on and off campus to support the teaching, research and administrative functions of the University.

The center aims to:

- Provide an integrated information environment for the university community on campus and beyond.
- Serve the academic process and scientific research.
- Respond to the university's administrative needs.
- Contribute to societal development in line with the university's mission.

The center uses latest technologies at highest standards to serve the university's academic and administrative needs. For example the locally developed Academic and Administrative Portal "Ritaj"- which serve both students and staff – provide the e-business tools to support

university functions. Moreover, the center provides other specialized techniques for the admission and registration process, financial and administrative affairs, human resources management, supplies, procurement, libraries, and project management, in addition to applications related to the specialized institutes and centers and others.

The computer center runs an advanced wired and wireless networks covering most of the university campus, to be used by both students and staff alike, through which the university's e-Services and Global Internet are accessed.

The center oversees university computer labs, which provides access to over 1000 public machines to the benefit of students, the machine run several programs and applications to support the learning process.

The Computer Center provides the following communication links for the students: [help@ritaj.ps](mailto:help@ritaj.ps)

## **Art and Culture Birzeit University Museum**

Since its inception in 2005, Birzeit University Museum (BUM) practiced a pioneering role in fulfilling the University's mission in promoting Arts and Culture. This started by hosting the Ethnographic collections that the university owned at the end of the nineties, including Tawfiq Canaan's Collection of Palestinian Amulets. In addition to folklore costumes, traditional ceramic artifacts and artistic collections which all enrich the Museum's programs hosted on the Virtual Gallery's website.

For five years, the Art and Ethnographic Museum and the Virtual Gallery were able to introduce many ethnographic and art exhibitions, in addition to providing educational programs at schools and universities levels, along with electronic archiving of contemporary arts with up-to-date news about contemporary arts provided by the Virtual Gallery web pages.

The Ethnographic Museum and the Virtual Gallery were among the most important artistic centers that provided the local community with the opportunity to see the local and global artistic productions. This was through the provision of the first Palestinian artistic exhibit gallery equipped with advanced professional styles. The Gallery offers its exhibitions in extra-professional methods, through an ongoing annual program that makes the Museum a major player in the cultural scene since it was established.

In 2011, the two programs were combined to form the institute of Birzeit University Museum. Through its planned programs for the next three years, the Museum, and based on its deep understanding to the local community's needs especially in the sector of visual arts, is looking forward to developing a specialized role that provides a model of the

role of visual arts and the visual cultural heritage in social development.

## **University 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, thereby promoting the spirit of cooperation and community service.

## **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. Starting in the 2006/2007 academic year, the university established the Alumni Liaison Unit to develop relations with the alumni. By the end of the 2013/2014, the number of BZU alumni had reached over 29,554.

As part of the university's concern for preparing the graduates to enter the labor market, the university in the start of 2008/2009 established the Career Services Unit. The Unit aims to provide training and career advice to graduating students and alumni in areas such as writing a resume (CV) and preparing for job interviews. The Unit works in tandem with the various faculties to hold recruitment activities for graduating students in cooperation with the public and private sectors as the civil society.




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## Contact Information



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### University Websites

University Website:

[www.birzeit.edu](http://www.birzeit.edu)

Administrative and Academic Electronic Portal (Ritaj):

<http://ritaj.birzeit.edu>

Advancement Office:

<http://giving.birzeit.edu/>