A revolution is happening at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. Already known for being a major force in higher education of foreign students, at 1,500 strong, its first-ever law degree program entirely in English is on course to open in the fall of 2014. Although different schools have offered specific classes, some masters programs and short-term law programs in English in the past, no school has ever attempted to offer an entire law degree before in English.

The Radzyner Law School, headed by dean Sharon Rabin-Margalit, will offer international students the opportunity to study and live in Israel with the flexibility to take their degree back to their home country. They will benefit from the quality of education, a focus on international business, strong networking connections and of course, lower cost.

The hope is that the program’s first year will have an enrolment of 50-60, eventually growing to around 120, a cap which Rabin-Margalit hopes will maintain the highest quality of students.

Rabin-Margalit said she was proud of the “innovative concepts” that the program will be based on. She said that in this age of globalization, the school will press forward by expanding on IDC’s “global English concept,” namely that a subject should be “taught in the language it is most widely practiced in.” She added that aside from being attractive to Anglos, the idea of “global English” was that the language was not merely the language of Anglos, but the ideal language to study international business.

A program focused on international business “should be studied in the language of the profession,” she continued.

Rabin-Margalit also said she had been told by major Israeli law firms that “the labor market is flooded with lawyers, but not the ones they are looking for,” who possess the asset of global English relating to international business.

Moreover, the dean stated she personally believed that this kind of program would bring IDC more international notoriety and connections than merely hiring faculty members famous for their research, since the program inextricably doubles as a platform for connecting IDC to countries and institutions around the globe.

The program is also different from a few other, somewhat similar programs in other countries, in that it is “based on the notion that studying comparative international law” (which is part of the program), but also “studying the traditional local Israeli law curriculum.”

Regarding the quality of the law school, Rabin-Margalit pointed out that the former dean of Michigan’s law school was a visiting professor for electives held in England at the IDC, and next year, with the opening of the English-language law school, a professor from Oxford University is scheduled to teach.

Top foreign academics compliment what IDC’s already “strong teaching faculty,” including former Supreme Court president Aharon Barak.

In terms of cost, Rabin-Margalit said US President Barack Obama recently commented that he was just finishing paying his student loans from his law school education. Her point was that “not everyone goes to Harvard” and can make enough money to fully justify the massive cost to a US law degree, which some websites estimate on average at around $37,000 per year, with many top law schools running into the $40,000 to $50,000 range.

In contrast, while not cheap by Israeli standards, IDC’s $10,950 per year is a tremendous bargain by US standards. IDC said its own estimate was that its program was 15 percent of the cost of an average US law school.

The program also offers a dual law and business degree program (designed to run for nine semesters vs. the four year law-only degree) so that graduates will be well-positioned for all sides of a career in international business, which experts only expect to continue to expand in the globalization era.

Still, the challenges for such a program are many. The classes and materials for the law degree will be in English, but Israeli law, including procedure, will be taught to prepare students for the Israeli bar exam, should the students decide to remain in Israel (which 70% of IDC’s foreign students do). Thus, if all of Israeli law has to be translated to English, and IDC must find enough professors who are fully competent to teach Israeli law in English.

Possibly more challenging is the fact the program is geared to students who choose to allow them to take their degree back to their country of origin, but has had to overcome the obstacle that some countries require a student to have a law degree from one of its own domestic institutions.

IDC has therefore arranged various supplementary programs for students in many countries. For example, graduates can take a five-week LLM degree course at Northwestern University in Chicago, and will then essentially be able to sit for the bar exam in New York and California, despite not having studied in the US.

Those counting dollars should also note that if they return to practice law in the US via the Northwestern LLM program, the program costs an additional $55,000 – but they will also come out with a full LLM.

IDC has and is continuing to work on similar programs in other countries from Canada to England to France, to streamline the process for graduates to return to practice law in their country of origin should they choose that option.

For those who decide to practice law in Israel, they will not need to take the Dinei Yisrael exams that foreign-educated lawyers must take, and will have studied the subjects tested on the Israeli bar exam as well as benefit from the number of top level ulpan courses.

Rabin-Margalit also noted the program will place students in a specialized clinic for giving legal advice to start-ups and providing students with real international business experience.

Jonathan Davis, head of the Raphael Recanati International School, which includes the law school, said the new program could be “very attractive to Anglos and native Hebrew-speaking Israelis who want to focus on international business careers connected to the US and China.”

On his way back from a trip to Masada with some of his international students, Davis said IDC has been called the largest “absorption center in the country,” because of the number of its foreign students who make aliya and its general “Zionist spirit.”