

2015-16 Rabbinical School Student Learning Assessment Report

Prepared by Robert Covitz

Director of Institutional Research & Assessment

Table of Contents

Background & Methodology – 1

Summary – 2

Data Statistics – 3

Cohort Analysis – 4

Background & Methodology

This report highlights the student learning assessment efforts of HUC-JIR's Rabbinical School faculty over the course of the 2015-16 academic year. Program assessment is mandated by HUC-JIR's accreditors, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and is a systematic, continuous process that uses the results from measured outcomes to improve programs. This form of assessment allows faculty to assess the developmental growth of students across a variety of skills, and the ensuing data can then be aggregated to identify trends in student learning. This is not meant to replace course assessment (i.e. grading), but complement it.

The Rabbinical School program learning outcomes were developed in the spring of 2014 by the National Assessment Committee in collaboration with the faculty. The twelve skills of the rubric are as follows:

- Written Communication
- Performative Skills: English
- Performative Skills: Hebrew
- Critical Thinking
- Hebrew
- Textual Interpretation
- Teaching
- Pastoral Counseling
- Leadership
- Personal/Religious Growth & Development
- Skills & Habits for Independent Study
- Jewish Knowledge & Integration of Knowledge

These skills are assessed across five developmental levels of growth: *Novice* (the point at which students enter the program), *Intermediate*, *Advanced*, *Achieved/Ordination* (the baseline level of knowledge expected of students upon ordination), and *Aspirational* (the ideal level of knowledge that we hope all students will achieve). Program-level rubrics are deployed by assessing the same assignment across all students. The goal is to create an "apples-to-apples" comparison in which the entire cohort is being assessed at the same point, thereby reflecting that all students have been exposed to the skills and concepts that are being taught within a course. Data is then aggregated to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning, which can be used to inform curricular improvement.

Summary

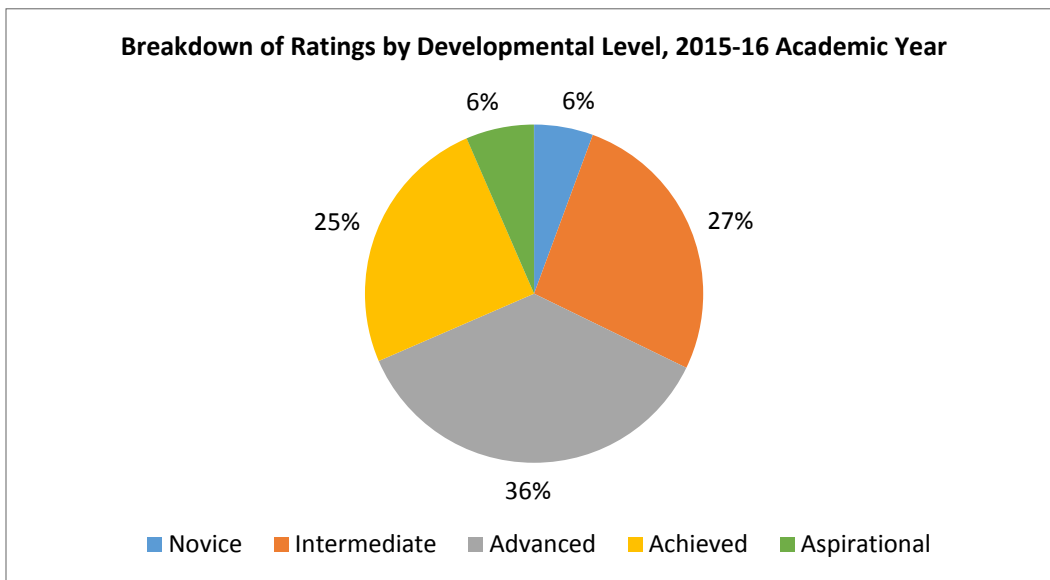
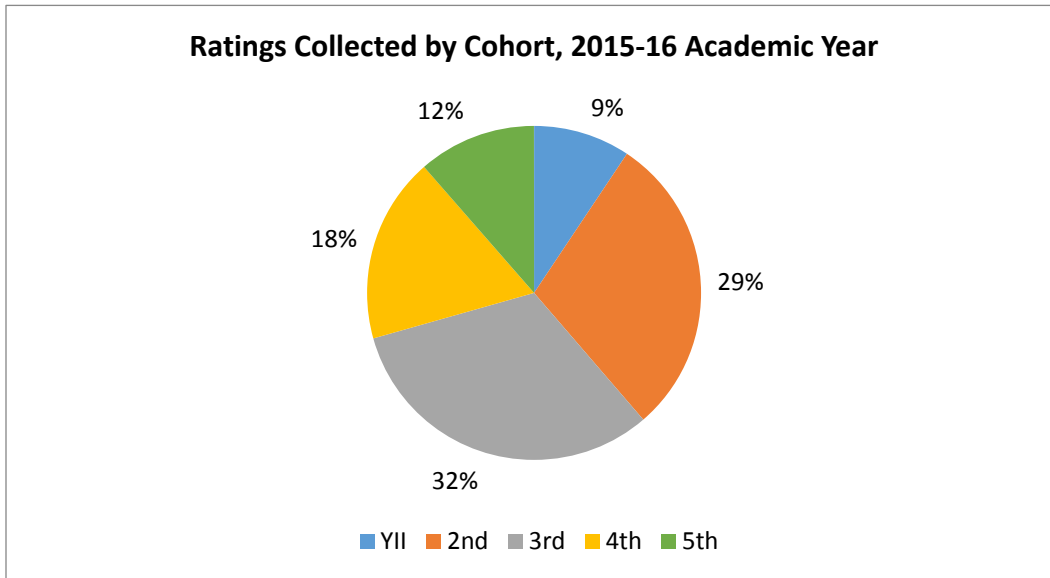
The dataset of 3,425 ratings collected over the course of the 2015-16 academic year revealed that the 4th year cohort demonstrated the most growth from the previous year. Additionally, less than 2/3 of the assessed artifacts of the 5th year cohort were assessed at the *Achieved/Ordination* level.

The data also highlights the fact that as students' English oral skills improve, their Hebrew skills weaken with the change in emphasis during their stateside studies. Within this dataset, no cohort demonstrated 50% or more of their artifacts rated at *Achieved/Ordination* or above in Hebrew.

A campus-by-campus comparison of each cohort's average rating for each rubric skill illustrates that the most disagreement exists in how 2nd year students are assessed. In *Performative Skills: English*, the LA 2nd year cohort was rated almost two developmental levels higher than the CN cohort. *Textual Interpretation* is similar; both LA and NY students were rated a whole developmental level higher than CN students. Beyond the 2nd year, there is a fair amount of consistency in how 3rd and 4th year students are assessed.

Data Statistics

A total of 3,425 ratings were collected over the course of the academic year. The 2nd and 3rd years were the most assessed cohorts, which is appropriate considering the majority of the artifacts were assessed at the *Intermediate* and *Advanced* developmental levels (the two middle developmental levels of the rubric).



Cohort Analysis

The table below highlights the percentage of artifacts rated at the *Achieved/Ordination* level and above for the 2015-16 academic year, and compares each cohort's data with the prior year's findings. For example, the 2nd year's data are compared to the data that were collected while they were in their YII. The strongest and weakest skills for each cohort were identified by pinpointing the percentage of *Achieved/Ordination* + *Aspirational* ratings as part of the total combined ratings for each skill. Skills with a low number of ratings were filtered out so as to not skew the analysis.

In terms of growth towards the desired outcome level (*Achieved/Ordination*), the 4th year class demonstrated the most advancement (a jump of 22% from their 3rd year). Additionally, less than 2/3 of the assessed artifacts of the 5th year cohort were assessed at the *Achieved/Ordination* level over the course of the 2015-16 academic year.

Aside from the quantitative data, one will note the apparent trends in how the curriculum is preparing students. While correlation does not equal causation, the data highlights the fact that as students' English oral skills improve, their Hebrew skills weaken with the change in emphasis during their stateside studies. Within this dataset, no cohort demonstrated 50% or more of their artifacts rated at *Achieved/Ordination* or above in Hebrew.

	2015-16 Overall % Achieved + Aspirational	2014-15 Overall % Achieved + Aspirational	Strongest Skill Based on % of Work Rated at Achieved or Above	Weakest Skill Based on % of Work Rated at Achieved or Above
2nd	17%	12%	Performative Skills: English (31%)	Performative Skills: Hebrew (12%)
3rd	28%	20%	Performative Skills: English (44%)	Hebrew (23%)
4th	56%	34%	Performative Skills: English (64%)	Hebrew (48%)
5th	61%	48%	Personal/Religious Growth & Development (88%)	Hebrew (38%)

The ratings collected for the 2nd-4th years represents almost 80% of the entire dataset. As such, we can learn a lot about inter-campus assessment patterns. The table below represents a campus-by-campus comparison of each cohort's average rating for each rubric skill. Skills with one rating were intentionally removed. As the data illustrates, the most rater disagreement exists in how 2nd year students are assessed. In *Performative Skills: English*, the LA 2nd year cohort was rated almost two developmental levels higher than the CN cohort. *Textual Interpretation* is similar; both LA and NY students were rated a whole developmental level higher than CN students. Beyond the 2nd year, there is a fair amount of consistency in how 3rd and 4th year students are assessed.

Average Rating* by Cohort & Campus									
	2nd			3rd			4th		
	CN	LA	NY	CN	LA	NY	CN	LA	NY
Written Communication	2.2	2.7	2.7	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.5
Performative Skills: English	1.6	3.3	3.1	3.4		3.3	3.2	2.8	3.7
Performative Skills: Hebrew	2.0	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.3	3.1	3.3		3.6
Critical Thinking	2.2	2.6	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.4
Hebrew	2.1	2.5	2.7	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.3	2.2	3.3
Textual Interpretation	1.8	2.9	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.4
Teaching		3.4	4.0			4.0	4.0	3.3	4.2
Pastoral Care & Counseling		3.1	2.2			2.2			3.1
Leadership		3.0	2.6			2.2			3.9
Personal/Religious Growth & Development		2.9	2.5	3.3	3.0	2.7	3.5	3.5	3.4
Skills & Habits for Independent Study	2.4	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.1	3.4
Jewish Knowledge & Integration of Knowledge	2.1	3.0	2.7	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.4	3.0	3.4

*1=Novice; 2=Intermediate; 3=Advanced; 4=Achieved/Ordination; 5=Aspirational