# THE PROGRAM LEADING TO THE DEGREE OF

# DOCTOR OF HEBREW LETTERS

## Academic Year 2026-27

**Pines School of Graduate Studies**

**Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion**

**NOTE: Admission to the DHL program remains frozen until further notice. This Handbook currently applies only to students who are already enrolled in the program.**

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## MISSION STATEMENTS

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) is North America's premier institution of Jewish higher education and the center for professional leadership development of Reform Judaism. A multi-campus academic and spiritual learning community, HUC-JIR builds vibrant progressive Judaism in North America, Israel and around the globe by:

- studying the great issues of Jewish life, history and thought with an open, egalitarian, inclusive and pluralistic spirit;
- educating innovative, visionary clergy and professionals who embody the sustaining values, responsibilities, practices, and texts of Jewish tradition to inspire future generations; and
- advancing the critical study of Judaism and Jewish culture in accordance with the highest standards of modern academic scholarship.

The Pines School of Graduate Studies, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion:

- trains scholars of diverse faiths and backgrounds in those areas of Judaic, Hebraic, and Cognate Studies, from antiquity through the modern era, that are supported by our faculty;
- educates its students to produce and publish scholarship at the highest critical levels, using contemporary methodologies in the areas of historiography, philology, philosophy, and literary and cultural criticism;
- actively encourages its students to develop as teachers;
- is committed to the study and mastery of primary sources in their original languages and emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches to the study of history and religion;
- supports a diversity of scholars, students, and instructional staff committed to academic freedom and rigor.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM LEADING TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF HEBREW LETTERS

The program leading to the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.L.) is an international program of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion administered centrally by the Pines School of Graduate Studies. Students may work with faculty members from any of the campuses, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, New York, and Jerusalem (Board-appointed faculty only in Jerusalem). Eligibility for matriculation in the D.H.L. program is normally limited to rabbinic graduates of HUC- JIR (any campus). The basis for this eligibility is the period of residency that is required for the M.A.H.L. degree and subsequent rabbinic ordination.
Rabbinic ordinees of other academically accredited institutions may also be eligible for the D.H.L. program and should consult with the director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies.

**Program Learning Outcomes:**

Students awarded the Doctor of Hebrew Letters degree will:
1. be able to read and interpret primary source materials, particularly in Hebrew;
2. be able to interpret the meaning and place of source data within larger contexts and categories of humanities discourse relating to culture, society, history and religion;
3. be able to understand independent, advanced research both within their fields of expertise and in general Judaic Studies;
4. be able to conduct a bibliographic search of primary and secondary (scholarly) sources that pertain to a theme or research question and write scholarly as well as popular articles.

### I. General Requirements and Application Procedure

There are three elements to the D.H.L. program, each of which is described in detail in this document:

1. a course of study
2. a set of oral examinations
3. a doctoral dissertation

The core of the program is a course of study in three subject areas--one major field and two minor fields--designed by the student in collaboration with three faculty advisors (one for each field).

There is often a relationship among the three subject areas, but it is not required that there be one. The specific requirements of the course of study may be fulfilled entirely by guided independent study, or by a combination of independent study and coursework.

**Either the major or *both* minors must include substantial study of Hebrew texts.**

The major and minor areas normally are selected from the following list (other areas of Judaic Studies may be considered as well, as long as they are duly approved):

Bible and Related Literature Hebrew
Literature
Human Relations (minor field only)
Jewish Liturgy and Worship
Jewish Religious Education (minor field only)
Jewish Theology
Jewish Philosophy

Jewish Hstory
Judaism and Early Christianity
Judaism and Hellenism
Medieval Jewish Biblical Commentaries
Midrashic and Homiletical Literature Talmud
and Rabbinic Literature

The student is formally admitted to D.H.L. candidacy once three advisors have been secured and the application form and application fee have been submitted to the National Office of Recruitment and Admissions. The application form can be found and filled out electronically at

*sis.huc.edu/forms/gen_cf/inq_app_exec_screen.cfm?scor_id=6C2491F5FB0872D3FC44D49A64D0240F*

Upon admission to D.H.L. candidacy, the program of study for each area must then be formulated with, and approved in writing by, the faculty advisor for that area. Once all three program outlines have been prepared and approved (including bibliographies), they must be submitted to the director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies. When ready, the dissertation proposal (including bibliography) must also be submitted to the director for approval by the Graduate Executive Committee.

The three programs of study may be completed concurrently or sequentially, depending on the candidate's preferred manner of working. In either case, all requirements for the D.H.L. degree normally must be completed within seven years from the date of the G.E.C.'s approval of the candidate's program.

## II. The Course of Study

The goal of the program of study in a minor area is to develop broad competence and general proficiency in that area. The major program of study, which leads to the dissertation, goes beyond that base of competence, and cultivates professional expertise in a well-defined area of specialization.

A. Program of Study--Minor Areas

The program outline for each of the two minor subject areas should specify the subject matter to be studied, including the primary and secondary source material to be covered, the methodology to be used, and tentative description of a concluding project (usually a written assignment).

B. Program of Study--Major Areas

The program of study in the major subject area may augment the program outline for the minor in that area, adding the extra primary and secondary resources that are required to go beyond the level of general competence and attain professional expertise. The program outline should specify the subject matter to be studied, including the primary and secondary source material to be covered and the methodology to be used.

In the case of the major, there is no interim "concluding project" as there is for each minor. Rather, the dissertation represents the culmination of the major, which means that the major advisor normally serves as the dissertation advisor. The major program outline submitted at the time of application need not include a full dissertation proposal, but it should indicate the direction of research that will eventuate in a dissertation.

C. D.H.L. Courses in Real Time

The Pines School of Graduate Studies offers real-time courses open to D.H.L. students originating from each of the stateside campuses. These courses may be taken in person or through an electronic connection (Zoom). Permission of the instructor is required, and the PSGS director must be notified.

Course work can be coordinated with the predefined program outlines of the minor subject areas. D.H.L. candidates may take up to two of these courses per year for no additional fee beyond the annual D.H.L. tuition. For additional courses per year, D.H.L. candidates must pay the reduced per-credit tuition fee (for 2024-25, $1,400 per credit-hour) or per-credit audit fee (for 2024-25, $675 per credit-hour) afforded to HUC-JIR alumni. (D.H.L. students are not eligible for financial aid.) Any incomplete course work in courses taken for credit must be finished, and a grade submitted, by the beginning of the following academic year. For more information, contact the Office of the Pines School of Graduate Studies.

D. D.H.L. Examinations

When the candidate has completed a program of study in a minor area, the advisor submits a letter of confirmation to the director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies. The D.H.L. examination can be administered only after receipt of this letter. The examination in the major may be administered when the advisor certifies in writing that the dissertation is the only outstanding program requirement but must be taken at least one month prior to the submission of the dissertation.

The D.H.L. examinations are oral examinations that may be taken online. Their content is based upon the work that comprised the course of study. Each exam is administered by the faculty advisor in that area.

E. D.H.L. Dissertation

The D.H.L. dissertation is the "concluding project" in the candidate's major area, as well as the culmination of the degree program. "The [doctoral] research project should be an original, theory-driven investigation characterized by rigorous methodology and capable of making a significant contribution to knowledge about the subject under study" (*The Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation,* Council of Graduate Schools Policy Statement, 1991, pp. 6-7).

1. Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal is an integral part of the program outline for the major area. The proposal should give an overview of the proposed topic, outline the specific subject matter of the dissertation, describe how the subject matter will be treated, and include some relevant bibliography. The proposal should indicate the original contribution to scholarship that the student expects to make.

The proposal may be submitted at any time during the course of study, as early as the time of application, but no later than one year prior to the anticipated date of graduation. Students are encouraged to formulate their dissertation proposals before taking the D.H.L. examinations.

The procedure for submission and approval of the proposal is as follows: the student submits the

proposal to the dissertation advisor (normally the major area advisor); the advisor signs the proposal and submits it to the director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies; the director conveys the proposal to the G.E.C. for approval.

A typical dissertation proposal might be laid out as follows (each of the following items with the possible exception of the bibliography should require no more than one page):

**Cover Page**, including the student's name, the title of the dissertation, and the name and signature of the faculty advisor.

**Statement of the Problem**, giving the general scholarly context out of which the thesis topic has emerged, and indicating the questions to be raised and/or hypotheses to be verified.

**Review of Prior Scholarship**, emphasizing that which is specifically relevant to the dissertation. What is lacking in scholarship to date that makes the proposed work desirable or necessary?

**Statement of Methodology or Approach**, with particular emphasis on where it participates in and deviates from current scholarly discussion of the topic.

**Outline of the Contents of the Dissertation**, which should be simple in form, and follow a standard outline format (e.g., *The Chicago Manual of Style*).

**Preliminary Bibliography,** topically arranged, and limited to what is strictly relevant.

2. The Format of the Dissertation

The Graduate Executive Committee has established several guidelines and regulations for the preparation of dissertations. These cover such areas as required contents (abstract, title page, etc.), paper size and quality, formatting, printing, and annotation. Examples appear in the Graduate Student Handbook of the Pines School of Graduate Studies. Any significant deviations from the regulations in that document must be discussed with the director of the Pines School of Graduate Studies and, if necessary, brought before the Graduate Executive Committee for approval.

3. Submission of the Dissertation

When the advisor agrees that the dissertation is ready for submission, the candidate should prepare the final copy for official submission. One unbound submission copy of the dissertation and a pdf file copy, together with the advisor's written evaluation approving the dissertation, must be in the Office of the Pines School of Graduate Studies by March 15 if the D.H.L. is to be awarded at the spring graduation exercises.

## III. Fees (for Academic Year 2026-27)

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|---|---|
| Application Fee | $ 100.00 |
| Annual Tuition Fee | HUC-JIR ordinees: $ 2,200.00; all others: $2,700.00 |
| Graduation Fee | $ 200.00 |

## IV. Enrollment, Registration, Tuition Payment

Upon acceptance into the program, the candidate must confirm their intent to enroll with the Office of Admissions. Once enrolled the candidate will be issued an HUC email address. All

correspondence from the College-Institute, including tuition and fee notifications, will be sent to the candidate's HUC email address ONLY. **It is crucial that candidates routinely monitor their HUC email accounts, particularly at the beginning of each academic year.**

While admission to the DHL program is on a rolling basis, the entering student will be able to formally enroll, through registration for DHL Candidacy on the Student Information System (SIS), only during regular registration periods, at the beginning of each semester, and during pre-registration periods prior to each semester at times designated by the Office of the National Registrar and indicated on the Academic Calendar. For all other times, please consult the Registrar's Office.

The Office of Student Billing will assess the one-time annual tuition fee during the Fall semester of each academic year; however, if the candidate's initial enrollment is for the Spring semester, half of the annual tuition fee will be assessed during the Spring semester. DHL students are not eligible for financial aid.

The tuition **Payment Deadline Schedule** is posted on the Student Billing page of the huc.edu website every academic year. It is critical that candidates keep these dates in mind. Payment for each semester is due to be paid in full no later than the payment date assigned. All accounts not paid in full by the assigned dates (as displayed on the huc.edu website) will be subject to a Business Office Hold, a Late Fee of $150, along with interest at a rate of 1% for each month the account remains past due. A Business Office Hold will prevent students from graduating/being ordained, enrolling for future semester coursework and may have course registration cancelled.

## V. Leave of Absence and Withdrawal

If, during the course of the program, the candidate needs to take a Leave of Absence for a semester or an academic year, he or she should notify the PSGS director and fill out the Leave of Absence form available on the Registrar's page of the huc.edu website. A Leave of Absence is renewable, by petition to the PSGS director, for a second year. Any longer-term leave requires a withdrawal from the program. The candidate must notify the PSGS director and fill out a withdrawal form available on the Registrar's page of the huc.edu website. If the candidate wishes to resume the program at a later date, after withdrawal, he or she must contact the PSGS director and, possibly, reapply.

The candidate will not be charged tuition during the approved Leave of Absence. In the case of both Leave of Absence and Withdrawal from the program, the effective date to be used in determining refunds is the date that the National Registrar receives written notification of Leave of Absence or Withdrawal from the candidate.

The one-time annual tuition fee for the DHL program is assessed during the Fall semester of each academic year. Should a candidate withdraw or petition for a Leave of Absence after the fourth week of the Fall semester, the candidate remains liable for 50% of the annual cost of tuition that was assessed. If the candidate was not enrolled or registered during the Fall semester but began (registered) during the Spring semester, the candidate would then be liable for 100% of the tuition cost that was assessed during the Spring semester (half of the annual tuition fee).