

**ACADEMIC HANDBOOK**  
**SCHOOL OF RABBINIC STUDIES**

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

**Jack H. Skirball Campus**  
**Los Angeles, CA**

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## **Introduction to the Academic Handbook for the School of Rabbinic Studies**

The mission of the HUC-JIR Rabbinical School is to educate rabbis to serve the Reform Movement, the Jewish people, and humankind. Through rigorous academic and professional study, the HUC-JIR Rabbinical School prepares rabbis to...

- engage in critical study of Jewish thought, tradition, culture, history, Hebrew language, and text;
- teach effectively people of all ages, across denominations and faiths;
- organize and lead inspiring Jewish worship services and religious ceremonies;
- advocate and act for social justice;
- promote meaningful relationships with Israel and its cultural life;
- provide pastoral care and religious guidance;
- serve effectively as visionary leaders in their work and communities;
- be self-reflective in their personal practice, ritual observance and belief and in fulfilling their professional commitments;
- act as informed spokespersons for Judaism and the Jewish people; and
- foster the vibrant development of the Reform Movement.

The School of Rabbinic Studies at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion on the Jack H. Skirball Campus in Los Angeles is a community of faculty and students, each of whom is committed to high academic and professional standards. We agree to abide by published rules, regulations, and procedures that define and maintain those standards.

The rules, regulations, and procedures of the School of Rabbinic Studies are contained in this Academic Handbook. The School of Rabbinic Studies Academic Handbook supplements the National Academic Handbook, which contains rules and procedures that apply to students in all of the academic programs of HUC-JIR; the National Academic Handbook is available on the HUC-JIR website. The School of Rabbinic Studies Academic Handbook is available on Sakai. The Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies and ECASA are charged with overseeing these rules, regulations, and procedures. Students and faculty will receive electronic notification of any changes in this Handbook.

Questions regarding the rules, regulations, and procedures in this Handbook should be addressed to the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies.

## **The Curriculum of the School of Rabbinic Studies**

The curriculum of the School of Rabbinic Studies at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion has two phases. The first phase, the Core Curriculum, is covered by the Year-in-Israel and the first two years stateside; upon completion of the Core Curriculum in Los Angeles, students are awarded the MAHL degree. The second phase, the post-MAHL course of study, consists of work done in the fourth and fifth years of the program.

**Year 1:** The Year-in-Israel program includes the study of Hebrew language, extensive reading in the Hebrew of the classical texts of Judaism, the study of the history and contemporary realities of Israel, and professional leadership training seminars. Courses in liturgy and modern Judaism introduce the student to the thought and practice of the Reform movement.

**Years 2 and 3:** The Core Curriculum consists of foundational courses that examine the language and literature of a variety of disciplines, different critical approaches to those disciplines, and the acquisition of professional skills through classroom learning. These courses are generally taken during the second and third years of the rabbinic program.

**The required courses for the degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters are:**

Fall – Year 2

BIB 600	Torah
HEB 600	Hebrew Language
LIT 600	Liturgy
PDE 602	Homiletics
PDE 604	Education A
PDE 611	Rabbinic Practicum A
RAB 600	Mishnah

Spring- Year 2

BIB 601	Prophets
HEB 603	Hebrew Language
HIS 601	Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages
PDE 603	Speech
PDE 609	Creating Worship Experiences
PDE 612	Rabbinic Practicum B
RAB 601	Midrash

Fall – Year 3

BIB 602	Ketuvim
HEB 602	Introduction to Aramaic (one week intensive)
HIS 602	Modern Jewish History
PDE 613	Rabbinic Practicum C
PHI 601	Medieval/Early Modern Jewish Thought
RAB 604	Commentaries
RAB 605	Talmud A

Spring – Year 3

HIS 603	American Jewish History
EDU 630A	Curriculum Content
PDE 614	Rabbinic Practicum D
PHI 602	Modern/Contemporary Jewish Thought
RAB 606	Talmud B
RAB 607	Codes

**Years 4 & 5:** The post-MAHL program consists of sixteen advanced courses and two one-week intensives that are generally taken in the fourth and fifth years of the rabbinic program. The following courses are required: PDE 643/Leadership for the Reform Rabbinate; HIS 620/Islam Intensive; and HIS 621/Christianity Intensive.

The remaining fifteen courses are chosen by the student with two caveats:

1. To ensure that students continue to deepen their Judaica knowledge and skills, students may take no more than four of the 15 electives in Professional Development.
2. If a student receives a LP in a Core course, the student must take an elective in that subject area and receive a P in that course.

Electives in a given discipline may not be taken before the completion of the Core courses in that discipline.

### **Additional Requirements**

1. All rabbinic students are expected to participate in worship services at HUC. Students are assigned to lead services, read Torah, and deliver *divrei Torah*. The synagogue calendar, which contains these assignments, is published at the beginning of each academic year and can be found on Sakai.
2. Each rabbinic student will deliver two sermons, one each during the fourth and fifth years. Sermon dates are assigned at the beginning of the academic year and printed in the synagogue calendar.
3. Each student must complete three years of fieldwork. Students must serve at least one year in a monthly student pulpit (or its equivalent) and one year in a supervised internship. Each student must also complete a pastoral care internship or one unit of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education).
4. Each student will participate in the Gerecht Institute (2<sup>nd</sup> Year) and the Outreach Institute (4<sup>th</sup> year), and the joint HUC-CCAR Mentoring program. Assignments for the mentoring program are made by a committee of HUC faculty, CCAR alumni, administration, and CCAR staff during the fourth year and will continue two years after Ordination. Successful completion of this program is required for Ordination and membership in the CCAR.
5. Each student must complete a capstone: a rabbinic thesis, a text immersion, or a project, under the supervision of a member of the HUC faculty.

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## **Capstone Requirements**

1. Every student is required to complete a capstone during his/her final year of rabbinic school.
2. Each year, the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies will review the current capstone requirements with fourth year students. Capstone guidelines will be posted on Sakai.
3. During the fourth year, a student must submit the proposed subject of the capstone to the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies on or before the date set that year.
4. The student shall first discuss the proposed capstone subject with a member of the faculty with whom the work is to be pursued. Written approval must be obtained from the advisor regarding the formulation of the subject.
5. Ordinarily, a capstone is executed under one advisor a member of the Los Angeles faculty. When a capstone involves more than one area of study or methodological approach, a second and, if necessary, third faculty member from our schools or associated institutions may be co-opted as minor advisors.
6. The capstone proposal form may be downloaded from Sakai and once signed by the advisor, is to be submitted to the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies, together with the student's proposal.
7. A request to emend the capstone topic or vehicle, or to change advisors must be submitted to the Rabbinic School Office at the beginning of the fall semester of the student's fifth year.
8. No faculty member may be expected to serve as advisor for more than three rabbinic capstones in a given year. Faculty members are not expected to serve as capstone advisors while on sabbatical.
9. Students are required to meet regularly with their advisor throughout the time that the work is in progress. If a student fails to meet according to the schedule agreed upon by the student and the faculty advisor, the student will not be allowed to continue work on the capstone. As a result, he/she will not be ordained that year.
10. In the senior year, the candidate delivers the completed capstone to the advisor(s) and to the Library no later than the date announced on the Academic Calendar. If, for reason of illness or other similar extenuating circumstances, a student is unable to present the completed work by that date, he/she may, upon the written permission of the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies (who will consult with the advisor), be granted up to a one week extension. The student must also submit a Capstone Completion Form, signed by the advisor(s), to the School of Rabbinic Studies.

11. If a student does not complete his/her thesis by the assigned due date, s/he will not be able to participate in CCAR/HUC-JIR placement. The Faculty, via the Rabbinical Program Director, may grant one more year to complete the thesis at their discretion. Upon completion of the thesis, the student will then be eligible to seek a position through the CCAR. Any student who does not complete the thesis after a second year will have their tenure in the program terminated.

### **Advanced Standing and Exemptions**

1. A student may be exempt from certain required courses due to prior study and/or preparation. To receive an exemption, the student should contact the faculty member who teaches the course in question to determine the method of evaluating the student's prior preparation. Such evaluation normally would include an examination of the student's transcript(s), prior course syllabi, and written work. The faculty member will then approve or deny the petition and notify the student, who must complete and submit the exemption form found on the Registrar's page of the HUC website.
2. If a student and a faculty member determine that a student has not done sufficient work to exempt from an entire course, but has already studied a significant portion of the material taught in the course, the student, with the instructor's permission, may register for the course but attend only certain sessions and/or do only certain assignments as determined by the instructor. The instructor may also choose to work independently with the student to cover certain portions of the course material and then exempt the student from the course.
3. Additional information about advanced standing and exemptions can be found in the National Academic Handbook.

### **Maximum Course Load**

A student's course load will not exceed 18 credits per semester without the written permission of the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies. A one-week intensive taken before the beginning of the semester is not counted toward the 18 credit cap.

### **Independent Study**

An independent study is a course not regularly offered but developed specially by a student and faculty member.

1. Students shall generally be allowed to take one independent study course per semester with the permission of the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies and the faculty member to be credited as a post-MAHL course, up to a total of four such courses. Only one independent study course is permitted each summer and a maximum of three independent study courses

during a leave of absence. If a student requests additional independent study, permission must be obtained from the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies; appropriate exemptions may be made on a case by case basis.

2. Any full-time faculty member may be asked to sponsor an independent study course. Since faculty members direct independent study courses in addition to their regular teaching load, they shall undertake to work with students at their own discretion. It is recommended that no faculty member sponsor more than two such courses in any one semester.
3. No student who has failed a course in either of the previous two semesters may register for an independent study course, unless permission is obtained from the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies.
4. Independent Study Registration forms are available on the Registrar's page of the HUC website. Every independent study must be approved by the student's advisor and the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies as well as the faculty member directing the independent study.
5. In special circumstances and with the permission of the School Director, independent study may be used to fulfill a core course requirement

### **Study in Other HUC Programs**

Rabbinic students are encouraged to enroll in the Rabbinic Education year offered by the Rhea Hirsch School of Education or the certificate in Jewish Non-Profit Management offered by the Zelikow School of Jewish Non-Profit Management.

The Rabbinic Education year is usually undertaken between a student's third and fourth years of rabbinic school, after the student completes the MAHL requirements. The Non-Profit Management certificate requires two summers of coursework; the certificate may be done any time during rabbinic school.

Students may apply two courses from the Rabbinic Education year toward their post-MAHL course requirements. The designated courses are: EDU 635 (Organizational Systems) and EDU 645 (Ideologies of Jewish Education). EDU 635 is counted as a PDE course and EDU 645 is counted as an open elective. Students also take a Judaica text elective while in the Rabbinic Education year that counts toward the post-MAHL course requirements.

Students may apply six credits from the ZSJNM certificate program or MAJNM toward their post-MAHL course requirements.

Students may opt to do a joint capstone project for the two degrees or to do two separate capstones. This decision should be made with input from the directors of the two schools. Students must do one year of fieldwork that satisfies the requirements of the ZSJNM.

Students who enroll in both the Rabbinic Education program and a ZSJNM program may apply only two courses or six credits toward their post-MAHL requirements; the student may choose which of the courses listed above to apply toward rabbinical school requirements.

### **Study at Other Institutions**

1. Students may enroll in graduate level courses at accredited institution and receive credits toward their HUC degree, provided that the proposed course of study is submitted in advance, in writing, and is approved by the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies.
2. HUC-Los Angeles has a reciprocity agreement with the Rabbinical School of the American Jewish University which enables full-time students to take rabbinical school courses at AJU with no additional tuition fee. Students should check the AJU website for course information and consult with their advisors about appropriate courses.
3. No more than 25% of course requirements can be fulfilled by study at other institutions, whether that work is done prior to enrollment at HUC-JIR or during the student's tenure at HUC-JIR.

### **Fifth Year Residency and Requirements**

The School of Rabbinic Studies is a five-year, full-time academic program. Students are expected to be in Los Angeles during their fifth year to meet with their thesis advisors, participate in the ordination seminar, and complete their course work.

All rabbinic students should register for THS 698 (4.5 credits/semester) and PDE 620 & 621 Ordination Seminar (1.5 credits/semester) during each semester of their fifth year.

Students may take courses in the spring semester of their fifth year; work for these courses must be completed by the deadline set by the registrar.

Students must complete all required coursework in the spring semester of their final year by the date determined by the Registrar.

### **Review of Students**

1. At the end of the Year in Israel, the Jerusalem faculty and administration will conduct a review of students regarding their suitability to continue in the program.
2. There also will be a formal review of students at the end of the third year. In addition, there shall be periodic reviews of students by faculty according to the assessment protocols established in each program.

3. Information about student tenure can be found in the National Academic Handbook.

### **Academic Advising**

1. The faculty advisor is intended to support students; to stimulate students' personal, professional and intellectual growth; and challenge students to develop wider perspectives on Jewish life, belief and practice, as well as deeper insights into their academic and experiential learning.
2. Upon arrival at the Los Angeles campus, each student is assigned a member of the faculty or administration as an advisor. The advisor is available to the student to discuss academic, professional and personal issues.
3. Changes may be requested by the advisor or the student. Unless a change is requested, students will have the same advisor from the beginning of their second year until ordination.
4. Students and advisors should meet no fewer than four times a year. The first meeting should take place at the onset of the academic year. Meetings should then take place later in the first semester and twice during the second semester. Additional meetings are encouraged.
5. We wish to create an atmosphere of trust between students and their advisors. A student should be able to speak to his/her advisor confident that the advisor will not discuss the student's academic situation with another student or with anyone not directly involved professionally in the student's academic program. If an advisor believes that sharing information with faculty members would be beneficial, he/she should speak to the student about sharing that information.
6. Students are required to consult with their advisors as they prepare to give divrei Torah and sermons in the HUC-JIR Synagogue.

### **Aronoff Rabbinic Mentoring Program**

1. Students serving student pulpits are required to participate in the Aronoff Rabbinic Mentoring Program. Information about the program can be found in the Fieldwork Handbook of the School of Rabbinic Studies.
2. All HUC-JIR rabbinical students are required to participate in the JCRMI Mentoring Program for three years. The program begins at the end of the student's fourth year in rabbinical school and continues during the first two years following ordination. Orientation to the program and assignment of mentors is done during the fourth year.

