



ACADEMIC HANDBOOK
SCHOOL OF RABBINIC STUDIES

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Jack H. Skirball Campus
Los Angeles, CA

Academic Year: 2023-24

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HUC-JIR Mission Statement

Mission

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.

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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.

Desired Learning Outcomes for HUC-JIR Rabbinical Students

As a learning-centered institution, HUC-JIR is committed to articulating desired learning outcomes for its graduates. These outcomes cut across all aspects of rabbinical education and formation at HUC-JIR, including classroom and co-curricular learning, and the wide range of fieldwork experiences. The learning outcomes take a holistic approach, relating to the knowledge, practice, spiritual life, and dispositions of rabbis. They are intended to serve as a guide for prospective and current students, faculty, alumni, fieldwork supervisors, and employers. In using the term “desired learning outcomes,” we mean to convey a sense of aspiration rather than expectation. HUC-JIR aims to be an incubator that nurtures and challenges every aspect of a rabbi-in-formation. We recognize the uniqueness of each of our students, and we are committed to diversities within our sacred learning community. We hope that all rabbis will continue to grow as lifelong learners of Torah in the broadest sense, returning often to this document as a source of guidance and inspiration.

Section 1: Interpreter of Text and Culture

An HUC ordained rabbi will be able to:

1. Competencies

- a. Read aloud and translate a range of Jewish textual sources in Hebrew and Aramaic using recommended resources.
- b. Teach and transmit the content and contexts of Jewish texts, traditions, ethics, theology, and history to diverse audiences.
- c. Translate, interpret, and communicate Jewish sources in meaningful ways for contemporary Jewish life. Participate in both traditional and contemporary modes of worship and ritual.
- d. Facilitate, as a solo practitioner and in partnership with others, worship with skill, fluency, and artistry.

2. Literacies

- a. Use the tools and methods of critical scholarship to study and analyze a range of texts, focusing on main themes and issues.
- b. Articulate how and why Jewish thought and practice have changed over time.
- c. Trace the evolution of Jewish history and culture in North America and other global Jewish communities.

3. Commitments

- a. Embody an ongoing commitment to lifelong study and active engagement in Jewish practice and communal life.

Section 2: Personal Integrity

An HUC ordained rabbi will be able to:

4. Competencies

- a. Serve as a rabbi with an understanding of and commitment to live by the CCAR Code of Ethics.
- b. Exemplify integrity as exemplified by the mishnaic concept of a תלמיד חכם/*talmid chacham* (learned person) and expressed by the values of Reform Judaism.
- c. Harness the reflective capacity, discipline, and awareness that each of us is an imperfect being with the understanding that the process of תיקון/*tikkun* (repairing) is both internal and external.

5. Literacies

- a. Acquire a command of Jewish texts, values, and practices that guide their personal life and inform their stances on issues of significance to the Jewish People and humanity.

- b. Develop a network of spiritual and ethical mentors, colleagues, and communities that aspire to study and enact sacred Jewish values.
- c. **Commitments**
 - a. Demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity, pluralism, and diversity, treating all members of the community with respect.
 - b. Exhibit personal, passionate, and enduring commitments to a life of learning, spiritual growth, ethical behavior, and social engagement.
 - c. Advocate for Jewish Peoplehood, recognizing points of connection to the wider Jewish story through both time and space.

Section 3: Sacred Community Creator and Leader

An HUC ordained rabbi will be able to:

6. Competencies

- a. Articulate a compelling vision for Jewish life informed by a sophisticated understanding of Reform Judaism in relationship to other branches on the tree of Jewish life.
- b. Inspire one's community to fulfill Jewish norms and expectations of social responsibility through acts of loving kindness, the pursuit of social justice, and the commitment to challenge oneself and the community to act in accordance with the highest moral standard.
- c. Navigate the demands of leadership, which include ensuring the institutional budget is aligned with the community's mission and vision.
- d. Supervise, mentor, and collaborate with staff and collegial partners.
- e. Develop a spiritual practice that is personally enriching and contributes to the rabbi's role as a communal worship leader (שליחות ציבור)

7. Literacies

- a. Articulate, through study and God wrestling, a personal theology grounded in Jewish thought that informs and guides one's conversations with and about God.
- b. Grow, through prayer and contemplative practice, a habit of the soul, embedded in a deep, nuanced understanding of engagement with the Divine.
- c. Engage in substantive intra-religious and inter-religious dialogue.
- d. Communicate one's thoughts in speech and in writing through 21st century media.

8. Commitments

- a. Use one's power and authority to embody the Jewish value of working in partnership with the community and the Divine.
- b. Engage in *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World), working to fix what is broken in expanding circles from individual communities within North America, Israel and the world.
- c. Take risks as a leader to realize a vision of Jewish life in the 21st century and to encourage community members to do the same.
- d. Strengthen connections and cultivate responsibility to *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people), to Jews throughout the world.
- e. Act upon a personal relationship to the State and People of Israel, including wrestling with the complexities of what it means for the Jewish people to be powerful and for Israel to be a sovereign state.

Section 4: Comforter and Challenger

An HUC ordained rabbi will be able to:

9. Competencies

- a. Provide pastoral care and counseling guided by Jewish ethics and values and shaped by an understanding of the diversity of human experience and relationships.
- b. Navigate the delicate balance between “afflicting the comfortable” and “comforting the afflicted” by reading the text, subtext and context of interpersonal relations.
- c. Establish genuine relationships and to be fully “present” in the moment to reach and teach people.

10. Literacies

- a. Maintain current knowledge in the language and study of clinical pastoral education.
- b. Understand and internalize the Jewish and contemporary sources of wisdom and experience that inform a pastoral presence.

11. Commitments

Respect and accept the power and sacred responsibility rabbis hold in having a profound and meaningful impact on individuals and families throughout the lifespan and at peak and valley moments in their lives.

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
HIS 601	Medieval Jewish History
JLL 401	Dikduk and Sifrut
PDE 602	Homiletics
PDE 604	Education A
PDE 609A	Worship
RAB 600	Mishnah

Spring- Year 2

BIB 601	Prophets
HIS 602	Modern Jewish History
JLL 402	Dikduk and Sifrut
PDE 603	Speech
PDE 609	Creating Worship Experiences
RAB 601	Midrash

Fall – Year 3

BIB 602	Ketuvim
HEB 602	Introduction to Aramaic (one week intensive)
PDE 611	Rabbinic Practicum A
PDE 613	Rabbinic Practicum C
PHI 601	Medieval Jewish Thought
RAB 604	Commentaries
RAB 605	Talmud A

Spring – Year 3

LIT 600	Liturgy
PDE 612	Rabbinic Practicum B
PDE 614	Rabbinic Practicum D
PHI 602	Modern 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 an 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 Outlook Calendar.
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 fieldwork experiences. 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 (2nd 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.

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.
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 must signed by the advisor and submitted to the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies, together with the student's proposal.
7. A request to amend 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 two 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, the student 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, the student may, upon the written permission of the Director of the School of Rabbinic Studies (who will consult with the advisor), be granted an 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. Transfer credits can be made for required courses, assuming the course the student took elsewhere corresponds closely in skills and content to the required HUC class. Otherwise, we count transfer credits toward a student's "elective" coursework at HUC. Exemptions from required courses may be granted with credit (assuming the student has accredited graduate work) or without credit; an exemption without credit assumes the student will take an additional course to reach the total required number of credits for the MAHL and ordination.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 sponsors 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. If students also take a Judaica text elective while in the Rabbinic Education year, the course 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 who enroll in both the Rabbinic Education program and a ZSJNM program may apply only six credits toward their post-MAHL requirements; the student may choose which courses 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.

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.