

STANDARDS: INTRODUCTION

In exercising its accreditation responsibilities, AIJS looks at how effective the institution is in achieving its academic and administrative mission, as well as the level of quality and professionalism of its operations. In order to make these judgments, a framework of operational dimensions is required, as is a set of performance measurements. When evaluated, an institution worthy of being accredited will consistently score highly on all of these operational dimensions. The task of AIJS will be to determine an applicant institution's performance level on each of these operational dimensions, which it calls Standards.

In this section, the AIJS Standards will be presented. Each section consists of a definition of the Standard, followed by an interpretive explanation of that Standard. Implications for the institution under review and what site visitors will consider when evaluating the Standard are described separately in the *Guide to the ISA*.

AIJS considers the Standards that it has selected as essential to the effectiveness and excellence of an educational institution.

In the Guide to the ISA, there are multiple examples of ways in which the Standard should be evident in the institution's operations. Institutions engaging in the accreditation process should carefully examine the extent to which these Standards are reflected in their operations. Mapping these (on the checklists provided in the Guide) is the first step in the preparation of the Institutional Self-Appraisal.

In explaining how the site visit team will measure the extent to which these Standards are satisfied by an institution, there are behaviorally anchored statements – what a typical institution will be doing if its performance is judged unacceptable, acceptable or exemplary. All of this is included in the *Guide to the ISA*.

STANDARD 1: INSTITUTION MISSION AND GOALS

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution has a clear mission and goals. The mission defines the institution's reason for existence and the students and community it seeks to serve.

The institution mission must clearly state that primary purpose of the institution is to provide a program in Jewish Studies.

The mission is clearly articulated and encapsulated in a mission statement that states the institution's general purpose and philosophy. It states the institution's goals consistent with the expectations of higher education. It provides the framework for institutional growth, development, and student objectives.

The mission of an institution is the driving force that sets the framework for all institutional activity. It should drive decision making, planning and allocation of resources; and should act as the benchmark to evaluate actual performance.

Articulating the mission into a Mission Statement is imperative in two regards. First, it gives a succinct and publicly disseminated statement of the institution's reason for being. It should address the institution's purpose, philosophy and approach toward its role, its constituents and its distinctive educational services. While the mission statement should be revisited periodically, it can be taken as representing a stable statement of organizational purpose.

Secondly, the Mission Statement should allow for growth and development by pointing to a framework for setting operational objectives and determining student achievement outcomes. Both of these elements, the statement of purpose and a framework for planning, should be clearly evident within the Mission Statement. AIJS will assess both of these aspects of the school's mission statement.

Institutional Implications

In determining whether an institution has a clear, effective mission, AIJS will determine how well the mission it is integrated throughout all institutional activities. Using the Mission Statement as a guide and benchmark, AIJS can assess how well an institution is accomplishing its mission.

What elements should a Mission Statement contain?

1. A Purpose Statement

The purpose statement clearly states what an institution seeks to accomplish, the reason for its existence, and the ultimate result of its work.

A typical purpose statement might include: “to transmit classic higher Torah scholarship to its student body.” Another might be: “to enhance the student’s knowledge of *Halacha*, or traditional Jewish law”, “to promote self-awareness and character development” or “to train future teachers in a broad range of Jewish Studies.”

2. An Activity Statement

This statement will present the activities or the programs that the institution provides in order to accomplish the stated purpose. For example, there are many ways approach traditional Jewish Studies within the student body by offering a comprehensive program of studies firmly grounded in traditional Jewish texts. One might be “to deepen the knowledge of traditional Jewish law through the study of Talmudic or Biblical texts together with the classical medieval commentaries and Responsa” or “to promote self-awareness and character development through the study of classical *Mussar* or Hassidic texts and tracing their sources in the Bible and Commentaries”.

A Mission Statement should drive the decision-making process in an institution and should be well known by all institutional participants. It should be communicated prominently, clearly and often – and should reverberate throughout all institutional activities; including academic, administrative, and public functions.

In this regard, AIJS will review the degree to which the mission statement drives the planning and decision-making process within the institution, and how the mission is translated into practice.

Questions to be asked by AIJS in assessing an institutions mission include:

- Are all members of the institution, at every level, aware and invested in the mission?
- Are the overall operations, beginning with recruitment and continuing through establishing and assessing outcomes, consistent with the mission?
- Are resources allocated wisely toward to goal of furthering the mission?
- How does the institution determine if it is succeeding in achieving the goals determined by the mission?
- Is the mission revisited periodically to determine that it is still relevant?

STANDARD 2: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution has a curriculum for each of its programs, which is consistent with the mission of the institution.

Course curricula should specify educational objectives consistent with accepted standards of post-secondary education.

Curricula should state the criteria for assessing achievement.

Curricula must contain a required 30% minimum core of Jewish Studies courses for each degree or academic credential offered.

The institution uses methods of delivering instruction appropriate to each program it provides.

All courses and curricula offered by the institution must be consistent with classical Halacha (Jewish Law) based on the Shulchan Aruch.

The core of the effectiveness and viability of an educational system is an understanding of what content is included; what goals are to be attained; an agreement as to educational methodology; and procedures for assessing the extent to which participants are meeting these educational goals. AIJS

refers to the written descriptions of the programs and courses as 'curriculum'. The curriculum should have descriptions detailing the content, objectives, learning experiences, educational outcomes and methods of evaluation of each program offered.

Institutional Implications

The institution must have a curriculum available for all of its programs and individual courses. The curriculum allows for a consistent and methodical way of describing the teaching and learning that will take place. This is achieved by providing a description of the objectives and learning outcomes that the program and individual courses are designed to address.

The curriculum outlines the learning experiences that students are expected to undertake and the methods and criteria that will be used in assessing whether the course objectives were met. A curriculum allows for careful planning of the learning environment, maintaining a balance of subject area components, attending to the needs of the students, and allocating institutional resources effectively.

A well-considered curriculum allows for planning and incremental development of the educational courses within the institution. It also provides for realistic and focused criteria for a student's success within the course or program, which in turn allows the institution to evaluate the extent to which its own mission has been realized. Well-constructed course curricula in the form of syllabi, enable students to declare: "I know what I am learning and why."

The term "curriculum" includes the entire teaching/learning process. The process takes place within a framework that has purpose, direction and goals. This means that each program within an educational institution has a clear, well-articulated curriculum. Programs should be similar in rigor to accepted practice in post-secondary education.

Courses, curricula, and degree programs will be assessed as to their level and quality to assure that they are on a post-secondary level. This includes the core Judaic studies courses as well as any other credit bearing courses offered at the institution. This assessment will consider comparison with similar institutions in terms of skills, content, academic rigor, expected outcomes and are expected to be similar to normative expectations in the higher education arena, and specifically to typical

Yeshiva and Seminary programs. Additionally, the degree programs must conform to generally-accepted post-secondary standards whereby an Associate degree is generally awarded after the successful completion of 60-64 credits and a Baccalaureate degree is awarded after the successful completion of 120-132 credits (five year Talmudic or Rabbinical programs should typically require the successful completion of 150-156 credits).

The length of the program and each individual course within that program requires an appropriate number of hours to earn credit. The generally accepted calculation for a credit hour is referred to as the “Carnegie Unit,” wherein one credit is awarded for a three hour cluster per week over approximately a fifteen week period, which generally contains one hour of instructional time and presumes two hours of outside classroom work in the form of preparation, study, research, and writing.

Adjustments to this calculation, where appropriate, will be considered when the coursework is more suited to an alternative framework. For instance, in *Bais Medrash* study for Talmudic and Rabbinical subjects, *Chavrusa Study* (structured and supervised sessions with a study partner), and *Chabura studies* (several students studying in a cluster with a team leader), are the primary method of learning. Augmented by formal lectures, these sessions contain a balanced mix of joint study of primary texts, followed by research of related sources, critical textual analysis of these sources, formulating hypothesis to address seeming contradictions and inconsistencies, peer review of conclusions, and development of original presentations in a group setting. In this context, AIJS will be looking to see that there is three hours of such learning activities for each credit in the various modes.

Course syllabi should indicate how many hours per week the course meets and how many credits will be awarded for that course over the semester period. The semester schedule and calendar should reflect that calculation.

Accepted areas of study for 30% of the core curriculum (36 credits for Bachelor’s Degree programs and 18 credits for Associated Degree programs) may be in areas of Biblical Studies, Talmud, Jewish Law/Legal Codes, Jewish History, Jewish Philosophy/Ethics and the Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish languages as they support the study of original source texts. This requirement supports the mission and scope of AIJS, which is to accredit institutions that primarily focus on Jewish Studies.

For the award of a non-specialized Bachelor's Degree program AIJS requires a minimum of 30 credits in general education; or its equivalent in evaluated educational outcomes from other coursework. For the award of a non-specialized Associate Degree program AIJS requires a minimum of 15 credits in general education; or its equivalent in evaluated educational outcomes from other coursework.

General education includes the study of ethics and values, diverse perspectives (humanities, social science), English and foreign language skills, communication and writing proficiency, logical reasoning and critical analysis, and computer literacy.

The remaining credits after fulfilling the general education requirements and the Jewish studies requirements for a non-specialized degree may be assigned as the institution sees appropriate. All requirements for completion of a degree or certificate must be clearly stated in the catalog. They must also be consistent with the school mission as well as meet requirements of higher education academic standards.

For highly specialized programs, offering credentials in Talmudic, Torah and Rabbinic studies, there is no specific requirement for general education. However, the degree or certificate must specify the specialty in its title. Examples: Classical Torah Studies Degree, Talmudic Law Degree, Bachelors or Associate degrees in Classical Torah Studies or Talmudic Studies.

Curriculum and its development are at the core of successful, adaptive and quality programs and courses. Well-developed, integrated curricula are central to the day-to-day teaching and instruction of the institution. Each program offered by the institution should be covered by a written description that explains its goals, learning objectives, types of educational experiences to be considered, and the learning outcomes to be used in evaluating the program. Each program will, in turn, have a cluster of associated courses.

Program and course descriptions must be published in the institution's catalog. Individual teachers and/or instructors must be aware of and follow these course descriptions and curricula, and use them in planning and delivering courses. The institution will be expected to demonstrate that the curricula are subject to ongoing development.

Curriculum should have the active and expert participation of those in charge of educational departments and the actual teaching of courses. The process by which curricula are designed, implemented, developed, reviewed, and revised should be clear and well known within the institution. Faculty participation in the development and revision of curriculum should be evident.

The curriculum should identify learning goals that are to be achieved, as well as give the details of the resources a student is expected to use to achieve these goals. For instance, texts and educational sources are expected to be listed, current, and readily available to students. The student must be made aware of what measures of outcomes will be used to determine success. Learning outcomes must be defined and measured (examinations, assignments, projects, etc.). The institution must ensure that these stipulated methods of measurement conform to those identified in the course curriculum. Consistency must be monitored when different faculty members teach the same courses.

When a suitable curriculum has been established, it needs to be translated into educational activities, it needs to be implemented. This requires the planning, organizing, and coordinating of institutional resources in a manner that will allow the curriculum objectives to be effectively realized.

The faculty must be qualified pedagogically and academically to deliver the content of the curriculum. AIJS does not indicate which methods of instruction are appropriate. Institutions may use traditional lecture method, supervised individual or group study, self-paced student learning, individual assignments, independent studies, and other recognized instructional strategies as deemed suitable by the institution. However, all methods of instruction should be appropriate to the content objectives of the course, and must have substantial 'face time' learning activities. AIJS does not approve distance education at this time.

An institution's educational program extends beyond the classroom. In this context, other resources such as the Bais Medrash (traditional study hall), libraries, computers, and individual learning resources, should be available in a culturally sensitive and academically adequate manner, to support the educational process.

AIJS supports effective instruction and endorses no particular style of education. It does not prescribe specific instructional methods or approaches, nor does it insist on innovation merely for

its own sake. However, AIJS does recognize that ongoing evaluations of the curriculum and instructional methods are signs of institutional vitality.

Educational offerings should have a clear relationship with the overall mission of the school and contribute to pursuit of knowledge in a spirit of increased shared universal values. Degrees and their levels should be appropriate and proportionate to the amount of content covered and the skills developed in the program. They should generally follow the established American norms of higher education. For highly specialized degrees and certificates (where external benchmarks are often not useful), the institution should clearly state the achievements expected by the completion of the program.

STANDARD 3: STUDENT PROGRESS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

An institution accredited by AIJS must develop and demonstrate student learning outcomes. There is a clear relationship between the student outcomes and the institution's mission.

The institution must demonstrate that it has applied suitable procedures to measure student progress and to assess the knowledge and/or skills acquired by its students.

The institution is expected to review and analyze its measures of student progress and student learning outcomes to ensure that they remain relevant and effective, and demonstrate the institution's success with respect to student achievement in relation to its mission.

As students are admitted, they begin to engage with the institution's educational system. As the student moves forward, feedback to both the institution and the student will enhance the educational experience. Feedback to the student will be able them to gauge their educational progress or lack thereof. Such information will also enable the institution to revise or adjust its curriculum content, modes of educational delivery, and evaluation methods. Feedback is also

essential for the institution in setting admission criteria and marketing its program. From the students' point of view, this information is critical in gauging their progress towards their degree.

Institutions should monitor students' satisfactory academic performance both qualitatively in terms of satisfying a minimum grade average, and quantitatively in terms of progressing through the program at a satisfactory pace to complete the program. The institution should develop a satisfactory academic progress policy and that policy should address incompletes, withdrawals, course repetitions, and how they impact grade point average and total credits attempted. It should also contain provisions for students who do not meet satisfactory progress standards. In addition, there should be a process for students to appeal a determination of failure to meet satisfactory progress standards.

AIJS requires institutions to assess student learning by having specific learning objectives for each course offered as well as measures of program completion and effectiveness. It does not prescribe a specific approach or method. The institution is responsible to have in place a system that monitors the student's progress as well as gauges the learning outcomes achieved appropriate to the institutional mission.

The institution shall prepare and implement a plan for the systematic assessment of its learning outcomes consistent with its mission. The assessment of outcomes may include graduation/completion rates, student retention rates, transfers to a more advanced or specialized post-secondary program, subsequent enrollment in graduate institutions, career and occupational outcomes, job placement rates, indicators of subsequent employer satisfaction, and other generally accepted outcomes such as scores on standardized tests and passage of licensing exams. Institutions should choose their own appropriate measures of student outcomes which are consistent with institutional mission and standard post-secondary institutional expectations.

AIJS will evaluate the measures used by the institution to monitor students' progress and evaluate student outcomes. AIJS site reviewers and its accrediting council will evaluate if these measures are appropriate, support the mission of the school, and are consistent with the values and quality of post-secondary education.

Institutional Implications

The institution must have clear, well-designed policies in this area. Academic standards are vital to the reputation and continued well-being of an educational institution, but they also reflect an interest and concern for the student population and the wider academic community. Under the AIJS Standards, student academic progress and outcomes must be properly recorded. Its institutions must have specific performance standards or mechanisms in which students making inadequate progress are monitored and counseled.

Student Assessment and Assessment of Outcomes

Assessment tools should include systems of grading and evaluating student learning. Student assessment is vital for evaluating various components of the academic program. In addition to its value in improving academic quality and effectiveness, it is also helpful in the areas of student recruitment, retention and completions. A systematic analysis of student assessment may indicate lack of systematic sequencing of courses, ineffective instructional methods, unrealistic expectations, or the need to offer additional preparatory coursework. The school's assessment process should be viewed by the institution as a key working instrument.

Outcome measures demonstrate to the external world that the institution's programs have value than can be described and verified. These may comprise both direct and indirect measures. Direct measures would include test success, graduation rates, job placement rates, and acceptance to other institutions of higher learning. Indirect measures may include surveys, student and faculty evaluations, and feedback by employers or supervisors of the institution's graduates. Most important is to review and analyze the outcomes data collected with an eye to implement improvements in instruction, and utilize the conclusions to influence strategic planning.

AIJS will evaluate the institution's designation of outcomes as well as its commitment to assessment of student achievement and learning outcomes. It will review the validity of any direct or indirect assessment measures, and how often and how effectively the institution uses those measures to evaluate the success of the program and make effective improvements in its operations.

STANDARD 4: FACILITIES, RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution shall provide facilities and resources to support its educational activities. Instruction is conducted in safe, accessible, sanitary, and educationally suitable facilities that comply with prevailing law.

The facilities and equipment are sufficient to support the institution's administration, instruction and student performance.

The institution shall provide its students and faculty with library and information services and resources adequate to support the mission of the institution and each program of study.

In traditional models of education, instruction takes place within a physical location. The buildings within which the educational process takes place provide not only the physical location, but also contribute to the effectiveness and adequacy of the process itself.

AIJS will examine the physical facilities of the institution that applies for accreditation. The facilities must be adequately spacious, well-lit, and ventilated. Facilities mean sites of classroom instruction, faculty and administrative office space, and any facilities used for ancillary activities of the institution. Facilities must meet standards of safety and accessibility. Technology, furniture and equipment should be adequate to facilitate the mission and educational goals of the institution.

Institutional Implications

In reviewing the physical aspects of the institution, AIJS is concerned about present and future use. The agency will want to be sure that the physical allocation of space provided currently is compatible with the delivery of the stated educational objectives in an effective manner.

Within traditional educational delivery models, the size of the facilities and amount of resources must be consistent with the size of the academic population and anticipated growth. The institution must demonstrate that its facilities match the demands from the existing academic population and that they plan responsibly for future growth.

Libraries and computer facilities, where appropriate, must also be adequate to support student learning and the institutional mission.

Facilities must be clean, safe, and properly maintained, and there must be sufficient staff and budgetary allocation to ensure that plant and facilities are well maintained. The institution should be in compliance with all local and federal law regarding accessibility. Beyond mere compliance to the laws and regulation, AIJS will also look to see if the institution invests in proactive efforts to assist students with handicaps and disabilities to the maximum extent possible. This type of inclusive institutional culture is critical in allowing all students to fully participate in institutional activities.

STANDARD 5: RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS, CATALOGS, AND STUDENT SERVICES

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution has an admissions policy that admits students able to merit and benefit from the programs and educational activities offered. Institutional recruitment efforts seek to identify and recruit students with this potential. Procedures for application and criteria for acceptance are clearly defined. Students admitted shall generally have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

The institution will publish and distribute an institutional catalog to its students that is also available to all applicants and other interested parties. The institution has established a transfer of credit policy and publicly discloses it in its institutional catalog or in other publicly distributed material. The transfer of credit policy includes a statement of the criteria established by the institution for the transfer of credits earned at another institution, and a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement.

The institution should offer student support services to enable the student to enjoy a wholesome and supportive educational environment.

The institution shall establish, publish, and administer procedures to resolve student complaints regarding any aspect of its institutional activities with particular emphasis on the operation of its academic program.

Institutional Implications

Clarity, accuracy, consistency, and full disclosure in institutional materials are essential for accreditation as an AIJS institution. However, the content of these publications is certainly not sufficient. There must be congruence between what is written and what is actually implemented in matters of admissions, counseling, and other student services. Records, documentation, and feedback will all help support and confirm that the policies that the institution has adopted are, in fact, being administered in a fair, unbiased, systematic, and legal manner. These documents will be included in the ISA as exhibits. In reviewing all areas of this Standard, site visitors will pay special attention to all published information to ensure that they are accurate and not misleading.

AIJS requires clear, well-designed policies that encompass all aspects of recruitment, admissions, student retention, student-services and alumni relations. These policies should be widely accessible to all potential applicants and clearly articulated in all of the institution's admissions and recruitment literature and catalogs.

Criteria for admission must be a well-considered process that allows the most appropriate candidates to connect with the most suitable educational programs that the institution offers. Admissions criteria must be clearly documented and freely available to potential students.

If testing is required in the admission process, it should be reasonable, have face validity, and clearly satisfy needs of the institution and expectations of the student.

This catalog factually represents the courses and programs offered and the credentials granted upon program completion. The catalog also contains pertinent consumer information including, but not limited to:

- Costs of enrolling in each program that the institution offers
- Withdrawal and tuition refund policies
- Academic calendar
- Grading policies
- Satisfactory academic progress, and other academic policies
- Student complaint policies

- Financial aid, and student services offered by the institution
- Transfer of credits policy, including a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credits earned at another institution of higher education and a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement
- Campus security procedures

The catalog is a definitive document. It should be current, well presented, and match the information disseminated about the institution in institutional publications, official websites and public relations material. AIJS requires that all institutional advertising and publications be accurate and not misleading.

The institution should offer its students a range of support services including, but not limited to, scholarship and financial aid assistance, tutoring and remedial help, guidance and counseling, and access to health and medical services. Institutions must have policies and procedures for counseling students whose progress is inadequate and for dealing with student complaints.

If the institution offers its own residential facilities and/or in-school dining options, it must conform to relevant health and safety codes, and its costs should be clearly listed.

The institution shall spell out the steps a student may take to file a complaint. This procedure should include the following elements: the reasonable and appropriate timeframes for investigating and resolving a formal complaint; provision for the final determination of each formal complaint; and assurances that no action will be taken against the student for filing the complaint. The institution's complaint procedures must include a statement informing the student that he/she has the right to file a complaint with AIJS if the complaint was not resolved to his/her satisfaction, and must include the mailing address, phone number and website address for AIJS. The institution shall maintain adequate documentation of each formal complaint and its disposition for a period of at least five years after final disposition of the complaint.

STANDARD 6: STUDENT RECORDS

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution has an orderly and secure system of generating and storing academic and financial records. This system is in compliance with prevailing law including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These records should conform to the generally accepted practices of accredited institutions of higher education in the United States.

Clear record-keeping policies and organized management and maintenance of records are essential for effective administration of the institution's educational programs. Records of student progress and student achievement provide accountability for the quality and effectiveness of the educational programs and allow the student to authoritatively document his academic achievements. Accurate student account records and financial aid records ensure that funds received and disbursed from all sources for tuition are properly recorded. Clear financial records document that student charges correlate to the actual cost of providing education and demonstrate good financial stewardship.

An institution must demonstrate that its record-keeping systems are responsive to the needs of its students. They must comply with the requirements of oversight agencies that oversee federal, state, third party or any institutional financial aid programs the institution administers. The records must be maintained in an orderly manner. The institution's record-keeping should reflect the following objectives:

- To document the student's academic outcomes as well as the student's progress toward earning the institution's degree or academic credential.
- To provide important feedback on the effectiveness of the educational program.
- To serve as the basis for academic transcripts for students transferring to other institutions, or applying for employment positions.
- To provide accountability and transparency in all financial activities, and to demonstrate that the institution is fiscally viable.

- To demonstrate compliance with all regulatory requirements, including financial aid programs for students.

Institutions are also required to meet their responsibilities for periodic reporting to AIJS, as well as to the state and federal agencies that oversee the institution's management capability. This will include annual reports to AIJS as well as any reports required by HEA program regulations such as IPEDS Data Collection, Student Enrollment Reporting and Campus Safety and Security reporting.

Institutional Implications

AIJS requires that educational institutions applying for accreditation have in place a comprehensive student records system.

Student records are a critical component of an accredited institution. Complete and accurate record keeping is essential for the institution, its students, and its alumni and outside agencies that may fund or oversee the institution.

The institution must have a comprehensive policy regarding student records. It is imperative that this policy is reflected in the actual operations of the institution in a consistent and accurate manner.

The institution must have a policy on how long records are to be kept. The policy should specify in what form the records are kept, and who is able to access them or request information from them. Increasingly, there are issues of security that have to be considered to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the records, especially as new and more advanced electronic systems replace older ones.

Because of the amount of records generated and the length that these documents have to be maintained, the institution must have trained personnel to deal with the record keeping function. These individuals must be trained to operate according to procedures that ensure the accurate, timely and complete processing of student records.

Institutional staff must be able to retrieve required records. Academic records must be kept in a secured manner with controlled access to these records. There should be safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized access. Release of academic transcripts should follow established procedures.

Regarding a student's files and records, there must be dependable procedures of safeguarding private and confidential material. There must be a system in place that allows for the release of student information conforming to current FERPA regulations, and other relevant local, state or federal laws. Students must have access to their records and know of the process whereby incorrect information can be corrected.

These provisions apply to both physical (hardcopy) documentation and all student records maintained electronically. Again, security and restricted access are key issues to be kept in mind. There should be provisions for the timely backup and restoration of records, as well a policy for their eventual disposal according to institutional and regulatory protocols.

The institution must designate appropriate institutional officials to maintain academic records, such as admission and acceptance forms documenting compliance with admission criteria, student progress records and updated academic transcripts. These individuals must be trained and knowledgeable in the requirements and practice of post-secondary academic recordkeeping.

Transcripts

Issuing transcripts is an essential service to the student and the wider community. Proper transcripts and the process for their release should conform to good practices and with all regulatory requirements. A report of academic information, such as that needed to generate transcripts should be available indefinitely.

Student Complaints

The institution has a formal complaint procedure that is publicized in its catalog or posted on its website. The complaint policy must be clear and must include procedures that students can follow to resolve any complaints they may have regarding the institution. In its complaint policy, an institution must include a statement informing the student that he/she has the right to file a complaint with AIJS if the complaint was not resolved to his/her satisfaction and must include the mailing address,

phone number and website address for AIJS. The institution maintains records regarding each formal complaint lodged by a student and its disposition, in an easy and accessible manner, for a period of at least five years after final disposition of the complaint. During an on-site review, site visitors will review the records of complaints to determine if there is a pattern of complaints in any particular area that could indicate a weakness or non-compliance, and to determine if the institution's published complaint procedures were followed.

Security of Institutional Records

The institution should have a policy in place to maintain backups of all critical institutional records. Electronic records should be backed up regularly. It is highly recommended that off-site site back copies are maintained and updated regularly. Appropriate safeguards should be in place to prevent hacking and protect the electronic data.

STANDARD 7: DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution issues official credentials documenting program completion. These documents have an obvious and explicit relationship to the institutional mission in general, and specific programs in particular. The meaning of the nomenclature and wording is clear to both recipients and audiences who may ask to review these documents. The institutional policy of awarding credentials follows generally accepted practice in accredited post-secondary institutions.

For institutions seeking AIJS accreditation, the anticipated conclusion of the education experience is the satisfactory completion of requirements and the issuance of an academic credential. In addition to the institution's degrees, an institution may also offer certificate credentials for specialized programs of one year or longer.

The degrees offered should be consistent with the successful completion of a program's educational goals, and provide clear evidence that all the requirements for graduation were fulfilled.

Institutional Implications

AIJS recognizes that accredited institutions will award academic credentials as part of their institutional mission. Such awards recognize successful accomplishment in meeting the required educational standards of the program. The institution should describe the procedures that recognize the accomplishments of students and provide them with a recognized credential of their success.

The credentials identify the level of performance and expectations associated with particular programs. In arriving at these decisions, the general academic context should be considered, and any credential awarded should correspond appropriately to the length and intensity of educational experience. In addition, the requirements for obtaining the credential should be substantially similar to requirements in other post-secondary institutions that offer similar programs.

Credentials should be granted only after a program of well-defined and carefully considered sequence of courses has been completed. The credential must reflect the meaning, knowledge and experience gained from the required courses. It should also reflect the objectives and specific aims of the underlying academic program.

Institutions must clearly state the expected time frames and expected grade point averages for the completion of degree programs. The school must develop satisfactory progress standards. These benchmarks, as well as other degree requirements, should be publicly disclosed as institutional policies in documents that are readily available to students such as the catalog or school website. The published benchmarks for satisfactory academic progress should include provisions for students who do not meet the standards as well as an appeal process for students who have extenuating circumstances. In addition, the satisfactory academic progress policy should address matters such as withdrawals and incompletes.

Policies for Degrees and Credentials Granted

The institution must carefully regulate, monitor, and record the awarding of credentials. Considerations of fairness, equity, and impartiality should characterize the award of these credentials.

Where credential-granting power is regulated by local, state, federal, or professional bodies, the institution must have obtained such authority and may only act in accordance with the requirements of these bodies.

Credentials issued must be clearly and consistently worded. Their meaning should be clear to the recipient and all persons and entities that rely on their validity, veracity and clarity. Credentials should not make claims or promise expertise in professional areas unless such expertise has been, in fact, delivered by the institution's program and is, in fact, accepted by competent, external professional bodies.

AIJS will review the credentials to ascertain that their meaning is not misleading and appropriate to post-secondary education.

Credentials should be awarded for successful and meritorious completion of institutional programs only. They should not be awarded as a mark of distinction, honor, in recognition of services or gratitude, or in connection with financial services or donations, unless they are clearly differentiated from those credentials that are earned. Such honorary credentials must be recognizable by their title on the credential.

STANDARD 8: FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

AIJS requires that the educational services provided by the institution's instructional personnel are of sufficient quality and professional competence to help achieve the institution's educational goals. To further the mission of the institution, its academic staff members must possess the skills, competencies and knowledge commensurate with their academic responsibilities. These qualifications are based on a combination of professional training, scholarship, experience, and classroom performance.

The faculty has input in the design and development of curricula, evaluates curriculum offerings, and makes changes based on their findings.

In order to provide and sustain a superior educational delivery system, the institution must recruit and retain highly competent and motivated faculty and administration. The finest academic program and institutional resources are of little value without competent, prepared, and qualified instructors.

In seeking AIJS accreditation, the institution affirms its commitment to the delivery of ongoing, superior education. In order to achieve this, the institution must have a core of academically and pedagogically competent instructional staff dedicated to teaching excellence.

All faculty members employed by the institution as instructors or other professional academic personnel must possess suitable educational training and qualifications for their positions. These academic personnel shall have demonstrated proficiency in the content of their teaching responsibilities, as well as the pedagogic and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to enable students to learn.

The quality and caliber of the faculty may be considered from a number of perspectives.

Faculty members should demonstrate a high level of subject-area competence. In addition to subject-area competence, faculty members should be able to demonstrate a high level of pedagogic competency. This pedagogic competence will be demonstrated not only in the experience of the instructor, but in the ability to transmit the subject matter in ways that motivate students and facilitate effective learning.

Jewish Studies Faculty

Institutions applying for AIJS accreditation view Jewish Studies as more than an academic discipline or area of study. The curricula and programs of Judaic Studies and any other courses offered are essential components in the socialization of their students into a particular world-view and ethical construct that resonates with the traditions and history of the Jewish people.

This broader vision of Jewish Studies entails a deep-seated commitment to transmit the *Mesorah* (legacy) of Torah ethical values to each new generation of students, and impacts the selection of instructors to those who live by or respect that *Mesorah*.

Viewed in this context, staff in this area should demonstrate exemplary qualities of scholarship, commitment, ethical and moral behavior, and overall personal conduct and deportment. While such

criteria are important in any educational environment, it is essential at institutions that see their role as preparing students for a life committed to learning and its meaningful application in their daily living.

It is also important to distinguish Jewish Studies from other academic disciplines with respect to teaching credentials. Whereas in other disciplines, degrees are paramount and are a clear indicator of teacher qualification – there is even a formal convention that faculty credentials must be at least one degree above the credential offered by the program – in Jewish Studies, this is not that clear-cut, and standard academic conventions are not useful to determine degree requirements.

Traditionally, renowned Torah scholars rose to greatness by a combination of accumulating vast amounts of knowledge, and honing research and analytical skills over many years of full-time study in a variety of academic settings. Some studied in very structured programs, others learned privately with world renowned scholars, still others studied in small Chabruas (study groups). This level and type of study could be compared to post-doctoral studies. The most gifted and talented of this select group comprise the pool from which teachers and instructors on the post-secondary level are selected.

The faculty of Women's Seminaries (the common nomenclature for Women Institutions offering a core of advanced Jewish Studies) comprise of Torah scholars, as described above, and outstanding personalities who have demonstrated a unique combination of mastery of subject material, considerable teaching experience on multiple levels, a natural passion for teaching, and a proven track record of conveying Jewish Studies courses in an inspiring manner. Many have earned reputations as sought out presenters and scholars-in-residence in a variety of settings, from Torah retreats, to online, video, and CD lectures.

Institutional Implications

Job descriptions for instructional and managerial personnel should outline the requirements for the position, the tasks and roles that will be expected, and how performance will be assessed. A well-written job description helps the institution define what exactly it wants from the position candidate and how performance will be assessed. There should be a procedure in place whereby job descriptions are reviewed and revised.

The institution should maintain personnel folders on all faculty members containing job descriptions, resumes, copies of academic and professional qualifications, institutional work histories, and copies of evaluations and reviews.

The institution must demonstrate that it places value on commitment to ongoing education and professional development within its teaching faculty. AIJS will examine the extent to which staff is engaged and encouraged to engage in continuing professional education.

AIJS institutions should actively solicit and demonstrate respect for faculty input in curricular decisions. Faculty input should be evident in curriculum design and revisions.

It has been a long-valued goal in Jewish studies to create life-time learners. With regard to faculty, this is especially important, in order for them to maintain their expertise in their particular discipline. To this end, AIJS will evaluate if the faculty are seriously engaged in continuing education and professional development.

STANDARD 9: ADMINISTRATION, HUMAN RESOURCES AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution is capably and responsibly managed. The distribution of responsibilities as defined in the governance structure, processes, and activities is understood and is implemented through delegated authority.

The institution identifies necessary organizational positions consistent with the institution's mission, academic programs and administrative responsibilities. The institution develops procedures for identifying potential candidates and recruiting them to fill necessary positions.

A system is in place that measures and evaluates employee performance. This appraisal is utilized to encourage and improve employee performance and document shortcomings.

The institution is committed to identifying and developing positive relationships with those external constituents that are relevant to the realization of the institution's mission. The institution maintains effective internal and external communications to ensure that all constituencies are collaborating together toward the same organizational goals.

Institutional Implications

The institution must define itself structurally. It should be aware of and able to, articulate its current personnel position and recognize whether it is properly staffed in all departments and functions.

Within the institution, the quality of administrative and instructional staff is of great importance. Educational institutions should do whatever they can to hire, inspire and keep highly competent individuals to serve on their staff. The institution should have an articulated procedure for locating, identifying, and attracting capable applicants for positions. There should be a structured process of recruiting and filling vacant positions with appropriately qualified and experienced candidates. The institution should have in place a process that regularly reviews its organizational structure, positions, job descriptions and recruitment practices.

In recruiting efforts, and indeed with all human resource management practices, the institution should be able to demonstrate that it has a consistent policy of non-discrimination and equal employment opportunity that it is in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.

There should be job descriptions for administrative staff. The job description clearly outlines the requirements for the position, the tasks and roles that will be expected, and how performance will be assessed. The institution should develop a set of operational standards that allow it to determine the degree to which actual performance corresponds to performance expectations.

The institution must maintain sufficient support staff to assist each department with its responsibilities. Cost-effective technology should be employed to make operations smooth and efficient. Many administrative functions within a higher education institution require specialized training, as well as ongoing professional development, as the practice of the profession changes. With technological advances, changes in laws and regulations, and evolving 'good practices', higher education administrators must constantly strive for excellence by adjusting and improving existing

policies and procedures. Membership in professional peer organizations, attendance at external and internal training events, subscriptions and reading of professional literature and periodicals, can all be valuable tools to keep administrators current and professional. Institutions should encourage and support these activities.

An institution should maintain a current organizational chart, identifying the various functions performed within the school, the relationship between these functions, and the governance process – lines of authority, communication, and accountability.

There should be an emphasis on strong internal communications. Such exchanges can be both formal and informal. Stronger interpersonal relationships will assist the institution in improving teamwork, cohesiveness, and allegiance to a common vision.

Ensuring that the right people know the right information at the right time is basic to a well-run institution. Each department must have an effective method of communicating both within its division and with other departments. Face-to-face meetings and written memorandums are examples of methods of communication that can be used effectively towards this goal.

To further its mission, the institution will typically need to interact with various elements that are part of its external environment. The role and effectiveness of the institution vis-à-vis its community, or relevant publics, will depend, in great measure, on the extent to which the institution has created, nurtured and developed a positive and constructive relationship with that community.

Likewise, relationships with the parents of students, feeder institutions whose graduates attend the institution, alumni, various sectors of the community, employers of the school's graduates, the broader higher educational community and local governmental agencies all constitute relevant publics that the institution relates to in implementing its mission and educational objectives. These relevant publics, or "stakeholders", for their part, will also attempt to influence the institution in the furtherance of their particular interests. A strong, mission-focused administration will be alert to and blend the interests of all the stakeholders to lead an institution dedicated to the success of its mission and its students.

STANDARD 10: FINANCIAL PRACTICES

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution shall possess the financial resources necessary to fulfill its mission and educational objectives.

The institution shall demonstrate institutional financial stability.

The institution should have a proper accounting system and competent and trained financial staff familiar with financial management, record keeping and internal control procedures. Roles and responsibilities shall be clear and understood.

The institution must ensure that all funds and monetary instruments are accounted for, monitored and properly safeguarded.

Institutional Implications

In addition to the institution's delivery of educational services, the institution must be able to demonstrate professional competence in its dealings with the financial aspects necessary for effectively carrying out its mission. They should be qualified to handle finances by demonstrating competency in higher education good financial practices. This includes its financial dealings with its students, employees and suppliers and other key economic players including providers of student financial assistance programs.

The institution must have in place professional and competent staff familiar with basic management and accounting principles as well as internal control standards. Staff must ensure that the assets and resources of the institution are safeguarded. They must devise and implement an adequate system of financial procedures to ensure that the financial objectives of the institution are being met.

A standard institutional accounting system is imperative to ensure that financial information has been properly and consistently recorded. An appropriate system of controls must be in place to ensure the integrity of the accounting and financial record.

An external, independent audit should be conducted on a regular basis and reviewed by designated parties such as the institution's board of governors or directors. Particular care must be taken to account for federal or state monies, restricted funds, grants, and other specially designated funds.

In preparation for an initial accrediting review, the institution shall provide AIJS with recently audited financial statements, generally completed within the last year, as well as financial data for a period that includes the previous two fiscal years. Audited financial statements for the most recently completed fiscal year is also necessary for re-accreditation. If the last audit is older than twelve months, a more current financial statement should be provided. If an institution is composed of a secondary or other non-post-secondary components, a schedule containing only the post-secondary component should be provided along with the institution-wide audit.

Designated institutional staff should be responsible for developing and implementing all financial policies and practices. These staff members should be professionally qualified and should be required to be up to date with applicable legal, administrative, and governmental regulations.

The institution should set tuition and related fees with the following considerations; the type, quality, and length of the educational programs provided, the institutions actual costs, the institutional mission, competitive environment, communities, and economic background from which the institution draws its students.

Tuition payments should be posted in a timely and accurate manner. The institution must maintain and publish a fair and equitable tuition refund policy and have procedures to insure that refunds are disbursed in a timely manner.

If the institution participates in federal governmental financial aid for its students, it must demonstrate competency in administering student financial assistance programs in full compliance with all applicable regulations and program requirements. This includes proper training and ongoing professional development.

The institution shall properly document its compliance with federal requirements for HEA programs. This will include actions resulting from findings in financial or compliance audits,

program reviews, the most recent student loan default data, and any other information requested by the U.S. Department of Education.

Any institution found to have a high student loan default rate, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid, must develop a corrective action plan to address the high default rate. The institution must also demonstrate that it has effectively resolved any area of deficiency identified in audits, program reviews, and any other information provided by the Department to AIJS.