ASSOCIATION OF INSTITUTIONS
OF JEWISH STUDIES

HANDBOOK

2013
ASSOCIATION OF INSTITUTIONS
OF JEWISH STUDIES

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SECTION I
THE FRAMEWORK FOR AIJS ACCREDITATION

INTRODUCTION AND MISSION

The Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies (AIJS) is an accrediting agency with a voluntary membership of postsecondary institutions specializing in traditional Jewish Studies, dedicated to fostering quality and integrity within the institution, and in its relationships with its stakeholders. AIJS will review, approve and accredit institutions that offer text-based traditional Jewish Studies programs that ascribe to the principles and philosophy of classic Halacha (codes of Jewish Law) as embodied by the Shulchan Aruch, and operate in accord with the definitive guidance of contemporary, traditional mainstream Orthodox rabbinical authorities.

The aim of AIJS is to encourage academic and administrative excellence by conducting a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the institution, and subsequently granting accreditation to those institutions that meet the organization's Standards. Accredited institutions will be able to use accreditation to establish eligibility for federal financial aid programs.

The scope of AIJS accreditation is institutions of higher education offering programs with a focus on text-based traditional Jewish Studies on the undergraduate level. This would include post-secondary certificate programs, Associate Degree programs, Bachelor Degree programs, and programs that lead to highly specialized degrees. The geographic scope of AIJS is limited to institutions which are located within the United States.

What are the basic parameters of the field of Jewish Studies? To begin, we should identify certain elements that are subsumed under the broad heading of Jewish Studies. This is not to suggest that each Jewish Studies institution must offer instruction in every one of these areas.
The following elements provide a general landscape of the field of Jewish Studies:

- Biblical studies and commentary
- Jewish law, practice and customs
- Talmudic and rabbinical studies
- Medieval and contemporary Jewish exegesis
- Jewish religious and philosophical thought
- Jewish ethics
- Jewish history
- The study of Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish languages

While some AIJS member institutions may offer programs exclusively in Jewish Studies, other institutions may elect to offer their students an integrated program of Jewish Studies with Liberal Arts or career oriented sequences. These programs might include coursework in the following traditional disciplines; Arts, Business Administration, Computer Science, Counseling, Education, Psychology, Sociology, and more. All courses offered at AIJS member institutions must reflect classical Torah values in accordance with the definitive guidance of contemporary mainstream Orthodox rabbinical authorities. The staff of AIJS institutions, whether instructors of Jewish Studies or other studies, must, likewise, be sensitive to these guidelines.

In sum, the field of Jewish Studies offers students a rich opportunity to gain an interdisciplinary perspective of history, culture, languages and laws of this dynamic civilization from Biblical times to the modern day. AIJS institutions will include this rich heritage of social values in all the coursework studied within its institutions.

JEWISH STUDIES TODAY

The universe of formal postsecondary programs that are devoted to Jewish Studies has been growing steadily commensurate with the growth of the Orthodox Jewish population in large
and small cities around the country. This population group in particular places great cultural and historical value on an educated citizenry with a strong background in Jewish Studies.

For centuries, the epicenters of traditional Jewish Studies were located in the academies and centers of scholarship in Israel and Eastern Europe. With the advent of mass Jewish migration to the U.S. in the early decades of the 20th century, there began an undercurrent of yearning for the establishment of the classical postsecondary programs in Jewish Studies.

Beginning with the founding of a few fledgling institutions in the 1940s and 1950s, there are now well over a 100 institutions located throughout the U.S. that provide Jewish Studies at the core of their higher education offerings.

The vast majority of postsecondary Jewish Studies institutions belong to one of two basic categories. Yeshivas, catering mostly to young men, see as their mission the production of world-class scholars in Jewish Studies, primarily in Talmudic and Rabbinical studies. Jewish institutions for women, commonly referred to as Seminaries, developed with the primary mission to give each student a quality college level Jewish Studies curriculum and to prepare students to become Jewish Studies teachers.

Over the last 50 years, women's seminaries have graduated and placed thousands of Jewish Studies teachers in Hebrew Day schools across the country. Likewise, Yeshivas have succeeded in producing a generation of graduates who are fluent in the scholarship of the Talmud, Jewish Legal Codes and related studies.

The Yeshiva school universe is currently being serviced by a US Department of Education approved accrediting agency (AARTS), while the Women’s Seminaries don’t fall within their scope of recognition. This has led to a difficult situation whereby graduates of the Women’s Seminaries are often not recognized for their full academic accomplishments. This disparity was a primary motivation for the founding of AIJS, which will now afford these students proper recognition of their achievements.
Another compelling reason for the founding of AIJS was to give students of Women’s Advanced Jewish Studies Institutions access to widely available HEA programs, which are only available to accredited institutions.

AIJS also seeks to serve an additional population of institutions that offer Jewish-studies programs. These institutions serve students who seek to integrate a concentration of Jewish Studies alongside college level secular studies. Such programs provide advanced Jewish scholarship as well as the skills and knowledge to pursue a secular profession. These programs all share the common thread of offering higher education programs anchored in higher Jewish learning.

It should also be noted in this context that while there are secular Liberal Arts institutions that offer courses or even programs in Jewish Studies, the vast majority are at an introductory level, at least in the undergraduate degree programs, and do not fulfill the academic objectives of the student who is seeking a more traditional and comprehensive advanced Jewish Studies curriculum.

The earliest discussions leading to the creation of AIJS date back to 2000, when a number of interested institutions met to discuss forming an organization to facilitate the growth and quality of institutions of Jewish Studies by offering an opportunity for institutional accreditation.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AIJS ACCREDITATION

Accreditation serves several purposes in higher education. At its core, it makes judgments about the effectiveness of the delivery of educational programs. This provides a level of assurance to the institution’s various stakeholders that benchmarks of effectiveness and quality have been attained. To this end, accreditation is primarily concerned with the establishment of objective ‘Standards’ by which these judgments can be made.
Another purpose of accreditation is to improve the performance of educational programs. For institutions that already meet the baseline Standards of effectiveness and quality, continued accreditation challenges them to strive higher in a quest towards educational excellence.

The third purpose is to enable eligible students to benefit from HEA programs.

**AIJS DECISION MAKING COUNCIL – THE EAC**

**Operation of the EAC**
The Executive Accreditation Council (EAC) of AIJS is analogous to the board of directors of a corporation, and is broadly responsible for the operations of the agency. The EAC ensures that AIJS has the appropriate resources and staff to: (a) carry out its accrediting responsibility effectively, (b) manage the organization and its finances effectively, and (c) satisfy all requirements of the U.S. Department of Education.

The founding EAC was created by nomination and consensus of the various stakeholders, including institutions and community members, with a strong interest in establishing a quality accrediting agency for Jewish Studies.

Subsequent to its founding, new members may be added to maintain the EAC at an effective level of membership. Individual EAC members can nominate a new member for consideration by the EAC. The EAC then discusses and votes on the nominee’s acceptance to the Council. Senior officials of institutions that are potential candidates for AIJS accreditations may not serve on the EAC.

All members of the EAC receive training on their responsibilities as the decision making body. They are also trained on the AIJS standards and their applications in the processes and policies for accreditation.
The EAC defines the broad policies and procedures for accreditation and ensures that its accrediting activities are in full compliance with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Education.

The EAC appoints an executive director who is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the organization and whom reports directly to the EAC.

The EAC meets a minimum of two times per year, but may meet more frequently if necessary. Members of the EAC serve for a term of four years, but may be re-appointed for a second, or subsequent, term of service.

A quorum of half of the current EAC members is required in order for formal action, such as a vote, to take place.

Members may participate and vote by teleconference (voice or voice/video) provided that the participating EAC member can fully participate in two-way discussions.

The EAC has the power to create standing or working committees, as necessary, to effectively oversee AIJS operations, to establish and review Standards, and to set policies.

The EAC has developed accreditation Standards in the following areas:

1. Institution Mission and Goals
2. Curriculum and Instructional Methods
3. Student Progress and Learning Outcomes
4. Facilities, Resources and Equipment
5. Recruitment, Admissions, Catalogs and Student Services
6. Student Records
7. Degrees and Credentials
8. Faculty Qualifications and Responsibilities
9. Administration and Collaborative Relationships

10. Financial Practices

The EAC determines the measures of performance in each of the Standards necessary for accreditation, and the conditions under which it could decide to deny, withdraw, suspend or terminate the accreditation or pre-accreditation of an institution or program.

AIJS shall periodically evaluate its own accrediting Standards, which may be expanded or adjusted as necessary in order to keep AIJS accreditation relevant and in compliance with current governmental and professional norms. If the agency determines that it needs to make certain changes to its Standards, it shall initiate action within 12 months of that determination and complete its revision within a reasonable period of time, generally within 24 months.

Before finalizing any substantive changes to the AIJS Standards, the agency will: (a) provide notice to all of its relevant constituencies, and other parties who have made their interest known to the agency, of the changes the agency proposes to make; (b) give its constituencies and other interested parties adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed changes; and (c) take into account any comments on the proposed changes submitted by these parties in a reasonable timeframe.

**EAC and Institutional Accreditation**

The major responsibility of the EAC is to accredit institutions of Jewish Studies. It does that by the reviewing AIJS site review reports, and other information as appropriate, and then decides which institutions and/or programs will receive AIJS accreditation according to its published Standards.

As part of its accrediting function the EAC will review and ascertain that:

1. Accredited institutions offer education on a postsecondary level of instruction that is within AIJS's scope of recognition.

2. Reviews are professionally and fairly conducted.
3. Accredited institutions represent their programs fairly to the public.

4. Academic and administrative affairs are conducted in accordance with published AIJS Standards.

The EAC will provide all potential candidates for accreditation:

1. Clear published Standards and criteria for accreditation.

2. A full description of all accreditation review processes and procedures.

3. A full description of the Institutional Self-Appraisal (ISA) process that must be conducted by the institution to evaluate its own administrative and educational strengths and weaknesses.

While AIJS operates as an independent accrediting agency, it measures its Standards and accreditation activities against generally accepted policies and procedures in the American system of peer-review accreditation, as well as the Standards and guidelines recommended by the U.S. Department of Education.

The EAC has a responsibility to ensure that the Standards adopted are appropriate for Jewish Studies postsecondary programs, that they are consistently and professionally applied, and that they are in full compliance with federal and state requirements.

**Other EAC Activities**

The EAC may create task forces, working committees and standing committees in any of the areas in its jurisdiction. Such bodies may include current members of the EAC, outside experts, stakeholders, members of the community and public members.

The EAC is responsible to select and supervise the staff, subject-area experts and consultants who conduct on-site reviews and who review documents and reports submitted by the institutions and programs that seek accreditation. It must ensure that all staff members have appropriate expertise and experience for performing all assigned duties, including record keeping and communication requirements.
Selecting and Training EAC Members

The cumulative membership of the EAC should ideally include a healthy combination of individuals with substantial expertise and experience that can be helpful in evaluating Jewish Studies institutions. Such individual may include, Rabbinical/Talmudic scholars, senior college-level administrators, college faculty members, experienced financial professionals, lay leaders and professionals with involvement in the Jewish Studies universe, community leaders, public members and others with an interest in advancing the quality of Jewish Studies institutions.

The suitability of individuals recommended for EAC membership will be assessed on the basis of formal academic training and degrees earned, employment history, and experience, other qualifications as well as recommendations received. AIJS will be looking for individuals who are sensitive to a candidate institution’s mission and religious traditions. This requires recognition of the importance of Jewish Studies, an acknowledgement of its legitimacy as a discipline of scholarship and research, and a commitment to promote educational and administrative excellence within institutions that provide Jewish Studies. All EAC members will attend a training session in AIJS policies and standards as well as attend training sessions scheduled to review existing and revised accreditation procedures and policies. EAC members may not serve on the Board or as CEO of any related trade association or membership organization.

The EAC membership will also include public members, complying with the federal requirement that a minimum of one out of seven EAC members must be a public member. A public member is anyone who is not:

- An employee, member of the governing board, owner or shareholder of, or consultant to an institution or program that either is accredited or pre-accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation or pre accreditation;
- A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or
- A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an employee or individual affiliated with an institution accredited by AIJS within the last two years.
The founding members have ratified the process for including new members into the EAC by nominating and voting on the acceptance of new members. New members may join the EAC after being nominated by an existing member and approved by majority vote following careful review of their experience and expertise by the members of EAC. They will be obligated to attend training for their role and formally observe an EAC session.

CONFIDENTIALITY

AIJS holds EAC members and site visitors to the highest ethical expectations. Schools expose their weaknesses and conflicts – all aspects of an institution’s life – and team members must treat all information with utmost confidentiality. Any discussion of the internal workings of an institution as observed by EAC members or site visitors is restricted solely to the internal evaluating and accrediting recommendations and decisions. Members of the EAC as well as site visitors sign an affidavit that they will abide by this Confidentiality standard.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

AIJS is committed to the highest ethical values in selecting members to serve on its committees. To ensure that decision making members are free of any personal or professional responsibilities or interests which may affect accreditation decisions, a conflict of interest policy has been implemented. This policy fosters objective evaluation of institutions, as it requires that any individual making accreditation decisions, such as EAC members and site visit teams must discharge his or her duties to the agency in an objective and non-biased manner, free of any conflict of interest. Specifically, these representatives of the agency may not:

- Evaluate an institution which they or a close relative** have attended within the last two years.
• Participate in the accreditation process of an institution that used their services as a paid consultant within the last two years.

• Additionally, EAC members may not serve as a participating member of a site visit team.

**A close relative includes a spouse, and the parents, guardian, siblings, or children of the individual or their spouse.**

Further, the names and affiliations of prospective site visit teams will be conveyed to an applicant institution in advance of the visit, in order to allow the applicant the opportunity to identify any conflict of interest, actual or perceived.

AIJS will rely on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where the potential for an actual or perceived conflict of interest exists. The agency expects members of the EAC or members of a site visit team to recuse themselves from any discussion or accreditation decision involving an institution in which there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

The Chairman of the EAC, at his or her discretion, may disqualify a member of the EAC from participating in the accreditation decision for perceived conflict of interest.

**BENEFITS OF THE AIJS ACCREDITATION**

Before describing the actual process of accreditation, it is important to understand the unique benefits that may be attained by an institution's being awarded accreditation.

As stated earlier, the objectives of AIJS accreditation are to assure standards of quality and to encourage and facilitate excellence in institutions offering programs in Jewish Studies. Once the institution is granted AIJS accreditation, each of its stakeholders stands to benefit, although the particular benefit may vary among its constituencies.
For Institutions:
The primary advantage to institutions arises from the very object of the accreditation process, namely an impetus toward institutional development and improvement. The institution's self-appraisal addressing the agency's Standards of excellence, and the subsequent site visit to the institution, encourage the institution to focus upon and better understand their unique strengths and weaknesses. Once identified, institutional strengths can be further expanded and refined, while weaknesses can be addressed more openly, and ultimately resolved.

Most institutions appreciate the benefits that accrue from self-appraisal and reflection; however the constant press of day-to-day responsibilities often diverts attention from such endeavors. Often, the accreditation process provides an external imperative to address areas that the institution knows that it needs to address, but never found the time to do so because of internal conditions and external constraints.

The Institutional Self-Appraisal required by AIJS provides a framework for exploring these areas. It allows for enhanced communication, discussion and reflection. It provides the means to make visible problems and potential problems that have been ignored or have never been properly recognized. Working with the site visit team allows for the frank and constructive sharing of experience developed in other institutions.

Institutions also benefit from accreditation as a result of the enhanced status they derive as a result of a favorable evaluation by colleagues at other institutions. Accreditation provides an imprimatur, and signals publicly that the institution is concerned with issues of effectiveness and excellence in its educational and administrative functions.

The granting of accreditation demonstrates, in the clearest terms possible, that the institution has attained the highest standards of performance and achievements that might be expected by a Jewish Studies postsecondary institution. It also shows that these accomplishments are not simply self proclaimed but are attested to objectively by professionals within the extended Jewish Studies community.
Accreditation thus provides an external, objective assessment of the quality of the institution and its educational programs that other institutions, agencies, and constituencies can then accept. Among these other agencies is the U.S. Department of Education, which hopefully will recognize the AIJS accreditation process. As a consequence of this recognition, the accredited institution will fulfill one of the Department of Education’s requirements for institutional eligibility and thereby enable student participation in federal student financial programs.

For Students:

Students also gain from the accreditation process and accreditation. The enhanced status of the institution grants students a broader acceptance of the academic work that they complete. This is of particular significance for students who are already planning their future careers. Having completed academic work in a nationally accredited institution opens a new range of possibilities and options.

Students, as well as their parents and guardians, also benefit from the accredited institution’s eligibility to participate in federal financial aid programs.

Accreditation requires institutions to provide “consumer information” to their students, and also adds significant transparency to an institution due to enhanced institutional reporting requirements and the obligation of AIJS to report adverse actions publicly.

Additionally, many of the AIJS Standards that are the basis of accreditation deal directly with the level and quality of student services. An accredited institution is one that is more sensitive to its students’ needs, and one that has in place the mechanisms to provide a broader range of student services.

Accreditation also gives students another forum into which to lodge complaints, with the assurance that their issues will be given serious consideration.
For Supporting Constituencies and the Public:

A healthy diversity prevails among postsecondary institutions that provide Jewish Studies programs. Different institutions have developed particular emphases and expectations that reflect their organizational histories and culture, as well as the special nature of the communities which they serve. This general diversity, however, can lead to some interesting issues.

The graduates of these distinctive institutions frequently accept positions as teachers of Jewish Studies in other institutions. One of the goals of AIJS accreditation is to introduce important benchmarks in the field of Jewish Studies. While recognizing the underlying diversity, a common denominator for standards emerges out of the AIJS accreditation process.

The core of academic expectancies and standards that result from AIJS accreditation means that the wider public – including parents, employers, funding agencies and benefactors – gains a yardstick by which it can measure and compare institutions of Jewish Studies. In an environment where resources are limited, accreditation provides this wider public with an objective standard to gauge the quality of the institution that can be used when making decisions regarding admissions, placement, etc.

THE INITIAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS

In keeping with the mission of AIJS, and in order to promote and sustain the goals of accreditation, interested and qualified institutions are invited to engage in the accrediting process, which consists of the following steps:

1. Institution submits application for the status of Applicant for Accreditation.
2. AIJS reviews application and approves or declines it within 30 days.
3. If application is accepted, institution attains the status of Applicant for Accreditation.
4. Applicant for Accreditation status generally lasts for up to 18 months.
5. During these 18 months, applicant prepares and submits its ISA.
6. After the ISA has been submitted and accepted, an AIJS site evaluation is initiated.
7. If the on-site review is positive, institution may be granted either Candidate or full AIJS accreditation status.
8. If the institution is granted Candidate status, it must commence immediately to raise its achievement and compliance levels, so that it can attain full accreditation status within the prescribed timeframe, which is not more than 5 years.
9. After attaining full accreditation status, institution engages in continuous monitoring to retain its AIJS accreditation status.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

AIJS requires that any postsecondary institution of Jewish Studies wishing to be considered as an Applicant for Accreditation or for continuing accreditation, must meet the basic eligibility requirements described in this section. Eligibility requirements are regarded as essential conditions that must be met before the institution can consider the process of accreditation.

An institution's application will not be considered unless the institution has met each of the eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements are the preconditions or starting points for sound administration and effective education. The agency's Accreditation Standards rest upon these minimum eligibility requirements.

Eligibility requirements should not be confused with accreditation Standards. If each one of the eligibility requirements is in place, then there is a possibility that the institution is structurally able to proceed toward the accreditation process. While meeting the eligibility requirements is essential before the process can begin, there is certainly no assurance or inference that accreditation, or even Candidate status, will be granted.

As a postsecondary, institutional accreditation agency, AIJS accepts applications for accreditation from postsecondary institutions that offer a predominantly Jewish Studies
curriculum, or a core Jewish Studies curriculum complemented by other disciplines, such as Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Computer Science, and Business Studies. AIJS will consider applications from institutions that ascribe to the principles and philosophy of classic Halacha (codes of Jewish Law) as embodied by the Shulchan Aruch, and operate in accordance with the definitive guidance, traditional mainstream Orthodox rabbinical authorities.

In general, the principal programs of eligible institutions will build upon the knowledge and competencies normally acquired by students through a completed high school program, or its equivalent. This academic foundation must be verifiable by objective criteria.

There are 10 specific eligibility requirements which must be met:

1. **Authorization**
   The institution is authorized to operate as a postsecondary institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, or controlling body as required by the jurisdiction or state within which the institution operates.

2. **Mission**
   The institution’s mission is clearly stated and officially endorsed by its governing body, consistent with its legal authorization and the stated mandate of the AIJS.

3. **Administration**
   The institution provides the administration, support, and services necessary to achieve the stated mission.

4. **Faculty**
   The institution employs sufficient professionally qualified faculty to fulfill its obligations toward achieving the institution’s stated mission.

5. **Financing**
   The institution substantiates an objectively verifiable funding base, financial resources, operational budgets, and manageable level of debt adequate to achieve the mission.

6. **Educational program**
The institution offers one or more educational programs in Jewish Studies consistent with its stated mission. The educational programs offered must be of sufficient duration and content to provide documented levels of educational quality on the undergraduate level, and the rigor meeting requirements for the degrees or credentials offered.

7. **Learning resources**

The institution provides appropriate and adequate educational, technological, material, and physical resources to implement its stated mission for all of its formal educational programs.

8. **Public information and access**

The institution publicly distributes accurate and current information that describes its mission, educational programs, admissions policy and procedures, financial costs, and academic rules and regulations. The policies and procedures of the institution are administered in a nondiscriminatory manner consistent with the legitimate interests of the constituencies served by the institution as specified in its mission statement.

9. **Operational status**

The institution will have completed at least one year of its principal educational programs and is operational with registered students pursuing credentials through these programs at the time that the AIJS evaluates the application for status as Applicant for Accreditation.

10. **Relationship with the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies**

The institution accepts the standards and related policies of the AIJS and agrees to comply with the standards and policies as currently stated.

**APPLICANT FOR ACCREDITATION STATUS**

The status of Applicant for Accreditation offers postsecondary institutions the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly-recognized relationship with the agency. The Applicant status is normally granted for a maximum period of 18 months, during which time the institution is
expected to engage in a process of self-appraisal and assessment in order to attain full AIJS accreditation.

Postsecondary institutions that fall within the scope of the AIJS mission statement, and which meet the eligibility requirements as outlined above, may apply for Applicant for Accreditation status.

The Applicant for Accreditation is a voluntary, affiliated, non-accredited relationship with AIJS. Only institutions that have attained AIJS accreditation status are eligible for membership in AIJS. Membership in AIJS is not dependent upon membership or affiliation with any other organization or agency. Dues owed to AIJS will be paid directly to the agency and not through any related, associated, or affiliated trade association or membership organization. The term Applicant indicates that an institution has made a decision to work toward accreditation, and is currently engaged in that process, and has an affiliate status with AIJS. Affiliate status does not infer or ensure that full accreditation will result, and no such claims can be made by the institution.

Applicant status is the outcome of the approval granted by AIJS, after a determination that the institution appears to meet the conditions of eligibility. This process is initiated by the institution that seeks accreditation. AIJS will consider applications from all suitably qualified institutions that are included within its scope of activities. The review to determine Applicant status requires:

A. A letter of Application requesting to be considered as an applicant, signed by the appropriate institutional representative, and identifying the designated liaison between AIJS and the institution.

B. Application responses which include:
   - A complete and concise written response to each of the ten eligibility requirements.
   - A current operating budget and a recent financial statement (income statement and a balance sheet), as well as financial data that demonstrate the institution’s stability over a period of at least three years. New institutions may submit a recent financial statement covering a period of their first year of operation.
   - Proof of legal authorization to operate as a postsecondary institution.
- A brief institutional history including legal form of the entity, date of initial operation, previous institutional history including all present and prior affiliations or associations, any prior associations or application for accreditation with another accreditation agency.
- A current institutional calendar.
- A descriptive brochure or advertisement for the institution.
- The current institutional catalog.
- A filing fee of $600.

C. Any institution applying for AIJS accreditation must have legal authority under applicable state law to offer a postsecondary program in Jewish Studies. Further, the agency may not grant initial or renewed accreditation to any institution if the agency knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, that the institution is the subject of any of the following actions:

A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke withdraw or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state.

If the agency determines that the information filed with the request is insufficient, it may ask the applying institution to provide additional information, request supplementary clarification or explanations, or request the applying institution to host a visit by an agency representative. Based on the materials submitted, the agency may determine that the applying institution has not met AIJS eligibility requirements and will decline the application.

In declining an application, AIJS will refer to the underlying reasons for their rejection and will offer constructive comments on how a future application might be improved. All decisions as to whether an institution meets, or does not meet, the essential requirements to be considered for Applicant status, are made solely by AIJS. There is no right of appeal, nor is there a refund of the application fee, although an institution that has had its initial application rejected is encouraged to address the underlying reasons for the rejection and to consider reapplying in the future.
All applicants will be advised in writing no later than 30 days after receipt of all necessary documentation, as to whether the application has been approved or declined.

Once AIJS has formally approved Applicant status and communicated this finding to the institution, the institution shall refer to itself as an “Applicant for Accreditation by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies,” subject to the requirements and restrictions included in the terms of agreement.

Once an institution has been formally accepted by AIJS as an Applicant for Accreditation it must agree to the terms below. Failure to do so, or any other breach of this agreement, will lead to the revocation of Applicant status.

The institution that has received Applicant status may use the term “Applicant for Accreditation by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies” in all of its official publications and correspondence. AIJS may list these intuitions in its publication as applicants.

Whenever an institution uses the language “Applicant for Accreditation by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies,” it must also include the official AIJS definition for the term, "Applicant for Accreditation." This is required to fully and correctly identify the institutional relationship with AIJS, and to inform the reader that the institution has earned full AIJS accreditation.

The official AIJS definition, which must appear every time the institution uses the term “Applicant for Accreditation” is:

(Name of Institution) has been granted Applicant for Accreditation status by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies (AIJS). Applicant status is not accreditation nor does it ensure eventual accreditation. Applicant for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Association that indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and that it is engaged in a process that will hopefully progress toward accreditation.
INSTITUTIONAL SELF APPRAISAL (ISA) AND ON-SITE VISIT

After the institution has been formally granted Applicant for Accreditation status, it is expected to progress toward accreditation. The Applicant status is normally granted for a maximum period of 18 months, which should allow sufficient time for the institution to complete its Institutional Self Appraisal (ISA) and any other materials. If the institution requires additional time to submit the required materials, it must obtain written approval by AIJS.

Applicants for Accreditation must prepare a comprehensive self-appraisal, the ISA. The purpose of this self-appraisal is to assess the degree to which the institution is in compliance with the Standards that have been promulgated by AIJS for accreditation. Applicants will receive guidance on how to develop their ISA in the Guide to the Institutional Self-Appraisal, which includes detailed instructions on what is expected in the ISA. Essentially, the institution is required to examine and report on the level of its compliance with each of the Standards required by AIJS.

It is important that the institution involve its various stakeholders including board, faculty, administration and students in the preparation of its ISA. In this way, the study can encompass the different interests and viewpoints of the institution's constituencies, thereby resulting in a more accurate and objective assessment of the institution's strengths and weaknesses. A Liaison Accreditation Official should be appointed to direct the process.

The AIJS Standards are critical to the accreditation process. They define areas of developmental growth, opportunity and progression toward excellence within the educational and administrative activities of institutions. Even before work on the ISA is begun, those institutional members who will be involved in the study should study in detail the Standards described in this Handbook as well as in the Guide to the ISA.

By conducting a careful, honest and objective self-appraisal, the institution will be able to identify its operational and strategic strengths and weaknesses. The institution is invited to reflect on these and determine whether current practice deviates from the requirements of
AIJS. If a deficiency is found to exist, the institution is expected to identify it and take operational measures that will correct or otherwise address the weakness.

After the ISA has been completed, copies must be submitted to AIJS in the prescribed format. AIJS can accept the document, reject it, or ask for supplementary documentation, explanations or evidential materials.

Once the ISA has been formally accepted by AIJS, an evaluation committee, or site visit team, will be appointed, and a site visit will be scheduled with the applicant institution. The purpose of this visit is for knowledgeable evaluators, representing different aspects of higher Jewish, general education, and other professionals committed to excellence, to review the operations of the institution. Their review will be based on the comparison of the institution’s own self-study to their first-hand observations and discussions with the key individuals on-site.

The site visit team, or committee, will conduct a careful review of the institution and assess the degree to which the institution satisfies each of the AIJS Standards. In order to discharge their duties properly, the committee members must be fully prepared for the on-site visit, and thoroughly familiar with the provisions of the Guidebook to the ISA which includes sections on Cooperating with the Site Visit Team and Guidelines for the Site Visit Team.

Following the review, there are a number of possible outcome options. These options are described in this Handbook under Additional Accreditation Issues.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Those who are selected to serve as evaluators of applicants for AIJS accreditation have demonstrated a commitment to quality in the field of postsecondary Jewish Studies. They may represent a variety of disciplines and areas of professional competence – academic, financial, administrative, student services, the public interest, etc. But regardless of the expertise of the individual evaluators, one element that ties them together in this enterprise is
their responsibility to the stakeholders who have a right to know if the institution is providing the educational services it claims to provide.

In conducting the review of an institution, AIJS evaluators have a mandate that calls for them to help colleagues understand more clearly the institution's strengths and weaknesses. AIJS reviewers must be discrete, objective, professional, and dedicated to quality Jewish Studies education.

In this Handbook, two sections in particular outline what must be done prior to the team’s visit, and what the team will do on its visit. Institutions planning to host an agency site visit, as well as individuals appointed to serve on an agency site visit team, are encouraged to read the two important guides: Site Visitor's Manual and the Guide to the ISA.

ACCREDITATION

Following the application process described above, in which the institution submits a comprehensive ISA and subsequently hosts the site team visit, the agency will decide whether the institution should be granted accreditation by following the following process.

The Chairman of the Site Visit Team submits a summary that represents the findings of the site visitors to the host institution for their review. The institution is asked to comment within 14 days and may either accept the summary as stated or inform the chairman of any omissions or mistakes in the factual description of the institution. Once the summary has been accepted, it is forwarded to the Chairman of the EAC who will share it with the members of the EAC.

Notice of an upcoming accrediting meeting is posted in appropriate places, in public notice boards in the institution, and/or in publications widely read by those who would be interested in an AIJS decision; third party comments are invited. All comments are confidential. At the next scheduled meeting of the EAC, usually within 6 months or less, members of the EAC make an accrediting decision. The institutions are notified of the
decision and if not satisfied, have a right to appeal. This process is further discussed in the last section of the Handbook.

Under normal circumstances, if the institution demonstrates during the application process that it satisfies each of the AIJS Standards, it will be granted accreditation and become an accredited member of AIJS.

The cycle of accreditation is generally ten years for full accreditation status and may be awarded to a mature institution. This accreditation may be granted to an institution that has demonstrated acceptable to ideal compliance with all AIJS Standards and has already been granted accreditation for at least one 5 year period. Newer institutions may be awarded accreditation for five to seven year periods. AIJS may limit or condition the term of accreditation based on the results of the accreditation review.

Accredited institutions should acknowledge and disclose this status in their catalogs and other publications by publishing the following statement:

(Name of Institution) has been granted Accreditation status by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies (AIJS). Accreditation indicates that the institution has achieved recognition by AIJS, by demonstrating compliance with AIJS accreditation Standards.

CANDIDATE STATUS

There may be instances, particularly with respect to newly-developed institutions that have not been in existence long enough to demonstrate full compliance with some of the Standards, where the agency is unable to grant full accreditation status. In such cases, AIJS may grant the institution Candidate for Accreditation status, providing that the institution demonstrates substantial compliance with most of the Standards, minimal compliance with the remaining Standards and the potential to fully meet each of the AIJS Standards within a five-year period. Institutions may be granted Candidate Status for up to five years.
During this time, AIJS will assist the institution in its progress toward accreditation by reviewing the institution's updated reports, making visits as necessary, and providing guidance to the institution, particularly on those Standards with which the institution has not yet demonstrated full compliance.

Institutions granted Candidate status may be considered eligible for HEA programs, if and when AIJS is granted recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.

Candidates for Accreditation should acknowledge and disclose this status in their catalogs and other publications by publishing the following statement:

(Name of Institution) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies (AIJS). Candidate for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Association that indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition by AIJS, by demonstrating substantial compliance with AIJS accreditation Standards. It further demonstrates that (Name of Institution) is engaged in a process that will hopefully result in full accreditation status.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Whenever an institution plans to adopt a substantive change in its governance or academic program, the agency must make a determination whether the change will have a significant effect on the quality, integrity and effectiveness of the institution. Specifically, the institution must demonstrate that it has the programmatic, fiscal and administrative capacity to incorporate the Substantial Change into its current operation while still meeting all of the AIJS Standards for accreditation. Thus, any institution that was granted either full accreditation status or Candidate for Accreditation status must have AIJS approval to implement a Substantive Change.
Procedurally, an institution must submit an Application for Substantive Change, along with documentation supporting the application, and wait for a formal written approval from the EAC.

Once the application is received, AIJS will evaluate the application to determine whether the requested change is minor (Category One), substantial (Category Two) or so fundamental as to question the continued validity of the agency’s grant of accreditation (Category Three). Category One changes may be approved based on the initial application and the documentation provided; a Category Two Substantial Change normally require a focused staff visit; and Category Three major changes generally require a focused self-study along with a focused site team visit to the institution.

The definition of substantive change shall include the following types of change:

1. Any change in the established mission or objective of the institution. (Category 3)
2. Any change in legal status, control or ownership of the institution. (Category 3)
3. The addition of courses or programs of study, that represent a significant departure from existing offerings of educational programs or methods of delivery from those that were offered when AIJS last evaluated the institution. (Category 3)
4. The addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution’s current accreditation or pre-accreditation. (Category 3)
5. A change from clock hours to credit hours. (Category 2)
6. A substantial increase in number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program. (Category 2)
7. An additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of the educational program. (Category 1, 2, or 3 depending on the circumstances.)
8. The acquisition of another institution or any program or location of another institution. (Category 3)
9. If an institution enters into a written agreement with a non-eligible institution that offers more than 25% of the eligible institution’s educational programs. (Category 1)

10. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their course of study. (Category 2)

AIJS may determine that other substantive changes, not listed above, significantly affect the operation of the institution and should be added to the list above. Institutions will be notified and given appropriate time to comment, before any such addition will go into effect.

The categories recognize that different levels of evaluation may be appropriate for different type of Substantive Changes. Yet all categories share the requirement that the institution must demonstrate that it has the programmatic, fiscal and administrative capacity to implement the proposed change, while still meeting the AIJS standards for accreditation.

Once an Application for a Substantive Change is received and reviewed, the EAC will determine to which category it will be assigned following the guidelines below.

Category One – A minor change is where the EAC determines that the institution’s proposed change does not significantly affect the institution’s status as fully accredited or Candidate for Accreditation. In this case, AIJS will so advise the institution and approve the substantive change. An example of this category is where the institution requests to expand classroom space to another local geographic area, with no requested changes to the actual program offered.

Category Two – If the EAC determines that the institutions proposed change is more substantial, it will require further steps before the application can be approved. These steps include a staff site visit focused on the proposed substantial change, and a possible request for additional documentation. A business plan may also be requested if significant resources are involved. The EAC will then direct the Executive Director to inform the institution of its determination, schedule a staff site visit and request any additional documentation, if applicable. The staff site visitor(s) will visit the institution and prepare an evaluation report.
detailing how the proposed substantial change may affect the institution’s compliance with AIJS standards. The EAC will evaluate the staff report and any additional documentation submitted and make a determination as whether to approve the substantive change. An example of this type of substantive change may be the addition of a new program of study which is closely related to current offerings and only requires modest institutional change to implement.

Category Three – A Substantial Change application that is judged to be a fundamental change, such as adding a higher level degree offering in an existing discipline or a new degree program in a new discipline, will require a focused ISA (Self Appraisal) which systematically describes how the institution will continue to meet all of AIJS’ Standards after the addition of the Substantive Change. After the submission of the focused ISA, a site team of at least two members will visit the institution in a manner similar to a full accreditation review, albeit with its scope limited to evaluate compliance with all of AIJS Standards as they may be affected by the proposed Substantial Change.

While the procedures above serve as general guidelines for categorizing Substantive Change applications, the EAC may modify the above protocols in specific cases where the EAC feels it would be more appropriate for a particular Substantive Change requested.

After the staff completes its evaluation of a proposed Substantive Change it is placed on the agenda of EAC. The EAC will then consider the application, and a decision will be made as whether to approve or deny the institution’s application. The EAC may also defer a decision and require further steps before the application can be considered for approval.

In certain rare instances, a proposed Substantial Change may be deemed to be so fundamental and comprehensive as to question whether the entire current institutional accreditation is still relevant. In such cases AIJS may require a full revaluation of the institution, similar to a new application for accreditation, before the Substantive Change application can be approved.

All approvals of substantive change requests are prospective and may not be retroactive.
AIJS will notify the institution in writing of its review, approval, and inclusion of the substantive change in the institution’s grant of accreditation. AIJS will also notify the U.S. Department of Education of its review, approval, and inclusion of a substantive change in an accredited institution’s grant of accreditation.

Additional Requirements:
Change of Ownership – The institution must notify the agency of a change in ownership before the transaction goes into effect, and must submit documentation describing the new ownership, and provide documentation of the transfer such as signed contracts or option agreements. In all cases of change in ownership, the agency will conduct a site visit within 6 months after the change in ownership took place.

Additional Location – If the Substantive Change application is for an Additional Location offering more than 50% of a program, then the location must be visited first (Categories Two and Three); or within six months after approval (Category One); to determine that the additional location has the personnel, facilities, and resources to offer the program at the new location.

In general, the EAC will not evaluate more than one application for an Additional Location at a time, unless they are all located within 10 miles of the home campus. Determination of which category Additional Locations are assigned to will generally be based on the extent the Additional Location places a strain on existing resources and the geographic and programmatic scope of the additional locations. AIJS has not established a process for the pre-approval of additional locations. Therefore, no additional locations will be pre-approved by AIJS. AIJS monitors the number of additional locations that an institution has to ensure that the quality of the education is not being compromised by the rapid growth of the institution. During an institution’s re-accreditation cycle, AIJS will visit all additional locations at which 50% of more of a program is offered to ensure that the quality of the education offered at each additional location.
BRANCH CAMPUS

A Branch Campus is a location that is geographically apart from the accredited institution at a site that offers 100% of a program and has its own administrative staff, faculty and provides all student services. Institutions seeking to establish a branch campus must inform AIJS and must undergo a full review for the branch campus which includes an application, a comprehensive business plan, similar to the ISA, that describes the educational program(s) the institution plans to offer; a budget projecting the revenues and expenditures as well as the expected cash flow at the site; and a description of the operation, management, and physical resources to operate at the branch campus, before the institution is permitted to establish the branch campus. AIJS will review the application and business plan and will give the institution initial approval to establish the branch campus if it determines that the institution has the necessary resources and procedures to operate the branch campus. A follow up comprehensive site visit to the branch campus must take place within six months of the establishment of the branch campus to determine if the institution substantially followed its business plan. A site report from the visit will be forwarded to the Executive Accrediting Council at least 30 days in advance of the next regularly scheduled EAC meeting. The EAC will determine institutional compliance with its business plan as confirmed at the site visit. At the institution’s next regularly scheduled accreditation review, the institution must incorporate in its ISA the activities of the branch campus and must demonstrate how those activities and operations comply with AIJS standards.
SECTION II
THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF APPRAISAL

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER

The ideal institution should be self-evaluating. It should be continuously monitoring its own activities so as to determine whether it is meeting its goals, or even whether these goals should be reconsidered. The decision-makers should seriously consider any evidence that suggests a change in goals or programs may be appropriate. In an ideal organization, there should be no vested interest in continuing with policies that produce ineffective and possibly dysfunctional institutional outcomes.

This Institutional Self Appraisal (ISA) exercise does not expect the institution to describe an ideal organization. Instead, AIJS anticipates an honest, earnest effort in describing the institution’s existing reality and, where helpful, the antecedents of this reality. Considering this reality, the institution should then describe its strengths and weaknesses. If after this effort, the institution can step back and offer realistic answers to such questions as "Where do we go from here" and "How do we get there," then AIJS will consider the application process to have been successful.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF APPRAISAL (ISA)

Completion of an Institutional Self-Appraisal (ISA), allows the institution to critically examine and reflect upon, and if necessary to upgrade, its administrative and educational operations to comply with the spirit and letter of each of the specific Standards required for accreditation.

AIJS requires that institutions seeking accreditation prepare an ISA. In so doing, AIJS is not looking for simply another report from the institution. Rather, in the experience of accrediting agencies, the very process of completing a self-study helps the institution to better focus on
critical administrative and educational issues. By focusing on these issues, the institution is better able to define its strengths and identify its weaknesses.

Two end products result: The first is a completed ISA report that is forwarded to AIJS for review and comment. The second, of equal if not more importance, is an opportunity for the institution to thoroughly review and reflect on its own policies and practices.

The ISA report should be an extensive and complete narrative built around the framework outlined below. It is important that all sections of the ISA report are completed and that the entire document is well articulated and integrated. Rather than address specific questions in each section, the institution should attempt to understand the purpose of the section and demonstrate its understanding in the ISA.

The ISA report should contain the following chapters:

- **Introduction:**
  - A summary of the history
  - Mission and objectives
  - Strengths and weaknesses of the institution.

- **Discussion of Standards:**
  - Standard 1: Institution Mission and Goals
  - Standard 2: Curriculum and Instructional Methods
  - Standard 3: Student Progress and Learning Outcomes
  - Standard 4: Facilities, Resources and Equipment
  - Standard 5: Recruitment, Admissions, Catalogs and Student Services
  - Standard 6: Student Records
  - Standard 7: Degrees and Credentials
  - Standard 8: Faculty Qualifications and Responsibilities
  - Standard 9: Administration and Collaborative Relationships
  - Standard 10: Financial Practices

- **Appendices**
In each of these Standards, the institution should present its understanding of what the Standard calls for. As noted, AIJS Standards may be satisfied either in a superior manner ("ideal"), or with varying degrees of compliance ("acceptable"). Although aiming for the ideal is expected, the reality is that meeting some of the Standards at the higher degree of excellence might require a level of expenditure that is simply not practicable and/or cost effective. Certainly, an institution may need to be mindful of cost-benefit considerations.

Many of these Standards suggest documentation that supports the narrative (forms, copies of materials, publications, etc.). The institution should attach this documentation as exhibits in an appendix to the ISA. Note that the documentation appended to the ISA should only be used to illustrate and/or document specific statements made in the ISA. A full explanation as well as the names of the documents noted should be included in the narrative.

Through this process of self-examination, the institution can identify organizational strengths and weaknesses that have a bearing on the operations of the institution and ways in which it might respond to change. The purpose of the ISA is not merely to anticipate the questions of the site visit team, but to allow participants to critically examine the institution, identify areas of strength and weakness, and report on the institution's ability to best serve its constituents.

In writing the ISA report, the institution should read each section in the Guide to the ISA to best understand what the report should contain and what it is that the site visit team will want to see demonstrated. There is list of suggested supporting documents after each description of the Standard. More documents may be required, depending on the individual institution.

This exercise, while significant in its own right, is seen as preparing the institution for the second phase of the accreditation process. The site visit, which is the second phase, will determine if what the institution presents in the ISA actually corresponds to practice. The site visit will determine the extent to which the institution has implemented sound policy and developed proper procedures.

AIJS will carefully review the ISA that the institution submits. There are three possible outcomes of this review process: (1) acceptance of the document as it stands; (2) a request for additional information or documentation; or (3) rejection of the ISA because of an unsatisfactory submission.
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 ideal. 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's 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 how 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 postsecondary 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 college arena. Additionally, the degree programs must conform to generally accepted post-secondary standards whereby an Associates degree is awarded after earning 60 credits and a Baccalaureate degree is awarded after earning 120 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 settings. 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 in the BA or 18 credits for the AA) 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 B.A. or B.S., AIJS requires a minimum of 30 credits for the BA and 15 credits for the AA 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 B.A. of 60 credits for a B.A. or 30 credits for an A.A. may be assigned as the institution sees appropriate. However, 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: Rabbinic Ordination, Classical Torah Studies
Degree, Talmudic Degree, Bachelors or Associate degrees in 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, detailed, and responsive 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.

An institution’s educational program extends beyond the classroom. In this context, other resources such as 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 completed 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. Such information enables 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 due to extenuating circumstances. 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 postsecondary 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 postsecondary 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 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 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. Facilities should be accessible to all students and visitors. 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 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.

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. Any numerical criteria should be clearly indicated.

This catalog factually represents the courses and programs offered and the credentials granted upon program completion. The catalog also contains pertinent consumer information including:

- Costs of enrolling in each program
- Withdrawal and tuition refund policies
- Academic calendars
- Grading policies
- Satisfactory academic progress, and other academic policies
- Student complaint policies
- Financial aid, and student services offered by the institution
- Transfer of credits policies
- Campus security – information on 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 are 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.

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 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. 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 and accessible 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 to graduate programs, or 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 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, in what form 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 desired 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 postsecondary 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 summary of academic information, such as that needed to generate transcripts should be available indefinitely.

Student Complaints
The institution maintains adequate documentation regarding each formal complaint lodged by a student and its disposition, for a period of at least five years after final disposition of the
complaint. Further description of the required institutional complaint procedures can be found in Section IV of this handbook, under “Responding to Complaints”.

**Financial Records**

A description of financial record keeping policies, including student financial aid procedures and practices will be discussed in Standard 10.

Financial records shall be kept for a minimum of five years or longer, if required by law or regulation.

**Security of Institutional Records**

The institution should have a policy in place to back up electronically or mechanically 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 malicious attacks of 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 postsecondary 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 varying durations.*

*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 postsecondary institutions that offer similar programs.
Credentials should be granted only after a 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 and these benchmarks, as well as the degree requirements, and should be publicly disclosed as institutional policies in documents that are readily available to students such as the catalog. 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 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 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. Instructors should possess not only formal experience and qualifications, but also the ability to be innovative and critically reflective with respect to the subject-area that is being taught.

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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.

All academic staff should demonstrate in their general deportment culturally appropriate ethical standards that reflect positively on the mission and reputation of the institution, thereby being effective role models for the students.

**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 worldview 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 a job description, their resume, copies of academic and professional qualifications, institutional work histories, 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.

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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 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 of strong internal communications. This facilitates explaining new policies or directions that the institution is taking, and promotes healthy discussion and a cross-fertilization of ideas. 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 and without its division. Face-to-face meetings, written memorandums and the use of email can all 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
The institution should have in place an efficient financial structure, a formal process of budgeting and an effective internal control environment. A written procedures manual is highly desired.

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, it 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.

In preparation for an accrediting review, the institution shall provide AIJS recently audited financial statements, generally completed within the last year, as well as financial data over a period of three years. A recent audit of financial statements is also necessary for re-accreditation.

Financial statements should be reviewed regularly by designated parties such as the institution's board of directors and senior administration. Particular care must be taken to account for federal or state monies, restricted funds, grants, and other specially designated funds.
SECTION III
THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

APPLICATION

The first step in the accreditation process begins with the institution’s submission of an application for AIJS accreditation. The agency staff reviews the institution’s application to determine whether the institution meets the basic eligibility criteria for AIJS accreditation. Submission of an application requesting review and consideration for AIJS accreditation constitutes the institution’s intent to fulfill the agency's requirements for granting accreditation.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF-APPRAISAL (ISA)

Following approval of an institution's application, the institution conducts a comprehensive self-assessment. In the course of this self-assessment, each of the AIJS Standards is subjected to careful examination in order to determine the extent to which the institution satisfies the individual Standards. During this time, the institution develops a systematic self-study document, termed the Institutional Self-Appraisal (ISA) that describes in detail its compliance with each of the AIJS Standards. This document is then submitted to AIJS.

AIJS reviews the ISA to determine whether the institution is in compliance with the Standards and is therefore ready for an accreditation site visit. At this point, the agency either recommends to continue the review process (when there is reasonable expectation that all Standards for accreditation can be met), or to discontinue the review process (when there is reason to believe that all Standards for accreditation cannot be met).

A recommendation that the accreditation process not continue suggests that the institution should examine carefully the cited concerns before deciding to resume the review process. Concerns that the agency noted in its initial review are communicated in writing to the
institution. AIJS staff is also available to discuss those concerns informally, through telephone or personal communication.

After reviewing the comments, the institution may decide to proceed with the accreditation review or to withdraw its application. This decision should be based on the institution's own evaluation of its ability to demonstrate compliance with the AIJS Standards.

PREPARATION OF ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

The ISA is designed to be comprehensive, providing all the information necessary for the committee members to make an informed decision about the extent to which the institution satisfies the accreditation Standards. However, additional materials may be required to supplement the facts provided in the ISA. These additional materials may include documents, such as copies of audits, annual reports, faculty resumes, and course syllabi. Occasionally, committee members may discover that they need information which neither they nor the institution anticipated in advance. In such cases, the institution liaison person will be contacted and asked to collect and transmit the relevant material. These additional materials may be required prior to the site visit, or to be available during the site visit.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ISA

The institution is responsible for ensuring that copies of the report, including appendices and related materials, are received by all relevant parties. Three copies of the ISA and an electronic copy should be mailed to AIJS. Once the report has been reviewed by the Executive Director and accepted, a date for the site visit is set. At this time, the institution forwards an electronic copy of the report and related materials to each site team member, within reasonable time to review the material prior to the visit.
SELECTION OF THE SITE VISITORS

Members of the site visit team are selected on the basis of their experience, expertise, and commitment to quality in Jewish Studies education. These teams will generally consist of three to five individuals with professional competence in such areas as academics, institutional administration, finance, and student services. A public member may also be included.

The critical element which guides the selection of the team is that they have demonstrated a commitment to quality in the field of postsecondary Jewish Studies. Any conflict of interest issues must be addressed when choosing site visitors (See the agency's Conflict of Interest Policy in Section 1 of this Handbook).

AIJS site visit teams are selected on the basis of individual members’ expertise and capacity to objectively evaluate a candidate institution on the basis of its own stated mission and the presented Standards. In the case of institutions that offer, in addition to their core Judaic Studies curriculum, other professional studies, AIJS will supplement the site visit team with experts or practitioners specific to that field.

Prior to the site visit, AIJS will identify and appoint the members of the site visit teams. A roster of proposed site visitors, along with their institutional affiliations, will be sent to the institution prior to the scheduled visit. The institution may submit to AIJS a written objection concerning a proposed visitor, citing a possible conflict of interest. The AIJS conflict of interest policy is described earlier in this Handbook. The final choice of site visit team members remains with AIJS.

THE SITE VISIT

The site visit of the institution is one of the important sources of information used by AIJS in determining compliance with its Standards for accreditation. The site visit provides an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of data provided in the ISA, and to resolve any questions or concerns resulting from a careful analysis of the institution's ISA. The site visitors will
spend significant time in the institution reviewing documents and the conditions under which they are recorded, stored and saved, observing classes, touring the facilities, and interviewing members of the administration, faculty, students, Board and community members as well as other stakeholders in the institution such as employers of graduates of the institution. The site visitors will have scheduled time during the visit to meet as a team, compare notes and assess the institution’s compliance to each of the AIJS Standards. The information and insights provided by the site visit team are important in formulating fair, impartial, and informed decisions on accreditation.

SITE VISIT TEAM SUMMARY

The chair of the site visit team submits the written summary to the agency within 30 days of the site visit. This summary includes the site visit team's observations and recommendations regarding each Standard. The observations in the summary must be supported by factual information. The site visit summary indicates the program’s strengths and limitations and provides explanatory information.

The institution will receive a copy of the site visit summary, and is given the opportunity to respond in writing within 14 days on the accuracy of the visiting team's observations before it is submitted to the EAC for an accrediting decision.

EVALUATION FOR ACCREDITATION (OR RE-ACCREDITATION)

AIJS completes an intensive review of all information collected, including:

- the accreditation application
- the institution's response to AIJS concerns (if any)
- the ISA
- the site visit summary
- the institution's response to the site visit summary
On the basis of this information, a decision will be made with regard to the accreditation of the institution by the Executive Accrediting Council of AIJS.

AIJS DECISIONS

The following is a list of decisions available to the agency with regard to an institution's accreditation:

- Grant full accreditation
- Grant Candidate for Accreditation status
- Deny the institution for accreditation
- Renew accreditation of an accredited institution
- Condition the accreditation on a satisfactory progress report or a focused interim visit
- Impose probation or continue probation for a specific period of time
- Terminate an institution's accreditation

In addition to the formal actions listed above, AIJS reserves the right to initiate an inquiry, request information and/or explanation, or schedule a focused visit prior to taking any formal action, should it have any reason to suspect that the institution may not be in compliance with AIJS standards. The institution must comply with any such requests.

The length of an institution’s accreditation or pre-accreditation is a decision made by the EAC when considering the institution application for accreditation or pre-accreditation. The EAC will consider the level of compliance with each one of the AIJS standards and any particular concerns brought to the attention of the EAC through a review of the ISA and Site Visit Summary. Typical terms of accreditation are 2-4 years for candidate (with a maximum of five years for candidate status) 5-10 years for full accreditation.

Once the agency has made a decision regarding an institution’s accreditation it will notify the institution as promptly as possible, but no later than 14 business days. Notification of AIJS accreditation decisions will state the basis for the action and may also contain conditions that the institution must fulfill in order to maintain accreditation.
In addition, a letter, with recommendations and suggestions made by the EAC, may accompany the decision letter. The letter will delineate which recommendations will require documented follow up within a specific time-frame, and others which are friendly suggestions. Adverse actions are accompanied by a notice that describes the basis for the action and include a notification of the right and process of appeal.

Accredited institutions should acknowledge and disclose this status in their catalogs and other publications by publishing the following statement:

(Name of Institution) has been granted Accreditation status by the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies (AIJS). Accreditation indicates that the institution has achieved recognition by AIJS, by demonstrating compliance with AIJS Accreditation Standards.
SECTION IV: ADDITIONAL ACCREDITATION ISSUES

CREDIT HOUR ASSIGNMENTS FOR TITLE IV ELIGIBLE PROGRAMS

Credit hour assignments for institutions seeking accreditation by AIJS must conform to the commonly accepted practice of institutions of higher education, or those used in specialized coursework such as Talmudic and Rabbinical Studies as described in Standard 2 of the AIJS Accreditation Standards. 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 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. AIJS will be looking to see that the institution uses the standardized Carnegie definition or an alternative appropriate measure.

Alternative appropriate measures 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 settings. 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. AIJS will review course syllabi to see 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 must reflect that calculation.
Credit hour determinations for programs offered by AIJS accredited or pre-accredited institutions for Title IV program eligibility federal purposes must meet at least the minimum standards in the definition of a credit hour in federal regulations. These standards are as follows:

One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or at least an equivalent amount of work for other academic activities established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practical and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

AIJS accredited or pre-accredited institutions applying to participate in Title IV programs must assign an amount of Title IV credit hours for each course that complies with the above standards and conforms with commonly accepted practice in higher education.

When reviewing an institution’s credit hour measures, AIJS will be looking to see that the institution uses the standardized Carnegie definition or alternative appropriate measures that meet the federal definition.

If deficiencies are identified in the institution's determination of credit hours, the following actions will take place:

The institution will be immediately advised that its credit hour assignments appear to be deficient and that it must submit an action plan, within 30 days, to review and correct said deficiencies to bring the institution in full compliance with agency standards for credit assignment. The institution should note that reassigning credit hour values may affect eligibility for HEA Programs. Failure of the institution to take the actions described above will result in adverse action by the agency.

If non-compliance is found to be systemic or significant, as determined by AIJS, AIJS will immediately refer the institution to the U.S. Secretary of Education as required by regulation.
PERIODIC MONITORING

AIJS continually monitors its accredited member institutions to ensure that they remain in compliance with the accreditation standards. Accredited institutions are required to submit annual reports to AIJS on its continuing compliance with the agency's standards of accreditation. These annual reports provide the agency with current information appropriate to its accreditation standards.

The institution’s annual report includes: (a) headcount enrollment data for each level of the program, (b) financial information with respect to institutional stability, (c) continuing measures of student achievement, such as completion rates and transfers to more advanced programs, (d) records of student grievances and (e) detailed information on the institution's compliance with HEA programs’ requirements.

Any enrollment increase of 30 percent or more of the previous year's enrollment shall constitute a "significant growth." The institution must explain this growth in its report to AIJS.

The Executive Director will share the response of the institution with the Chairman of the EAC to determine if additional steps are needed to insure the agency that the institution is still in full compliance with AIJS Standards. Additional follow up may include a request for additional documentation, an unexpected staff visit, or a site visit.

In addition, the agency will expect the institution to include in this annual report any issues that may impinge upon the institution's compliance with the AIJS Standards, even if such an issue does not involve a substantive change. The annual report will reflect the institution’s continued compliance with AIJS Standards.

The annual reports of a given year are due to the agency by the last day of March of the following year.
A monitoring site visit will be held midway through the school’s accrediting cycle. The Executive Director, possibly accompanied by a member of the AIJS staff with particular expertise in areas relating to the mission and type of institution, will visit each accredited institution to ‘take the pulse’ of compliance to accreditation standards, vibrancy and viability. In particular, they will review the last site visit summary to see how recommendations were attended to. A general walk around, meetings with key institutional academic and administrative personnel, a sample review of students’ records, and examination of the institution’s measures of student outcomes, will generally be the focus of this visit. The summary of this visit will be shared with the chairman of the EAC who will determine if an expanded follow up visit or action letter is required.

Additionally, AIJS will make unannounced visits to its accredited and pre-accredited institutions at any point during the accrediting cycle when compliance to any of the standards is in doubt.

This process affords the agency an opportunity to periodically reevaluate the institution that was accredited. In this way, the agency's decision to grant accreditation is not a one-time action. Instead, the agency ensures that it maintains its ongoing responsibility to the public for assuring the quality of the institution.

If an institution that was accredited by AIJS is subsequently found by the agency to be out of compliance with one or more of its accreditation standards, the institution will be given a maximum time frame to come into compliance based on the length of its longest program. If the longest program is less than one year, the maximum time frame that the institution will be given to come into compliance is 12 months. At this time, AIJS does not accredit an institution whose longest program is less than one year. If the longest program offered by the institution is at least one year, but less than two years, the maximum time that the institution will be given to come into compliance is 18 months. The time period to come into compliance begins on the date that the institution was notified that it is out of compliance with an AIJS accreditation standard. This time period is known as the corrective period.
If the institution does not come into compliance by the end of the corrective period, AIJS will take immediate adverse action. AIJS can extend the period allowed for achieving compliance, but only for a good cause. Such determinations will only be made for extraordinary situations. Criteria for determining whether or not to grant an extension include circumstances beyond the institution’s control such as natural disaster, death or tragedy. Extensions for good cause may not exceed 12 months from the end of the corrective period. In the event that AIJS grants an extension for good cause to an institution, AIJS will require the institution to provide a plan of action listing the various steps that the institution is taking to come into compliance and to provide quarterly progress reports.

RE-APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION
An institution that was not granted initial accreditation may re-apply when it has corrected the deficiencies reported by the agency.

RE-ACCREDITATION
The AIJS re-accreditation process is similar to initial accreditation in that it requires a new ISA, a new site visit, and formal action by the EAC supported by the ISA, and site visit summaries.

The institution shall begin preparing for re-accreditation one year before the current accreditation period ends. In lieu of the annual report in the last year of the accreditation cycle, the institution shall submit a letter of intent to renew the accreditation by the date that the annual report is due. As a courtesy AIJS may notify the institution 30 days before a letter of intent to submit a re-application is due.

If the institution's application for re-accreditation is accepted, the institution shall submit a new ISA, which will be followed by a new site visit to the institution, and action by the EAC. The subsequent accreditation of the institution may be extended for up to 10 years.
VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL FROM AIJS

If an institution voluntarily decides to withdraw from AIJS accreditation, the agency will notify the Secretary, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency and, upon request, the public, that the institution is withdrawing voluntarily from AIJS accreditation, within 30 days of receiving notification from the institution that is withdrawing voluntarily from AIJS accreditation.

LAPSED ACCREDITATION

If an institution lets its accreditation or pre-accreditation lapse, AIJS will notify the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and upon request, the public within 30 days of the date on which its accreditation lapses.

APPEAL OF ADVERSE ACCREDITATION ACTION

When AIJS takes adverse action, as defined below, a notice of the right to appeal and a copy of the current appeals procedures is sent to the institution. The institution may then appeal the decision to an appeals panel. If the institution wishes to appeal, it must submit its notice of intent to appeal within 30 days of the date of the AIJS decision.

No change is made in the institution’s accreditation status during the appeal process; that is, the institution remains accredited. No public notice is made until all appeals are concluded.

If the institution does not submit a statement of intent to appeal within 30 days of the date of notification of the accreditation decision, then the decision to withdraw accreditation becomes final.
APPEALS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

AIJS policy allows institutions to appeal adverse actions taken by the agency, including denial of initial recognition, revocation of accreditation, and other adverse actions, as long as the institution sends a notice of intent to appeal to the EAC within 30 days of the institution’s receipt of the agency’s decision.

APPEALS PANEL

To consider a specific appeal, AIJS selects at least three persons as potential members of an appeals panel. The members of the appeals panel will be selected from a pool of people who are experienced in the field of accreditation, and will include an academic, an administrator, and a public member. Any potential member of an appeals panel must not have had a relationship with the appellant institution (as defined in the Conflict of Interest Policy) or with the accreditation process leading to the decision being appealed, for a period of five years. None may be current members of the EAC. Potential members will be either retired EAC members, or AIJS approved site visitors. If retired EAC members and past site visitors are not available to serve on a particular appeal panel, AIJS will select potential members from other accrediting agency decision making bodies, or from site visitors from other accrediting agencies, from individuals who have similar experience, such as retired state licensure officials, or other individuals who may qualify as representatives of the public. Members of an appeal panel will undergo training in AIJS Standards and policies.

After selecting three potential members from the agency’s pool of eligible potential members, and determining the willingness of these persons to serve, the names will be transmitted to the appellant who may challenge any of the potential panelists for due cause (e.g. conflict of interest, and bias.) After considering such challenges, AIJS finalizes the three members of the appeals panel and designates one of them as chair.
APPEALS PROCESS

The appellant is informed of the appeals panel appointments. Appointment of the appeals panel is completed within 30 days of the receipt of the appellant’s notice of intent to appeal. Within 60 days of the date that the institution received notice of the EAC decision, the institution must submit to the chair of the appeals panel a written explanation of the grounds for appeal. An institution may appeal on any of the following grounds, or combination thereof:

- the decision was arbitrary, capricious;
- the decision was in disregard of AIJS Standards;
- the decision was not supported by substantial evidence in the record;
- the decision was erroneous as a matter of fact or law;
- there was substantial material oversight or omission;
- the procedures used to reach the decision were contrary to accreditation policies and procedures, or agency bylaws;
- procedural error prejudiced EAC consideration;
- the institution can prove current compliance

The panel chair schedules a hearing on the appeal and notifies the appellant and the executive director of AIJS of the time and place thereof. Each has the right to appear in person or by designated representative, and to present a statement or argument. Alternatively, each may present a statement or argument via telephone conference.

The appellant has the right to employ counsel to represent the institution during the appeal. The institution may make any presentation, written, oral, or by other means, on its behalf. In addition, the appellant may inform the panel chair in writing that it chooses to have the appeal considered on the basis of written documents only, without a hearing. If this option is chosen, the appeals panel will hold a meeting, within 60 days of receipt of the appeal, to consider the written record and reach a decision.
DECISION OF THE APPEALS PANEL

The appeals panel may affirm, amend, reverse, or remand the adverse action. A decision of the appeals panel to affirm, amend, reverse or remand the adverse action is implemented by the Executive Accreditation Council (EAC).

The chair of the appeals panel will prepare a report of the appeals panel in which it will state its decision and the basis for it. Within 15 days of its decision, the appeals panel will transmit its written report to the appellant and to the EAC. (The decision must identify specific issues that the original decision making body (EAC) must address.) Decisions of the appeals panel are implemented by the EAC. If the appeals panel upholds the decision of the EAC, that decision becomes final as of the date of the letter informing the appellant of the appeals panel decision. The final decision will be transmitted to the US Department of Education, and will be made available to the public.

COSTS OF THE APPEAL

There is a filing fee for an appeal, as listed in the current schedule of AIJS fees. In addition, all agency costs incurred in connection with the appeal, including a per-diem rate for appeal panel members and their transportation and lodging, are chargeable to the appellant.

NEW FINANCIAL INFORMATION

An institution may present new financial information to the EAC to be reviewed as part of its appeal of an adverse action if the following conditions are met:

- The financial information was not available earlier to the institution;
- The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified in the agency's review of the institution;
The only remaining deficiency cited by the agency supporting its adverse action is the institution's failure to meet the requirements of the agency's Standard 10: Financial Practices.

The EAC will review the new financial information to determine whether or not it provides the basis for reversing an adverse action. An institution may only provide new financial information once during an appeal and may not use the determination of AIJS’s review of the financial information as a basis of another appeal.

DECISION OF STATES AND OTHER AGENCIES

As stated above in Section I, AIJS will not accredit an institution that lacks the legal authority under state law to offer the postsecondary program of Jewish Studies.

In addition, the agency may not grant initial or renewed accreditation to any institution if the agency knows or has reasonable cause to know that the institution is the subject of any of the following actions:

- A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state.
- A decision by another recognized agency to deny accreditation.
- A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation.
- Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

However, in special circumstances, AIJS may grant accreditation to an institution if it provides AIJS a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its Standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude the agency's grant of accreditation.
If AIJS learns that an institution it accredits is the subject of an adverse action by another recognized accrediting agency, or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by another recognized agency, it will promptly conduct a comprehensive review of its accreditation of the institution to determine if it too should take adverse action or place the institution on warning or show cause. Procedures for conducting this comprehensive review are an unannounced visit or a request for documentation regarding the Standard for which another agency determined that the institution was not in compliance. AIJS will conduct a comprehensive review of the material and might require a focused site visit to determine if it too should take adverse action or place the institution on warning or show cause.

AIJS must, upon request, share with other appropriate, recognized accrediting agencies, and recognized state approval agencies, information about the accreditation status of an institution and any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited institution.

**RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS**

The agency defines a complaint as a documented statement alleging that an accredited or pre-accredited institution is not in compliance with any of the Standards AIJS uses to measure eligibility for accreditation or as a complaint against AIJS or a complaint against implementation of any of AIJS policies. The agency will review in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint that it receives against an AIJS accredited institution that is related to the agency's Standards or procedures. In the interest of fairness and due process, the agency will allow the institution sufficient opportunity to respond to the complaint, and will take appropriate action, as warranted, based on the results of its review.

Similarly, if the agency receives a complaint against AIJS itself, it will review the complaint in a timely, fair, and equitable manner, and take appropriate action, as warranted, based on the results of its review. Where the complaint is lodged against the agency itself, it may be necessary to refer the matter to legal counsel, or outside reviewers to recommend a suitable course of action.
Complaints may be directed to AIJS at the following address/phone number:

Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies
500 West Kennedy Boulevard
P.O. Box 594
Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620
732.534.7436
Fax: 732.364.7627
Email: AIJS@att.net

Complaints that are received by AIJS concerning an AIJS accredited or pre-accredited institution will be handled according to the following procedures:

1. Within 30 days of receipt by AIJS, the complaint is screened to see if it has any face validity and if it is relevant to AIJS’ role in accrediting and overseeing the institution. This generally means that the complaint has to address an institutional issue that bears on compliance with AIJS’s Standards for Accreditation.

2. If AIJS determines that the complaint does not fit into AIJS’s responsibilities, the complaint will be acknowledged and replied to as being not within the purview of AIJS. As a courtesy, a copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the institution, and the case will be closed.

3. If AIJS determines that the complaint is relevant to its accreditation Standards or policies, or if it falls within AIJS’ oversight responsibilities, AIJS will contact the institution and forward the complaint to the institution. AIJS will then allow 30 days for the Institution to respond to AIJS that it has reviewed the matter and either resolved the complaint to the complainant’s satisfaction or otherwise dealt with the issue in accordance with the Institution’s published Complaint Policy. An explanation of its actions is required, as well as a statement that Institution certifies that it followed its own published Complaint Policy.

4. AIJS will then review the institution’s response and Complaint Policy.

5. If the Institution informs AIJS in its response that the complainant did not follow the complaint policy of the school, AIJS will instruct the complainant to follow the complaint policy of the institution.
6. If the complainant claims to have followed the Institution’s published Complaint Policy, and the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, AIJS will make a determination as to whether the complainant did actually follow the Institution’s complaint policy. If it is determined by AIJS that the Institution did in fact follow its published Complaint Policy, and followed through with a proper disposition, the complainant will be so informed and that case will be closed.

7. If AIJS determines that the Institution did not in fact follow its own published Complaint Policy, or if the matter involves issues to substantially question the Institution’s compliance with AIJS Standards or policies, AIJS will launch an inquiry into the issue within 30 days. AIJS will ask for documentation from the complainant, substantiating the complaint; and an explanation of the disposition from the Institution (which should document how the Institution followed its own Complaint Policy and procedures).

8. Within 30 days of the receipt of these above materials, the executive director of AIJS, together with the chairman of the Executive Accrediting Council, will review the complaint file to determine if the institution complied with AIJS standards and policies. AIJS will contact the institution and allow the institution the opportunity (30 days) to review the matter and provide an explanation and/or additional information to AIJS.

9. If after receipt of the Institutional response and a review of any additional documentation, AIJS makes a final determination that the institution is not in compliance with AIJS standards and/or policies, a formal corrective action plan will be required from the institution within 30 days.

10. If the response is accepted by AIJS, both the complainant and the institution will be so advised and the case will be closed.

11. If the corrective action plan is not accepted by AIJS, the matter will be placed on the agenda of the EAC to determine if an adverse action, or other sanction should be initiated against the institution for noncompliance with AIJS’ Standards of Accreditation.
12. AIJS will make a good faith effort to address anonymous complaints against an accredited or pre-accredited institution or against AIJS itself and treat it in a similar manner to a regular complaint. Obviously, there is no mechanism to respond directly to an anonymous complainant.

If a written complaint is filed against AIJS directly, the complaint is recorded and acknowledged. Within 30 days of the receipt of the complaint, the Executive Director of AIJS will review the complaint and submit both the complaint and the review of the complaint to the Chair of the EAC to evaluate the validity of the complaint.

If the complaint is deemed justified, the EAC will instruct the Executive Director of AIJS of the appropriate means to resolve the matter and will notify the complainant within 30 days of the review of the complaint. If the complainant is anonymous, no notification is necessary.

If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may bring the matter directly to the EAC, by addressing the complaint to:

Chair of Executive Accrediting Council, AIJS
500 W. Kennedy Boulevard
P.O. Box 594
Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620
732.534.7436
Fax: 732.364.7627
Email: AIJS@att.net

PUBLIC NOTICE OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

The main purpose of AIJS accreditation is to grant recognition to those institutions of Jewish Studies that satisfy AIJS Standards of excellence. Maintaining public trust in the accreditation program and processes requires publication of the agency's actions relative to accreditation.

AIJS provides public notice, at least 30 days prior to an accrediting decision, that an institution is being considered for accreditation. The notice gives the public an opportunity
for third-party comment by advertising in a general circulation newspaper that has a wide and broad national readership with readers who are likely to be concerned with the quality and offerings of post-secondary institutions with programs in traditional Jewish Studies. AIJS has identified “Hamodia” and “Yated Ne’eman” as two such newspapers which meet these criteria. AIJS places a prominent public notice therein when an institution is being considered for accreditation or as a Candidate for Accreditation and invites third-party comment.

AIJS will provide written notice, within 30 days of the decision, of its accrediting decisions to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, appropriate state licensing or authorizing agencies, and other appropriate accrediting agencies. AIJS provides notice to the public of its accrediting decisions by posting the actions on the AIJS website and/or by placing a prominent notice in Hamodia or Yated Ne’eman.

AIJS will provide written notice to the US Department of Education and the appropriate State agency and accrediting agencies of a final decision to place an institution or program on probation, to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate an institution's accreditation, or any other adverse action, at the same time that it notifies the institution, but no later than 30 days after the final decision.

AIJS will provide the public with written notice of a final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke or terminate the accreditation or pre-accreditation of an institution, or other adverse action, within 24 hours of its notification to the institution. The agency will provide written notice to the public via its website and/or by placing a prominent notice in widely read newspaper such as Hamodia or Yated Ne’eman.

AIJS will make available to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, accrediting agencies and the public, no later than 60 days after the decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke or terminate the accreditation or pre-accreditation of an institution, or other adverse action, a statement summarizing the reasons for AIJS’s decision, including the official comments by the affected institution in response to agency’s decision.
If the institution has not commented, AIJS will bring evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to comment.

**AIJS RECORDS**

AIJS maintains complete and accurate records of its review and decision-making activities concerning the institutions it accredits or pre-accredits. This institutional file contains all current activity as well as the complete official record of the last accreditation review of an institution. These documents would include the institution's application for accreditation, the institution's ISA and related documents, the summary of the site visit team, the institution's response to the site visit summary, the accreditation or denial letter and the record of any institutional appeal.

Also part of the institutional file are a record of all complaints received by AIJS against the institution and their resolution, periodic AIJS review reports of the institution, institutional annual report, special reviews conducted by AIJS and any other pertinent correspondence relating to the accreditation of the institution.

Other applications requiring an official action or EAC consideration, such as applications for approval of a Substantive Change, and their disposition, are keep on file going back to the last accreditation cycle.

AIJS maintains recorded minutes of its public and EAC meetings. AIJS retains the resumes of AIJS EAC members, and the personnel records of the AIJS staff. AIJS financial records are on file, along with copies of AIJS’s own annual audit.

Also on file are all formal correspondence relevant to AIJS’s Standards, all correspondence and submissions regarding AIJS’s recognition status with the US Department of Education, and all complaints received against AIJS and their resolution.

The AIJS Handbook is the definitive document of AIJS procedures. A current copy is on file and available in both hard copy and electronic formats for distribution to interested parties.

AIJS Handbook 2013
Also on file and available are the Site Visitor guide, the Guide to Completing the ISA and other policy statements.

The general policy of AIJS is to keep records for a period of five years, except records relating to an institution’s accreditation, which must be kept for period including the last accreditation cycle.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING

The agency will transmit to the U.S. Department of Education the following information:

1. A copy of all annual reports it prepares at the beginning of each calendar year.
2. An annual directory of accredited institutions.
3. A summary of the agency's major accrediting activities during the previous year.
4. Any proposed change in the agency's policies, procedures, or Standards that might alter its scope of recognition, and or compliance with criteria for recognition.
5. The name of any institution it accredits that the agency has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, or is engaged in fraud or abuse.
6. Upon request by the Secretary, information that may bear upon an accredited institution's compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities.

AIJS has developed the following policy concerning disclosure of information to the Secretary of the US Department of Education concerning accredited institutions’ failure to meet its Title IV HEA program responsibilities. As required by federal regulations, AIJS will disclose the name of any institution or program it accredits that AIJS believes to be failing to meet its Title IV HEA program responsibilities, or is engaged in fraud or abuse. Along with the name, AIJS will state the agency's reasons for concern.

Upon request by the Secretary of Education, AIJS will disclose any information that may bear upon accredited institutions’ compliance with its Title IV HEA program responsibilities, including information that pertains to the eligibility of the accredited institution to participate in Title IV HEA programs.
If the US Department of Education contacts the agency for information included in the above policy, AIJS will review, on a case by case basis, whether the circumstances surrounding the contact warrant that the contact remain confidential – and not be disclosed to the institution. This review will be done by the Chair of the Executive Accrediting Council, jointly, with the Executive Director. The review will be focused on answering the question as to whether or not the disclosure of the contact would be a breach of the agency’s duties to act as a responsible gatekeeper and overseer of institutional integrity, and whether such a disclosure would jeopardize the function of AIJS in its own oversight activities. If the conclusion of the case by case review is that disclosure does not do so, AIJS will generally inform the institution of the US Department of Education's contact or request, unless specifically requested by the US Department of Education that the contract or request be kept confidential.

The above policy includes both accredited institutions and those institutions granted candidate for accreditation status.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

AIJS commits to public dissemination of the names, professional qualifications, employment, and organizational affiliations of its EAC members. It also makes public the types of accreditation policies, and standards it uses to grant this accreditation.

The integrity of the accreditation process often requires that applicant institutions submit confidential information. In instances where an institution is inhibited in its ability to disclose such information or to conduct a meaningful self-study, the ability of the accrediting body to make sound judgments is compromised and the effectiveness of the accreditation process is diminished.

At the same time, decisions of accrediting bodies are used by various government agencies, employers, financial institutions, regulatory bodies and students as one basis for their decisions. In this regard, accrediting bodies serve as protectors of the public interest. The
confidentiality needed to preserve the integrity of the accreditation process must be balanced against the needs of external constituencies for basic and essential information.

In determining which documents should be subject to public disclosure, AIJS accepts the principle that the primary consideration should be whether the information in question relates to compliance with established Standards. Advisory suggestions for program enhancement that result from a site visit, for example, are not viewed as critical for public disclosure.

In disclosing information relative to accreditation, AIJS will observe the following guidelines:

A. Information subject to full disclosure includes:
   - Information concerning the scope, evaluative criteria, procedures, and the process by which accreditation decisions are reached, as outlined in the agency's Handbook.
   - Lists of institutions that are accredited or that hold Candidacy statuses, that have had accreditation withdrawn; or that have been placed on probation.

B. Information available only from the institution or from AIJS with consent of the institutions includes:
   - Information supplied by the institution and/or AIJS in the course of the accrediting process, such as the ISA, the site visit summary and site visitor recommendations, the institution’s response to the site visit summary, and correspondence between AIJS and the institution relating to the accreditation process.

ACCURACY IN PUBLIC DISCLOSURES

Any public disclosure made by the institution regarding its accredited status by AIJS must be accurate, and indicate the full name, address and phone number of AIJS:

Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies

AIJS Handbook 2013
Any institution accredited, or currently being considered for accreditation, by AIJS, may not make any public disclosure, either in its promotional literature, catalog, or any other literature or communication, that contains misleading or incorrect accrediting information, regarding:

(a) The accreditation status of the institution
(b) The contents of summaries of on-site reviews
(c) The agency’s accrediting actions with respect to the institution

AIJS will take adverse action against the institution if the misleading or inaccurate information is not corrected within 24 hours by means of a public correction in a publication that serves the interested public of AIJS as well as notice on the institution’s website, if relevant. The full description of the policy for Procedures for Public Correction of Incorrect or Misleading Information by an Accredited Institution is available from AIJS.

REVIEW OF AIJS STANDARDS

AIJS will conduct a periodic and systematic review that demonstrates that its accreditation Standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of higher education provided by the institutions it accredits, and relevant to the educational needs of students. This review will be conducted at least once every five years, or in response to new federal or state regulations, changing demographics, or some other pressing development. This program of review will be comprehensive and will examine each of the agency’s accreditation Standards and the Standards as a whole. It will be conducted in a formal survey distributed to all member institutions as well as EAC members.
The review will also include all of the agency's relevant constituencies - faculty and administration at member institutions, and afford them a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review. Members of the EAC and site visit teams, member institutions, and outside experts and consultants will be invited to take part in the review. The information and insights gathered in the review will determine if any modifications of the Standards are needed for measuring the quality of institutions accredited by AIJS.

If at any point during the review of AIJS Standards, the agency determines that it needs to make changes to its Standards, the agency will initiate action within 12 months to make the changes, and will complete that action within a reasonable period of time.

Before finalizing any changes to its Standards, AIJS will provide notice of the proposed changes to all of its relevant constituencies and other parties that have made their interest in accreditation known to the agency. The agency's relevant constituencies and other interested parties will be given 30 days to comment on the proposed changes, and AIJS will take into account any comments on the proposed changes that are submitted on a timely basis by the relevant constituencies and other interested parties. If there are no significant responses during those 30 days, the changes will become effective within 60 days of their proposal.

If the response suggests a consensus for change to the proposed modification of the Standard, the debated proposals will be discussed at the next meeting of the EAC.

Any changes that are accepted by the EAC will be included in the Handbook which shall then be printed in a new version and distributed to all AIJS member institutions, as well as appear on the official website. All subsequent site visits will be held in accordance to the new Standards.
TEACH-OUT PLANS

AIJS requires an institution it accredits to submit a teach-out plan to the agency for approval, upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

- The Secretary has initiated an emergency action against the institution and required a teach-out plan;
- The agency has withdrawn, terminated or suspended its accreditation of the institution;
- The institution has notified the agency that it plans to cease operations or close a location;
- A state licensing or authorizing body notifies the agency that the institution's license or legal authorization has been, or will be, revoked.

AIJS may find other reasons to require the institution to enter into a teach-out agreement with another institution, as deemed necessary by AIJS.

AIJS will evaluate the teach-out plan to ensure that it provides for fair and equitable treatment of students who will be affected by the termination of the institution's programs, including notification to students of any additional charges.

If AIJS approves a teach-out plan that includes a program that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, it will notify that accrediting agency of its approval.

AIJS may require the institution to enter into a teach-out agreement with another similar institution as part of its teach-out plan.

Any institution accredited by AIJS that enters into a teach-out agreement, either on its own or at the request of the agency, must submit that teach-out agreement to the agency for approval.
Generally, AIJS will only approve an institution's teach-out agreement, if the agreement is with an institution which is accredited by nationally recognized accrediting agency or with similar accreditation and is consistent with applicable standards and regulations. It must also provide for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that the teach-out institution has the necessary experience, stability, resources and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations.

The teach-out institution must demonstrate that it can provide students access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances, and that it will provide students with information about additional charges, if any.

If an institution accredited by AIJS closes without a teach-out plan, or agreement, the agency will work with the U.S. Department of Education and the appropriate state agency, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.
SECTION V: ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS:

Women’s Institute of Torah Seminary
6602 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Accredited Programs: Bachelor of Arts in Judaic Studies
Bachelor of Science in Jewish Education

Date Accredited: November 5, 2009
Date of Next Review: October 2013

Associated Beth Rivkah Schools -Division of Higher Learning
310 Crown Street
Brooklyn, NY 11225

Accredited Programs: Classical Torah Studies
Overview of Jewish Studies Certificate

Date Accredited: May 22, 2013
Date of Next Review: May 2018

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Seminar L’Moros Bais Yaakov
4420 Fifteenth Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11219

Accredited Programs: Classical Torah Studies
Chinuch Yesodei Certificate

Date Accredited: May 22, 2013
Date of Next Review: May 2018