



## HANDBOOK

2017



**On March 10, 2016, AIJS was granted initial recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency, for a period of five years, with the following scope of recognition:**

*The accreditation of institutions of postsecondary Jewish Studies within the United States, exclusively offering educational programs leading to a certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or their equivalent credential in Jewish Studies or Classical Torah Studies.*




---

**EXECUTIVE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (EAC):**

Dr. Chaim Cohen, Chair  
 Rabbi Yoel Kramer, Vice Chair  
 Rabbi Yaakov Bogart  
 Mr. Samuel Brown, Esq., Public Member  
 Mr. Meir Lichtenstein, Public Member  
 Mrs. Sandra Parnes, MS  
 Rabbi A. Moshe Possick  
 Rabbi Yaakov Wasser, CPA

**AIJS STAFF:**

Rabbi Doniel Ginsberg, President  
 Mr. Alex Lowinger, MBA, Chief Financial Officer  
 Mrs. Nechama Landesman, MA, Accreditation Specialist  
 Mrs. Sima Wolff, Administrative Assistant

**EXECUTIVE OFFICES:**

500 West Kennedy Boulevard  
 Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620  
 Phone: 732.363.7330 Fax: 732.415.8198  
[www.theAIJS.com](http://www.theAIJS.com)

---

***AIJS FOUNDING COMMITTEE:***

*Dr. Chaim Cohen*  
*Dr. Sara Freifeld*  
*Dr. Shmuel Kessner*  
*Dr. Avraham Schwartzbaum ob"m*  
*Prof. Aaron D. Twerski, JD*  
*Rabbi Moshe Z. Weisberg*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Section I: The Framework for AIJS Accreditation</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction and Mission	7
Jewish Studies Today	8
The Purpose of AIJS Accreditation	10
AIJS Decision Making Council – The EAC	11
Requirements for Selection of EAC Members	15
Requirements for Selection of Public Members	16
Conflict of Interest Policy	17
Conflict of Interest Procedures	18
Benefits of AIJS Accreditation	20
For Institutions	20
For Students	21
For Supporting Constituencies and the Public	22
AIJS Membership	23
The Initial Accreditation Process	23
Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation	24
Application for Accreditation	26
ISA and On-Site Visit	26
The Review Process	28
Accreditation	28
Notice Regarding Preaccreditation	30
Substantive Change	31
Branch Campus	35

<b>Section II: The Institutional Self Appraisal</b>	37
Institutional Character	37
Standards: Introduction	40
Standard 1: Institution Mission and Goals	41
Standard 2: Curriculum and Instructional Methods	44
Standard 3: Student Progress and Learning Outcomes	50
Standard 4: Facilities, Resources and Equipment	53
Standard 5: Recruitment, Admissions, Catalogs and Student Services	55
Standard 6: Student Records	58
Standard 7: Degrees and Credentials	62
Standard 8: Faculty Qualifications and Responsibilities	65
Standard 9: Administration, Human Resources, Collaborative Relationships	68
Standard 10: Financial Practices	71
<b>Section III: The Accreditation Process</b>	74
Application	74
Institutional Self Appraisal	75
Preparation of Additional Materials	75
Distribution of the ISA	75
Selection of the Site Visitors	76
The Site Visit	77
Site Visit Team Report	77
Evaluation for Accreditation (or Re-Accreditation)	78
AIJS Decisions	78
<b>Section IV: Additional Accreditation Issues</b>	80
Credit Hour Assignments	80
Periodic Monitoring	82
Re-application for Accreditation	84
Re-accreditation	85
Voluntary Withdrawal from AIJS	85
Lapsed Accreditation	86

Appeal of Adverse Accreditation Action	86
Appeals Policy and Procedures	86
Appeals Panel	87
Appeals Process	87
Decision of the Appeals Panel	89
Cost of the Appeal	89
New Financial Information	89
Decision of States and Other Agencies	90
Responding to Complaints	91
Public Notice of Accreditation Actions	95
AIJS Records	96
Additional Reporting	98
Public Disclosure and Confidentiality	100
Accuracy in Public Disclosures	102
Review of AIJS Standards	103
Teach-Out Plans	105
<b>Section V: List of Accredited Institutions</b>	<b>107</b>

## 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 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.

AIJS will foster quality education and 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 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 in classical Jewish studies. 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 Biblical commentaries
- 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
- The methodology of instruction of the above fields of study

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 places great cultural and historical value on educated citizens with a strong background in Jewish Studies, dedicated to the good and welfare of their communities.

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 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. The first category is Yeshivas, catering mostly to young men, that see, as their mission, the production of world-class scholars in Jewish Studies, primarily in Talmudic and Rabbinical studies. The second category is 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 recognized accrediting agency (AARTS), while the Women's Seminaries don't fall within its scope of recognition. This has led to a difficult situation whereby graduates of the Women's Seminaries are often not recognized for their academic accomplishments. This disparity was a primary motivation for the founding of AIJS, which affords 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 institutions met to discuss forming an organization that would facilitate the growth and quality of institutions of Jewish Studies. These discussions culminated in the formation of an accrediting agency for Jewish studies, which subsequently became the Association of Institutions of Jewish Studies, and is now a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

## **THE PURPOSE OF 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**

The Executive Accreditation Council (EAC) of AIJS is the decision making council for AIJS and 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 are 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 members of the agency's decision making body. They are also trained on the AIJS standards and on the AIJS policies and procedures 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 a chief executive officer or president who is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the organization and whom reports directly to the EAC.

As per AIJS Bylaws, the EAC meets a minimum of one time per year, but generally meets twice annually and may meet more frequently, if necessary. Members of the EAC serve for a term of three to six years, but may be re-appointed for a second, or subsequent, term of service.

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 of an institution..

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.

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 ensure that potential candidates for accreditation are provided with:

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.
4. Appropriate support throughout the accreditation process

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 requirements.

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.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR SELECTION OF EAC MEMBERS

The cumulative membership of the EAC must 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 EAC will always be comprised of academic and administrative experts and public members. At least two members of the EAC must be academic experts and at least two members of the EAC must be administrative experts. At least one out of every seven EAC member must be a public member as defined in a later section of this guide. An “Academic expert” is someone who is currently or was recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary teaching and/or research, and an “Administrative expert” is someone who is currently or was recently directly engaged in a significant manner in postsecondary program or institutional administration. EAC members are classified into one of the following four categories – academic, administrative, other professional and public member.

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 recognize the importance of Jewish Studies and acknowledge its legitimacy as a discipline of scholarship and research, and who are committed to promoting educational and administrative excellence within institutions that provide Jewish Studies. All EAC members attend training sessions in AIJS accreditation standards and AIJS accreditation policies and procedures.

AIJS has ratified the process for including new members into the EAC by nominating and voting on the acceptance of new members. EAC members may not be elected or selected by the board or chief executive officer of any related, associated, or affiliated trade association of membership organization. EAC members may not serve on the Board or as CEO of any related trade association or membership organization. New members may join the EAC after

AIJS Handbook 2017 Revised July 2017

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. Any EAC member approved by the EAC must meet the requirements of the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy that appears below and must attest that he/she will adhere to the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy by signing a conflict of interest form prior to serving as an EAC member. This form is included at the end of this guide. AIJS staff members receive notification from the EAC following an EAC meeting at which EAC members are nominated and follow through with securing the Conflict of Interest Form.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR SELECTION OF PUBLIC MEMBERS**

As stated in a previous section, 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:

- (1) An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation;
  
- (2) A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or
  
- (3) A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition.



Any public member nominated to the EAC must sign an Affidavit for Public Members in addition to the AIJS Conflict of Interest Form prior to serving as a public member. This form is included at the end of this guide. AIJS staff members receive notification from the EAC following an EAC meeting at which EAC public members are nominated and follow through with securing the Affidavit for Public members as well as the Conflict of Interest Form.

## **AIJS CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

The AIJS Conflict of Interest policy is designed to avoid actual conflicts, potential conflicts and even the appearance of conflicts of interest in the agency decisions. AIJS conflict of interest policies are relevant to members of the Executive Accreditation Council including Public Members, Site Visit Team chairmen, Site Visit Team members, Members of an Appeals Panel, Members of the AIJS Administrative Staff, Agency representatives and Consultants.

AIJS will not assign any individual as Chairman of a site visit, site team member, reviewer or Appeals Panel Member if the individual is an alumnus of the institution, employee of the institution, a candidate for employment within the recent year, or has been employed by the institution within the past five years, belongs to the governing body of that institution or has belonged to the governing body in the past five years, has a personal, consulting or business relationship with the institution under review that could affect his or her objectivity, or has had a personal, consulting or business relationship with the institution under review, has a material interest in a positive accreditation outcome, has a close relative who is an employee of the institution, board member, current candidate for employment, a student at the institution or is an alumnus of the institution. A close relative includes a spouse, parents, guardian, siblings, or children of the individual or their spouse.

AIJS Staff liaisons will not be assigned to any institutions where they have ever been enrolled as a student, been employed or actively been a part of or are presently being considered for employment.

AIJS employees, EAC members, Site Visit Chairmen, Site Visitors, Members of an Appeals Panel, Agency representatives and Consultants to AIJS may not accept awards, honors or honorary degrees from an institution during the period of their employment/service at AIJS. AIJS employees and agency representatives may not serve as consultants to member or applicant institutions. AIJS employees and agency representatives may not serve as a participating “voting” member of an assessment visit team; AIJS staff may accompany such teams and review such documents. At visits following actions of warning, probation, or show cause an AIJS staff member may not serve as the sole evaluator. EAC members may not serve as participating members of a site team.

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

EAC members, Site Visit Chairmen, Site Visitors, Members of an Appeals Panel, AIJS staff, Agency Representatives and Consultants must sign a conflict of interest form, indicating that he/she is aware of the agency’s conflict of interest policies and will act accordingly.

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.

## **AIJS CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROCEDURES**

As stated in the section for Requirements for Selection of EAC Members, any EAC member approved by the EAC must meet the requirements of the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy that appears below and must attest that he/she will adhere to the AIJS Conflict of Interest

Policy by signing a conflict of interest form prior to serving as an EAC member. AIJS staff members receive notification from the EAC following an EAC meeting at which EAC members are nominated and follow through with securing the Conflict of Interest Form.

Any public member nominated to the EAC must sign an Affidavit for Public Members in addition to the AIJS Conflict of Interest Form prior to serving as a public member. AIJS staff members receive notification from the EAC following an EAC meeting at which EAC public members are nominated and follow through with securing the Affidavit for Public members as well as the Conflict of Interest Form.

In addition to EAC members, any site visit team members, members of an appeals panel, members of the AIJS administrative staff, agency representatives and consultants must adhere to the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy. AIJS has instituted the following procedures to ensure that AIJS conflict of interest requirements are met.

Potential site visitors, potential members of an appeals panel, potential employees of AIJS administrative staff, agency representatives and consultants are given a copy of the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy to read and review. He/she is then given the signed conflict of interest form to sign and return to AIJS prior to the start of his/her duties or responsibilities at AIJS.

AIJS maintains a file that contains all of the conflict of interest forms that have been signed and returned to AIJS to ensure that each EAC member, site visit team member, member of an appeals panel, member of the AIJS administrative staff, agency representative and consultant has completed the required form. AIJS staff members review the file that contains the conflict of interest forms within 30 days of every EAC meeting and compares the list of forms contained in the file to the list of EAC members and EAC nominees to ensure that all forms have been obtained. Public member affidavits are contained in a separate file and the file is reviewed by AIJS Staff within 30 days of every EAC meeting to ensure that all public members have completed the required forms.

## **BENEFITS OF 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 pressure 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. Working with the site visit team allows for the frank and constructive sharing of experience and ideas developed and used 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 post secondary institution of Jewish studies. 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. On March 10, 2016, AIJS was granted initial recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency, for a period of five years. Recognition of AIJS by the US Department of Education allows an AIJS accredited institution to fulfill one of the Department of Education's requirements for institutional eligibility and thereby enable student participation in federal student financial aid 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.

## **AIJS MEMBERSHIP**

Institutions that offer programs in Jewish Studies and/or programs with a core curriculum of Jewish Studies, and 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, may apply for membership in AIJS. Membership status does not infer or ensure that full accreditation will result, and no such claims can be made by the institution. To apply for membership an institution must submit a membership application to AIJS along with payment of the membership fee of \$10,000. The President of AIJS, or his designee, may make a short visit to the institution to confirm that the information listed on the membership application is accurate, and that the institution meets the basic criteria of AIJS Membership. 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 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 Accreditation.
2. AIJS reviews application and approves or declines it.
3. If approved, the institution prepares and submits its ISA.
4. After the ISA has been submitted and accepted, an AIJS site evaluation is scheduled and conducted.
5. The EAC reviews the ISA, Site Visit Report and determines if the institution complies with the accreditation standards. The EAC votes to grant or deny accreditation status.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

AIJS requires that any postsecondary institution of Jewish Studies wishing to be considered for initial accreditation, 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. 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 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.



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. Administration

The institution has the administration, support, and services necessary to achieve the stated mission.

3. Faculty

The institution employs sufficient professionally qualified faculty to fulfill its obligations toward achieving the institution's stated mission.

4. Financing

The institution substantiates an objectively verifiable funding base, and has the financial resources to achieve its mission.

5. 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, consistent with the degree(s) or credential(s) offered.

6. Operational status

The institution will have been in operation and offering its principal educational program for at least one full academic year, with registered students pursuing credentials through these programs, at the time that the AIJS evaluates the Application for Accreditation.

7. 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.

## APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

To apply for accreditation a member institution must submit the Application for Accreditation and supporting documents. The Application for Accreditation can be found on the AIJS website ([www.theaijs.com](http://www.theaijs.com)) or can be requested from the AIJS office by phone (732) 363-7330 or via email [info@theaijs.com](mailto:info@theaijs.com).

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.

## INSTITUTIONAL SELF APPRAISAL (ISA) AND ON-SITE VISIT

After the institution's Application for Accreditation has been reviewed and accepted, the institution is expected to progress toward accreditation.

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 (ISA)*, 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 by the institution 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 to the 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 Guide to the ISA which includes sections on *Cooperating with the Site Visit Team* and *Guidelines for the Site Visit Team*.

## 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.

Within 30 days of the site visit, the Chairman of the Site Visit Team submits a report that represents the findings of the site visitors to AIJS. The report is reviewed and then sent to the institution, within 45 days of the site visit. The institution is asked to comment within 14

days of receipt of the site visit report, and may either accept the report as stated or inform the chairman of any omissions or mistakes in the factual description of the institution. Once the report 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 three to ten years. The maximum time frame of ten years of accreditation may only be awarded to a mature, exceptional institution that has demonstrated compliance with all AIJS Standards and has previously been accredited by AIJS or by a nationally recognized accrediting agency for at least a five year period.

Newer institutions may be awarded accreditation for three 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.*

**NOTICE REGARDING PREACCREDITATION**

At this time AIJS does not have preaccreditation in its scope of accredited activities. AIJS has not granted and will not be granting preaccreditation to any institution at this time, and no recognition of any AIJS preaccreditation status by the US Department of Education has been granted or implied.

## 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 accreditation 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. (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-Title IV eligible institution to provide more than 25%, but less than 50% of a Title IV eligible institution's educational program. (Category 2). Under no circumstances will AIJS approve a written agreement with a non-Title IV eligible institution to provide more than 50% of a Title IV eligible institution's educational program as this would disqualify the program from being Title IV eligible.
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 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 President 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 is deemed to be so fundamental and comprehensive as to question whether the entire current institutional accreditation is still relevant. In such cases AIJS will require a full reevaluation of the institution, similar to a new application for accreditation, before the Substantive Change application can be approved. Examples of this might include: a change of mission that results in significant changes to other accreditation standards, such as curriculum, faculty, and credentials or, the relocation of an institution to a different state that results in significant change to a number of other accreditation standards such as administration, degrees and credentials (due to state licensing regulations), student body, faculty, and fiscal operation. The relocation of an institution does not automatically require a complete re-evaluation of the institution.

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 as soon as practical but not later than 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 before the EAC will grant approval for the additional location (for Categories Two and Three), and again within six months after approval; and, for category one - the location must be visited within six months after approval; 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% or 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 of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of that institution. A location is considered to be independent of the main campus if the location -- (1) Is permanent in nature; (2) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

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 brief history of the institution
  - 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 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 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 Associate degree is awarded after the successful completion of 60 credits and a Baccalaureate degree is awarded after the successful completion of 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 for Bachelors Degree programs and 18 credits for Associated Degree programs) may be in areas of Biblical Studies, Talmud, Jewish Law/Legal Codes, Jewish History, Jewish Philosophy/Ethics and the Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish languages as they support the study of original source texts. This requirement supports the mission and scope of AIJS, which is to accredit institutions that primarily focus on Jewish Studies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AIJS supports effective instruction and endorses no particular style of education. It does not prescribe specific instructional methods or approaches, nor does it insist on innovation merely for its own sake. However, AIJS does recognize that ongoing evaluations of the curriculum and instructional methods are signs of institutional vitality.



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

### STANDARD 3: STUDENT PROGRESS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

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

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

As students are admitted, they begin to engage with the institution's educational system. As the student moves forward, feedback to both the institution and the student will enhance the educational experience. 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. 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. 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, and a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement.*

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

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

### Institutional Implications

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

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

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

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

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

- Costs of enrolling in each program that the institution offers
- Withdrawal and tuition refund policies
- Academic calendar
- Grading policies
- Satisfactory academic progress, and other academic policies
- Student complaint policies
- Financial aid, and student services offered by the institution
- Transfer of credits policy, including a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credits earned at another institution of higher education and a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement
- Campus security procedures



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

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

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

## STANDARD 6: STUDENT RECORDS

### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

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

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

- To document the student's academic outcomes as well as the student's progress toward earning the institution's degree or academic credential.
- To provide important feedback on the effectiveness of the educational program.
- To serve as the basis for academic transcripts for students transferring to other institutions, or applying for employment positions.

- To provide accountability and transparency in all financial activities, and to demonstrate that the institution is fiscally viable.
- To demonstrate compliance with all regulatory requirements, including financial aid programs for students.

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

### **Institutional Implications**

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

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

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

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

Because of the amount of records generated and the length that these documents have to be maintained, the institution must have trained personnel to deal with the record keeping

function. These individuals must be trained to operate according to procedures that ensure the accurate, timely and complete processing of student records.

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

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

These provisions apply to both physical (hardcopy) documentation and all student records maintained electronically. Again, security and restricted access are key issues to be kept in mind. There should be provisions for the timely backup and restoration of records, as well as 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 report of academic information, such as that needed to generate transcripts should be available indefinitely.

### **Student Complaints**

The institution has a formal complaint procedure that is publicized in its catalog or posted on its web-site. The complaint policy must be clear and must include procedures that students can follow to resolve any complaints they may have regarding the institution. In its complaint policy, an institution must include a statement informing the student that he/she has the right to file a complaint with AIJS if the complaint was not resolved to his/her satisfaction and must include the mailing address, phone number and web-site address for AIJS. The institution maintains records regarding each formal complaint lodged by a student and its disposition, in an easy and accessible manner, for a period of at least five years after final disposition of the complaint. During an on-site review, site visitors will review the records of complaints to determine if there is a pattern of complaints in any particular area that could indicate a weakness or non compliance, and to determine if the institution's published complaint procedures were followed.

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

## STANDARD 7: DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS

### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

*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 standards and these benchmarks, as well as the degree requirements, should be publicly disclosed as institutional policies in documents that are readily available to students such as the catalog or school website. The published benchmarks for satisfactory academic progress should include provisions for students who do not meet the standards as well as an appeal process for students who have extenuating circumstances. In addition, the satisfactory academic progress policy should address matters such as withdrawals and incompletes.

### **Policies for Degrees and Credentials Granted**

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

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

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

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

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



## STANDARD 8: FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faculty members should demonstrate a high level of subject-area competence. In addition to subject-area competence, faculty members should be able to demonstrate a high level of pedagogic competency. This pedagogic competence will be demonstrated not only in the

experience of the instructor, but in the ability to transmit the subject matter in ways that motivate students and facilitate effective learning.

### **Jewish Studies Faculty**

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

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

Viewed in this context, staff in this area should demonstrate exemplary qualities of scholarship, commitment, ethical and moral behavior, and overall personal conduct and deportment. While such criteria are important in any educational environment, it is essential at institutions that see their role as preparing students for a life committed to learning and its meaningful application in their daily living.

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

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

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

### **Institutional Implications**

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

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

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

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

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

## STANDARD 9: ADMINISTRATION, HUMAN RESOURCES AND COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

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

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

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

### Institutional Implications

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

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

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

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

The institution must maintain sufficient support staff to assist each department with its responsibilities. Cost-effective technology should be employed to make operations smooth and efficient. Many administrative functions within a higher education institution require specialized training, as well as ongoing professional development, as the practice of the profession changes. With technological advances, changes in laws and regulations, and evolving 'good practices', higher education administrators must constantly strive for excellence by adjusting and improving existing policies and procedures. Membership in professional peer organizations, attendance at external and internal training events, subscriptions and reading of professional literature and periodicals, can all be valuable tools to keep administrators current and professional. Institutions should encourage and support these activities.

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

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

Ensuring that the right people know the right information at the right time is basic to a well-run institution. Each department must have an effective method of communicating both

within its division and with other departments. Face-to-face meetings and written memorandums are examples of methods of communication that can be used effectively towards this goal.

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

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

## STANDARD 10: FINANCIAL PRACTICES

### Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

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

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

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

### Institutional Implications

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

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

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

An external, independent audit should be conducted on a regular basis and reviewed by designated parties such as the institution's board of governors or directors. Particular care must be taken to account for federal or state monies, restricted funds, grants, and other specially designated funds. In preparation for an initial accrediting review, the institution shall provide AIJS with recently audited financial statements, generally completed within the last year, as well as financial data for a period that includes the previous three fiscal years. Audited financial statements for the most recently completed fiscal year is also necessary for re-accreditation.

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

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

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

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



The institution shall properly document its compliance with federal requirements for HEA programs. This will include actions resulting from findings in financial or compliance audits, program reviews, the most recent student loan default data, and any other information requested by the U.S. Department of Education.

Any institution found to have a high student loan default rate, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid, 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.

## **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 submitted to AIJS. Once the report has been reviewed by the AIJS staff 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, generally 30 days 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 REPORT**

The chair of the site visit team submits a written report of the site visit to the agency within 30 days of the site visit, along with the completed score sheet for each of the ten standards. This report includes the site visit team's observations and recommendations regarding each of the ten Accreditation Standards. The observations in the report must be supported by factual information. The site visit report indicates the program's strengths and limitations and provides explanatory information. The agency forwards a copy of the site visit report to the institution within 45 days of the site visit.

The institution is given the opportunity to respond in writing within 14 days of receipt of the site visit report, on the accuracy of the visiting team's observations, before it is submitted to the EAC for an accrediting decision. The EAC is given a copy of any institutional response to the site visit report to review and consider when making an accreditation 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 report
- the institution's response to the site visit report

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 accreditation
- 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 is a decision made by the EAC when considering the institution application for 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 Report. Typical terms of accreditation are 2-10 years. Initial accreditation is typically granted for a maximum of 5 years.

Institutions undergoing reaccreditation, who achieve full compliance with no recommendations or conditions noted in five out of ten standards will generally be granted five years of accreditation. Institutions who achieve full compliance with no recommendations or conditions noted in seven out of ten standards will generally be granted seven years of accreditation and mature institutions who achieve full compliance in all ten standards will generally be granted the maximum accreditation of ten years.

Once the EAC has made a decision regarding an institution's accreditation AIJS staff will notify the institution of the decision as promptly as possible, but no later than 14 business days from the date the decision was made. 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

Institutions that are accredited and those that are seeking accreditation by AIJS must assign credit hours for courses offered that conform to the commonly accepted practice of institutions of higher education, as described in Standard 2 of the AIJS Accreditation Standards. Institutions that offer specialized coursework such as Talmudic and Rabbinical Studies would have to conform to the norms of that type of specialized coursework, 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. Generally, 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 a minimum of 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 daily schedule and academic calendar will be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with credit hour assignments and to ensure that the minimum number of hours per credit is fulfilled.

An alternative measure would also be appropriate for schools that use clock hours to measure the length of the program. For these programs, the number of clock hours in a course divided by 37.5 (or divided by 30, if the agency determines that there are 7.5 homework hours for that course) would determine the number of credit hours that can be awarded for that course. This measure is appropriate for programs that do not lead to an Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree or Professional Degree or Associate level or Bachelor level programs in specialized coursework.

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 of a credit hour. AIJS will use the sampling method to do the review and evaluation of an institution's credit hour assignments.

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. These annual reports provide the agency with current information appropriate to AIJS accreditation standards.

The institution's annual report includes: (a) enrollment data for the prior two academic years (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 program requirements.

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 February of the following year.

AIJS analyzes the enrollment data from the prior two academic years and compares the numbers reported to determine if there is a 30% (or greater) increase in enrollment. If the analysis of the data indicates that there was an increase of 30% or greater in the enrollment, the institution will be notified that it must provide an explanation for the increase. AIJS will review the explanation for the increase and analyze the financial statements provided by the institution in its annual report to determine if the increase has had a negative impact on the institution's financial health. Negative impact on financial stability would include an operating deficit, composite score that falls below the 1.5 threshold, or increase in short term liabilities. AIJS will review the explanation from the institution and will determine if the explanation for the increase in enrollment might indicate that more frequent monitoring or

other action is necessary to ensure that the institution continues to fulfill its obligations to its students and to fulfill its educational objective. AIJS staff will share the response of the institution with the Chairman of the EAC to determine what additional steps are needed to assure the agency that the growth in enrollment has not diminished the educational quality of the program(s) offered by the institution and that the institution has the fiscal capability to handle the growth without compromising its fiscal stability. Additional follow up steps might include a request for updated financial statements reflecting the current fiscal year, an unexpected staff visit, more frequent monitoring, particularly with regard to monitoring student outcomes, student complaints and withdrawal rates and/or an acceleration of the institution's re-accreditation.

A monitoring site visit will be held midway through the school's accrediting cycle. The Accreditation Specialist, possibly accompanied by another member of the AIJS staff with particular expertise in areas relating to the mission and type of institution, will visit each accredited institution to ensure that the institution continues to be in compliance with accreditation standards. In particular, they will review the last site visit report to see how recommendations were attended to, conduct a brief tour of the facilities to ensure that it continues to meet AIJS standards for facilities, conduct meetings with key institutional academic and administrative personnel, review a sample of students' records, and examination of the institution's measures of student outcomes. An analysis of the items reviewed and a report of the mid-point visit will be shared with the chairman of the EAC who will determine if follow up action is required.

Additionally, AIJS may make unannounced visits to its accredited institutions at any point during the accrediting cycle to check or confirm compliance to any of the standards.

This process affords the agency an opportunity to periodically reevaluate the institution that is 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, AIJS will determine if immediate adverse action is warranted. AIJS will immediately initiate adverse action if it is deemed to be necessary to protect educational quality and/or to protect Title IV funds. If it is not deemed to be necessary to take immediate action to protect educational quality or Title IV funds, the institution will be given a deadline by which it must come into compliance. The maximum time frame that can be given is 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. If the longest program offered by the institution is at least two years in length, the maximum time that the institution will be given to come into compliance is two years. 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.

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 renew its accreditation is due. The institution shall submit a new ISA, which will be followed by a new site visit to the institution, and action by the EAC.

Institutions who achieve full compliance with no recommendations or conditions noted in five out of ten standards will generally be granted five years of accreditation. Institutions who achieve full compliance with no recommendations or conditions noted in seven out of ten standards will generally be granted seven years of accreditation and mature institutions who achieve full compliance in all ten standards will generally be granted the maximum accreditation of ten 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 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 (for the definition of public member see Requirements for Selection of Public Member in Section I of this Handbook.) Any potential member of an appeals panel must confirm that he/she abides by the AIJS Conflict of Interest Policy and must sign a Conflict of Interest Form. 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 chief executive officer 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 postsecondary education.

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 or preaccreditation.
- A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation.
- Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

In special circumstances, AIJS may grant accreditation to an institution that is or was the subject of a decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or preaccreditation or the subject of a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation, or the subject of a probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency, if it provides AIJS with 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.

In the event that AIJS accepts the explanation and decides to grant accreditation it will provide the Secretary within 30 days of the agency's action with 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 will, 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 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  
Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620  
732.363.7330  
Email: dginsberg@theaijs.com

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

1. Within 10 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.
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 and 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. The institution must provide, in its response to AIJS, an explanation of its actions, as well as a statement certifying that the institution 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 or not the matter involves issues that question the institution's compliance with its own policies and/or AIJS Standards or policies. AIJS will launch an inquiry into the issue within 10 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 as well as the steps taken to resolve the complaint).
7. Within 10 days of the receipt of these above materials, a member of the AIJS Administrative Staff, 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.
8. 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.
9. If the response is accepted by AIJS, both the complainant and the institution will be so advised and the case will be closed.
10. 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.
11. AIJS will make a good faith effort to address anonymous complaints against an 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.

12. All complaints received by AIJS regarding an accredited institution will be filed and stored in an easy and accessible manner. Site visitors will be given access to the file of an institution that is being reviewed, and any complaints on file in AIJS will be considered in the final decision of the EAC.

If a written complaint is filed against AIJS directly, the complaint is recorded and acknowledged. Within 10 days of the receipt of the complaint, a member of the AIJS Administrative Staff 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 AIJS staff of the appropriate means to resolve the matter and will notify the complainant within 10 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 Accreditation Council, AIJS  
500 West Kennedy Boulevard  
Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620  
732.363.7330  
Email: [dginsberg@theaijs.com](mailto:dginsberg@theaijs.com)

## **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 that an institution is being considered for accreditation by the Executive Accreditation Council. The notice, which gives the public an opportunity for third-party comment, is placed 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 places a prominent public notice therein as well as in a newspaper with wide circulation in the location of the candidate institution when an institution is being considered for accreditation and invites third-party comment.

AIJS will provide special 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 a special notice on the AIJS website.

AIJS will provide special 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 special written notice to the US Department of Education and the appropriate State agency and accrediting agencies when an appeal panel upholds an adverse

decision, thereby making it a final adverse decision, 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 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 by placing a prominent notice in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the Jewish community and in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the location(s) of the relevant institution(s).

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 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. There is a file for each institution that has applied for accreditation that 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 report of the site visit team, the institution's response to the site visit report, 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 reports, special reviews conducted by AIJS and any other pertinent correspondence relating to the accreditation of the institution.

Applications and institutional requests requiring an official action or EAC consideration, such as applications for approval of a Substantive Change, and their disposition, are kept on file going back to the institution's last accreditation cycle.

AIJS maintains recorded minutes of its EAC meetings and membership meetings. AIJS retains the resumes of AIJS EAC members, and the personnel records of the AIJS staff. AIJS financial records including income and expense ledgers, bank statements, payroll registers, tax related documents, insurance related documents, and other agency related paperwork are kept on file, along with copies of AIJS's own annual external audits.

Also on file is 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 Bylaws is the legal document of the agency, and is kept on file. The AIJS Handbook is the definitive document of AIJS accreditation procedures. A current copy is on file and available in both hard copy and electronic formats for distribution to interested parties. 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 a period that includes the last full accreditation cycle.

## ADDITIONAL REPORTING

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

1. An annual directory of accredited institutions.
2. A report of the agency's major accrediting activities during the previous year.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 the reporting to and disclosure of information to the Secretary of the US Department of Education.

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 Accreditation Council, jointly, with AIJS Administrative Staff. 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.

AIJS will provide special 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 a special notice on the AIJS website and by placing a prominent notice in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the Jewish community and in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the location(s) of the relevant institution(s).

AIJS will provide special 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 special written notice to the US Department of Education and the appropriate State agency and accrediting agencies when an appeal panel upholds an adverse decision, thereby making it a final adverse decision, 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 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 by placing a prominent notice in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the Jewish community and in a newspaper that has widespread circulation in the location(s) of the relevant institution(s).

## **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

AIJS maintains and makes available to the public written materials describing:

- (1) Each type of accreditation it grants;
- (2) The procedures that institutions or programs must follow in applying for accreditation;
- (3) The standards and procedures it uses to determine whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, restrict, deny, revoke, terminate, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation that it grants;
- (4) The institutions and programs that AIJS currently accredits and, for each institution and program, the year the agency will next review or reconsider it for accreditation
- (5) The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the agency's policy and decision-making bodies; and the agency's principal administrative staff.

The AIJS Handbook is the primary document that outlines the entire scope of AIJS activities. The AIJS Handbook is available to the public on the AIJS website – [theaijs.com](http://theaijs.com). The Handbook is also available by written request to AIJS, 500 West Kennedy Boulevard, Lakewood, NJ 08701. The AIJS Handbook may also be obtained by contacting AIJS staff at (732)363-7330.

The AIJS website ([TheAIJS.com](http://TheAIJS.com)) contains the names of the members of the agency's policy and decision-making bodies, the Executive Accrediting Council. It also lists any appeal panel members; and the agency's principal administrative staff and provides information on how to obtain information regarding the academic and professional qualification and employment

and organizational affiliation of EAC members, members of appeal panels and principal AIJS staff members.

Resumes of the EAC members and members of any appeals panel and the principal AIJS staff members are on file in the AIJS office and may be obtained upon written request to AIJS. Written requests should be addressed to AIJS, 500 West Kennedy Boulevard, Lakewood, NJ 08701.

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 pre-accredited, 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 report and site visitor recommendations, the institution's response to the site visit report, 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  
 500 West Kennedy Boulevard  
 Lakewood, NJ 08701-2620  
 732.363.7330

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 considers the publication of incorrect or misleading information by an institution concerning the accreditation status of the institution, and related actions, as a serious breach

of both the public trust and the institution's integrity. This includes misrepresenting the accreditation status of the institution, mischaracterizing the contents of a site team report or misrepresenting AIJS' accrediting or pre-accrediting actions with respect to the institution.

Should AIJS determine that this breach was inadvertent, accidental and unintentional; the institution is required to immediately and publicly correct this faulty information. AIJS expects that a prominent public notice be posted in a public common area within one business day to correct the inaccurate information, and a correction be posted on the institution's website, within one business day, if the institution has its own web-site. Posting this notice on a public bulletin board where important institutional notices are generally posted meets this requirement.

In addition, AIJS requires that within seven days the institution further publicize the correction utilizing the same manner as the original misinformation was publicized. For instance, if the misinformation appears in a press release, the institution must prepare a follow-up press release in substantially the same format as the original release, and distribute it to all outlets the original misinformation was made available to.

Should AIJS determine that the inaccurate or misleading information was provided intentionally, the institution will be so informed in writing. In addition to complying with the procedures outlined above, the institution is required to explain its behavior to the AIJS Executive Accrediting Council (EAC) within seven days. After hearing from the institution, the EAC will determine what follow-up action will be taken by the EAC in light of this breach. Actions available to the EAC range from AIJS issuing its own correction, the EAC issuing a formal warning to the institution, and/or the EAC initiating an adverse action against institution.

## **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.

The review will include all of the agency's relevant constituencies – students, faculty and administration at member institutions, as well as graduates of member institution and employers of graduates of 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, generally within 24 months.

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, students, members of the faculty and members of the administration at member institutions, as well as graduates of member institution and employers of graduates of member institutions 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 revised 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 notifies AIJS that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution has initiated an emergency action against the institution
- The Secretary notifies AIJS that the Secretary has initiated an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any title IV, HEA program
- AIJS has withdrawn, terminated or suspended its accreditation of the institution;
- The institution has notified AIJS that it plans to cease operations or close a location;
- A state licensing or authorizing body notifies AIJS that the institution's license or legal authorization has been, or will be, revoked.

AIJS may find other reasons to require the institution to submit a teach out plan and 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.

AIJS will only approve an institution's teach-out agreement, if the agreement is with an institution which is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency. 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. In addition, AIJS will only approve an institution's teach-out agreement if the agreement is with an institution that has a publicly disclosed transfer of credit policy that includes a statement of the criteria established by the institution for the transfer of credits earned at another institution, and a list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement.

The 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:**

### **Associated Beth Rivkah Schools -Division of Higher Learning**

310 Crown Street

Brooklyn, NY 11225

Program offered:

Classical Torah Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: May 22, 2013

Current Accreditation: May 22, 2013 - May 22,2018

Next Review: 2018

### **Bais Medrash Mayan Hatorah**

101 Milton Street

Lakewood, NJ 08701

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: July 28, 2016

Current Accreditation: July 28, 2016 - July 28, 2019

Next Review: 2019

### **Bnos Zion of Bobov Seminary**

5000 14th Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11219

Program offered:

Classical Torah Studies Degree

Classical Torah Studies Certificate

Date of Initial Accreditation:11/23/2015

Current Accreditation: Nov 23, 2015 - Nov 23, 2018

Next Review: 2018

**Mechon L'Hoyroa**

168 Maple Avenue

Monsey, NY 10953

Program offered:

Classical Talmudic Law Degree

Date of Initial Accreditation: 3/10/ 2015

Current Accreditation: Mar 10, 2015 - Mar 10, 2020

Next Review: 2020

**Seminar L'Moros Bais Yaakov**

4420 Fifteenth Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11219

Program offered:

Classical Torah Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: May 22, 2013

Current Accreditation: May 22, 2013- May 22, 2018

Next Review: 2018

**Seminary Bnos Chaim**

1269 Miller Road

Lakewood, NJ 08701

Programs offered:

Associate of Classical Torah Studies

A 60 credit course of study over two years leading to  
an Associate degree in Classical Judaic Studies

Certificate of Classical Torah Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: March 21, 2017

Current Accreditation: March 21, 2017 - March 21, 2019

Next Review: 2019

**Women's Institute of Torah Seminary**

6602 Park Heights Avenue

Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Programs offered:

Bachelor of Arts in Judaic Studies

Bachelor of Science in Jewish Education

Date of Initial Accreditation: November 5, 2009

Current Accreditation: March 2, 2014 - March 2, 2019

Next Review: 2019

**Yeshiva Chemdas Hatorah**

950 Massachusetts Avenue

Lakewood, NJ 08701

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: July 28, 2016

Current Accreditation: July 28, 2016 - July 28, 2019

Next Review: 2019

**Yeshiva Gedolah Keren Hatorah**

1083 Brook Road

Lakewood, NJ 08701

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: July 28, 2016

Current Accreditation: July 28, 2016 - July 28, 2021

Next Review: 2021

**Yeshiva Gedolah Tiferes Boruch**

21 Rockview Avenue

North Plainfield, NJ 07060

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: July 28, 2016

Current Accreditation: July 28, 2016 - July 28, 2021

Next Review: 2021

**Yeshiva of Ocean**

7120 Highway 52

Greenfield Park, NY 12435

Programs offered:

Classical Torah Studies Degree

First Talmudic Degree

Date of Initial Accreditation: March 21, 2017

Current Accreditation: March 21, 2017 - March 21, 2022

Next Review: 2022

**Yeshiva Ohr Naftoli**

701 Blooming Grove Turnpike

New Windsor, NY 12553

Programs offered:

Classical Talmudic Studies Degree

First Talmudic Degree

Date of Initial Accreditation: July 28, 2016

Current Accreditation: July 28, 2016 - July 28, 2021

Next Review: 2021

**Yeshivas Be'er Yitzchok**

1391 North Avenue

Elizabeth, NJ 07208

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: December 20, 2016

Current Accreditation: Dec 20, 2016 - Dec 20, 2019

Next Review: 2019

**Yeshivas Emek Hatorah**

395 Kent Road

Howell, NJ 07731

Program offered:

Bachelor of Talmudic Studies

Date of Initial Accreditation: February 23, 2017

Current Accreditation: Feb 23, 2017 - Feb 23, 2020

Next Review: 2020

**Yeshivath Zichron Moshe**

Laurel Park Road

South Fallsburg, NY 12779

Programs offered:

Classical Talmudic Studies Degree

First Talmudic Degree

Date of Initial Accreditation: December 20, 2016

Current Accreditation: Dec 20, 2016 - Dec 20, 2026

Next Review: 2026