ASSOCIATION OF INSTITUTIONS
OF JEWISH STUDIES

GUIDE TO THE ISA

(Institutional Self- Appraisal)

2020

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SECTION I:

GUIDE TO THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF-APPRAISAL

Long term goal: Implementing sound policy into excellent procedures.

An institution seeking accreditation acknowledges and accepts the AIJS Standards for the granting of accreditation. AIJS appreciates that the institution is looking for clarification of these Standards and for practical advice and support in making sure that it can attain these Standards. AIJS will work with institutions to ensure that the qualities of administrative and educational excellence, specified in the AIJS Standards, are present and evident within the applying institution. Accreditation can only be granted when this has been clearly and objectively demonstrated.

In order to ensure that you have examined each of the Standards and have properly reflected on the degree to which they are satisfied, AIJS requires institutions to perform two inter-related exercises: (a) to undergo the process of preparing and submitting an Institutional Self- Appraisal, and (b) to host an onsite review by an AIJS site visit team. In order to prepare you for these exercises, the agency will provide clear guidelines and other resources to ensure that you are ready for the challenge of the accreditation process.

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER

The ideal organization 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 continue to prevail. The decision-maker should seriously consider any evidence that suggests a change in goals or programs may be appropriate. There should be no vested interest in continuing with policies that produce ineffective and possibly dysfunctional institutional outcomes.

This ISA exercise does not expect you to describe an ideal organization. Instead, AIJS anticipates an honest, earnest effort in describing your existing reality and, where helpful, the antecedents of this reality. Considering this reality, you should then describe the institution's strengths and weaknesses. If after this effort, your 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
A Valuable Process

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. This exercise, valuable in its own right, also prepares the institution for the second phase of the accreditation process.

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-appraisal 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 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 should be extensive and be built around the framework outlined below. It is important that all sections of the ISA are completed and that the entire document is well articulated and integrated. Some institutions may choose to use a comprehensive question and answer format while other institutions might prefer a narrative style. Regardless of format, in each section, the institution should attempt to understand the purpose of the section and demonstrate, in its responses, compliance to AIJS Standards, and present supporting documents which provide evidence of this compliance.

The ISA should contain the following chapters:

Introduction - A summary of the history, mission, objectives, strengths and areas needing attention in the institution.

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, Human Resources and

Collaborative Relationships

Standard 10 – Financial Practices

In each of these Standards, the institution should present its understanding of how it complies with each Standard. The institution should present cohesive responses, rather than short answers to these guiding questions. Many of these Standards require documentation that supports the narrative (forms, copies of materials and publications). A suggested list of documents appears after each Standard in this Guide. While this list is pretty comprehensive, your institution is not limited to this list of documents. The unique qualities of your programs might require other documentation. Attach the documentation as attachments 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. The actual procedures and names of documents should be described in the narrative of the ISA.

Through this preliminary 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 serve its constituents.

In writing the ISA, you should read each section in this Handbook to best understand what the report should contain and what it is that the site visit team will want to see demonstrated. In general, think of the Guide to the ISA as outlining what AIJS will look for when evaluating your institution's compliance to its Standards.

Obviously, you should try to ensure that you have well-considered, well-integrated policies in each of these areas and that these policies provide a structure for operations, communication and development within your institution. The site visit team will want to see that what you have set out in the ISA *actually corresponds to practice*. The team will attempt to determine the extent to which you have implemented sound policy into excellent procedures.

AIJS will carefully review the ISA that you submit. 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 before an acceptance decision can be reached; or (3) rejection because of an unsatisfactory submission which reflects non-

compliance to Standards.

CONDUCTING THE ISA

The ISA is not intended to be an externally imposed burden that diverts the institution from its educational responsibilities. Accreditation addresses two primary purposes:

1. To serve the general public and prospective students by assuring consistent Standards of quality of educational programs. In this sense, accreditation is the stamp of approval that lends legitimacy to educational programs and assures interested parties that they can expect acceptable levels of educational quality. In this endeavor, AIJS plays a direct role by rendering a decision regarding the extent to which the institution satisfies its published Standards. Concerned publics look to AIJS for an evaluation of quality.

2. To provide a vehicle for the improvement of institutions and the enhancement of their educational programs and activities. This objective can only be realized through the efforts and actions of the institution applying for accreditation.

   Improvement cannot be imposed, it must be internally generated. The required ISA should be seen as mechanism to encourage institutional improvement. From this perspective, AIJS serves an indirect role in acting as a catalyst for improved levels of excellence in applicant institutions.

We present each institution with our agency's Standards. Ideally, we wish to encourage and help realize improvement in each of the areas indicated in these Standards. The ISA is the essential mechanism that enables the institution to gauge its present level of achievement.

Once it is assessed, the institution is then able to work toward generating levels of improvement that will satisfy the criteria that AIJS requires. In this way, the ISA process is a valuable experience that affords the institution an opportunity to accurately review its institutional strengths and weaknesses and to devise and implement programs for dealing with its weaknesses.

AIJS is committed to assist in this process of institutional self-discovery and self-improvement by offering the following guidance:

- giving clear and specific criteria in defining the Standards that must be met
- providing examples of the way in which these Standards will be evaluated
- suggesting approaches for you to better assess your present performance
- suggesting how you might make improvements or undertake changes

An institution about to embark upon self-assessment should have a thorough understanding of (a) the full complement of Standards that it will have to report on in the ISA documents, and (b) the criteria that AIJS will employ in evaluating the extent to which the institution is in compliance with AIJS Standards.

These two points, while essential, are really only the starting point for the self-assessment. The institution now undertakes its own assessment. This self-search is designed to answer the central question: "Where are we?" Once a picture of the current state of affairs is arrived at, the institution then needs to engage in a process of evaluation and planning.

At this juncture, the institution compares the various accounts and understandings that it has prepared and judges the present extent to which its program matches the requirements of the agency. This process will also highlight the areas of mismatch between where the institution is and where the agency expects it to be.

The process of planning is now used to narrow the gaps between actual and required positions. The planning should be formulated not simply as a document but as a course of action designed to bring about the required degree of congruence. This planning process is important in preparation for the external review.

AIJS considers it as part of its mandate to assist the institution at every stage in this process. We will offer this assistance in several ways. Staff at AIJS are available to provide technical assistance through individual consultations, small group sessions or larger workshops for institutional representatives in order to present and clarify all aspects of the accreditation process.

In addition, the AIJS Handbook and this Guide to the ISA include numerous suggestions as well as exercises designed to assist the institution to relate effectively to each of the separate stages of the initial assessment, evaluation, planning and final assessment. Each of the agency Standards described herein includes a section dealing with the separate functions of the self-assessment process. By working cooperatively with institutions applying for accreditation, AIJS can fulfill its role as catalyst for institutional improvement.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

An institution needs to learn how to recognize the changes that are occurring and to become adept at managing in a changing world. The institution has the responsibility to deal as effectively and efficiently as possible with the existing situation and its mix of problems and opportunities. This requires "planning." Planning is the systematic and rational way of examining the present and its antecedents to determine what can be done to achieve a desirable future and to avoid an unwanted one.

The first planning task is to determine what aspects of the total existing situation you should be focusing on. Typically, a "needs assessment" helps the institution decide what issues should receive attention, resources, and efforts.

The accreditation process, by establishing an institutional agenda, has essentially determined the specific needs or issues that the institution will focus on. The ten Standards discussed below detail the focus of the planning process. The self-assessment extends the needs assessment by asking the institution to determine if there are discrepancies between the agency's Standards, or benchmarks, and the current state of affairs in the institution.

We prefer to use the term "opportunity" rather than "need." The examination of the broad self-assessment issues should be regarded as an opportunity for improvement; an opportunity to create a better and more responsive educational institution. Planning allows the institution to take advantage of these opportunities for improvement. The accreditation process, in general – and the self-assessment exercise in particular – is a special type of planning process.

Planning does not take place in a vacuum. The institution must deliver an overall design for conducting the self-assessment and an appropriate organizational structure. This organizational structure might include work-groups or committees with a clear task assignment; preparation of schedules and time-lines for the completion of tasks; and a procedure for institutional adoption of the resulting product. An important step in the planning process is appointing a liaison to supervise the ISA as well as be the point of contact between AIJS and the institution.

Accreditation Liaison

Each institution seeking accreditation selects a liaison from within the institution to work with the AIJS Accreditation Specialist and staff on matters relating to accreditation. In appointing the liaison the institution should consider that this person have strong organizational abilities, technical communication skills, and a good rapport with the institution's staff. He/she must also have the time to fulfill his or her many responsibilities.

Duties recommended for the accreditation liaison are:

1. To provide an identified place on campus where information can be collected and written up and to provide an address for questions about institutional accreditation.

2. To maintain a file of all accreditation materials, such as Application files, ISA, site visitor's report, accreditation manuals and guidelines, schedules of all visits, and correspondence from AIJS and other agencies that have involvement in the accreditation process.

3. The liaison should make sure that faculty, administration, staff, and students know that these materials are available and make all shareholders in the institution aware of his/her role as liaison so that they may approach him/her directly with any

concerns.

4. To interpret the institution's accrediting standards, policies, and procedures, and to call attention to particular sections of the Handbook that may apply to certain aspects of the institution.

5. To serve as chair or resource person for the institutional self-review, coordinate preparations in advance of evaluation visits, and assist in follow-up studies resulting from the evaluation. To coordinate subsequent accreditation activities.

6. To attend all relevant meetings in order to receive information and participate in policy development. These meetings include AIJS training sessions or workshops which facilitate an understanding of the scope and responsibility of his/her role.

7. To receive and respond to, as appropriate, copies of complaints or requests for action referred by AIJS staff to the institution.

8. To receive bills for fees and visit expenses, and make sure they are paid promptly.

9. Once the institution has been accredited, to continue in this function by preparing the Annual Report required by AIJS, and notifying AIJS of substantive changes, program developments, or other matters, as required by AIJS policy.

While the chief executive officer of an institution may serve as accreditation liaison, many schools prefer to delegate this position to a senior member of the faculty or administration who is interested in accreditation and who will report to the chief executive officer on all relevant activities.

It is hoped that the accreditation liaison receive a suitable degree of visibility on campus, even to the extent of having this position recognized as chairman of an official committee. The accreditation liaison can facilitate an effective relationship between AIJS and the institution and enhance the participation of the institution in accreditation. AIJS hopes that the liaison will seek advice and counsel from its staff along the way.

Focus:

The institution appoints an accreditation liaison who will guide the ISA process.

THE USE OF COMMITTEES

Institutions applying to AIJS for accreditation may consider using committees to help formulate their ISA. Educational institutions are known for using committees in many different ways. An effective committee can bring individuals together to address a common problem and to seek a suitable resolution with broad-based support.

Generally, there are two types of committees. The "ad hoc" committee is formed to consider a particular problem, or situation, and make recommendations on it. When the ad hoc committee has completed its work it is disbanded. The "standing committee," on the other hand, is more permanent. It deals with recurring concerns and facilitates coordination of various functions.

The work of both kinds of committees usually includes investigation, data collection, discussion, analysis and policy recommendations. It goes without saying that a carefully chosen institutional committee that participates in the development of the ISA can be very beneficial to the accreditation process.

Focus:

The accreditation liaison should orchestrate the work of committees appointed to complete specific tasks that are part of the self-appraisal.

THE ROLE OF STANDARDS IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

In Section II of this Handbook, we consider each one of the Standards that guide the accreditation process. For each Standard we will provide the following:

- A definition of the Standard.

- Institutional Implications: what the institution is expected to consider in preparing the self-assessment for that Standard, including a set of representative questions that the task group assigned to this particular Standard may examine during the self-assessment.

- Institutional documents that should be used as exhibits to evidence compliance to the Standard. Your exhibits are not limited to documents on this list.

Start by becoming familiar with all of the Standards. A careful, complete reading of the sections that follow is essential before you start writing the ISA. Such a reading will help you identify areas of commonality or similarity between Standards; this will enable you to avoid duplicating efforts and assist you in writing a well-integrated ISA.

For each Standard examine the questions listed. To what extent can you answer each of them? Remember that it is not simply a case of supplying answers but of understanding the scope of the Standard and the considerations that need to be given in responding to each of the standards. If you believe issues or questions are either not applicable or have little significant impact on your educational goals or operational practices, explain why.

In writing the ISA, explain what your institution does and why. Explain why it is that you have decided to do things the way that you have. Be accurate in describing your

practices and critical in appraising them. If you see that there is a gap between what should be and what is, or between what could be and what is, consider changing the system or the policy rather than noting the discrepancy in the ISA. Write the policies you intend to follow and the procedures that enable you to follow them. The process of working through the ISA is to allow you to review, consider and improve. Take the opportunity of making the process work to your benefit and to the benefit of the institution. During the time it takes to write the ISA and plan the site visit, you will likely have the opportunity to follow these policies. Evidence of compliance should be prepared for the site visit though it may not have been presented in the ISA.

Always consider the likely reaction to your responses by the ISA reviewers. Have them in mind when you write the report or prepare for the on-site review. Anticipate their questions. Put yourself in their position and try to see your institution from the outside, from the perspective of someone who was not previously familiar with it.

At the end of each standard, you will see a list of documents you will include in an appendix to support the policies, procedures and activities described in your response. This list is inclusive; however, there may be other documents that will support descriptions of policies or activities that are specific to your institution.

Focus: Writing the ISA

Break into working committees; choose appropriate people to head those committees, set a defined time line; understand and learn the Standards, (use AIJS support) canvas your staff and administration for information, reflect on the relationship of the Standards and your school, address that relationship, determine what might need improvement and how you intend to improve; make the changes in policy and protocol and prepare any forms needed for documentation, collect the findings of all the committees and allow time for the liaison officer to collate the results, find and organize the supporting documents and be able to print and bind the material.

THE SITE VISIT TEAM

The second phase of the accreditation process is an on-site review by an AIJS site   visit team. Section III of this Handbook provides important guidelines for working most effectively with the site visit team. Therefore Section III should be carefully reviewed before the site visit takes place.

The site visit team will review day-to-day operations at the institution to see how they comply with the designated Standards. While the ISA considers the institution's thoughts and reflections on these Standards, the site visit team will be concerned that these

thoughts are, in fact, backed by a well-developed system of administrative and educational policies, practices and operations.

The AIJS site visit team will consider the Standards below. You should bear in mind that AIJS sees its role as one that provides a catalyst for growth and educational development within an institution of higher education. The Standards that it uses for assessment are regarded as essential components for academic quality and educational vigor -- not simply as abstract notions or as chores that have to be addressed.

REACCREDITATION AND THE PREPARATION OF THE ISA

In preparing an ISA for renewal of accreditation or reaccreditation, the institution should utilize this Guide to the Institutional Self Appraisal   and include two additional sections:

1. Summary of Changes since the last Site Visit

As institutions mature, changes inevitably take place. In this section, the institution should describe the changes that have taken place and decisions and factors that preceded or affected those changes.

2. Implementation of Recommendations from the last Site Visit.

This section should list the recommendations that resulted from the last site visit that AIJS conducted at the institution and should detail the manner in which the institution implemented   those   recommendations.

SECTION II: 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.

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

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 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.

STANDARD 1:

INSTITUTION MISSION AND GOALS

<u>Definition</u>

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 it is integrated throughout all institutional activities. Using the Mission Statement as a guide and benchmark, AIJS can assess how well an institution is accomplishing its mission.

What elements should a Mission Statement contain?

1. A Purpose Statement

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

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

2. An Activity Statement

    This statement will present the activities or the programs that the institution provides in order to accomplish the stated purpose. For example, there are many ways to 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supportive documents:

- Institutional mission
- Institutional catalog/publications
- Long range plans

Consider the following questions:

❑ What is your institution's mission? What is your institution's mission statement? Include a clear description of its mission, goals, and clientele? Provide examples of where your institution's mission statement can be found.

❑ Briefly describe the activities or programs that the institution provides to accomplish its stated purpose?

❑ How does the mission drive the major decisions regarding expansion, growth and development?

❑ How does the mission statement reflect the same values as AIJS, i.e., adherence to Halacha, or Jewish Law, as defined in the Shulchan Aruch?

❑ Describe how your institution's mission is communicated <u>within</u> the institution?

❑ Who are your major stakeholders? How is the mission statement communicated to your interested public or communities?

❑ How often does your institution review its mission statement to see if it needs to be revised? Who participates in the review and possible revisions? Describe the process of the review and provide examples of actions that were taken as a result of this review.

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. Exams, presentations and written assignments are usually evidence of this outside work and preparation.

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, one that does not have a major in Talmudic or Jewish Studies, 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 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Program descriptions
- Learning objectives
- Performance standards
- Institutional calendar
- Institutional catalog
- Sample syllabi
- Sample cumulative academic transcripts
- Internal reviews of programs

Consider the following questions:

❑ Does each program that your institution offers have a curriculum? How is the curriculum of the program(s) aligned with your mission?

❑ AIJS requires that each curriculum contain a 30% minimum core of Jewish Studies courses for each degree or academic credential offered. Describe your requirement of Jewish Studies for each degree or credential you offer. Describe how the student transcripts reflect this core course requirement? Describe how the Jewish studies courses are largely based on traditional texts and consistent with traditional approaches to Jewish Studies? Describe how they are consistent with classic Halacha (Jewish Law) based on the Shulchan Aruch?

❑ What criteria are used to measure that all courses are on a postsecondary level?

❑ Give examples of learning objectives sand performance standards regarding student achievement for each course. Describe what students will be able to do better than before they took the course or series of courses.

❑ For the award of standard degrees, are there a minimum of 30 credits required in general education? Do these 30 credits include English and foreign language skills, communication and writing proficiency, logical reasoning, study of ethics and values etc.

❑ How are program requirements organized? Show a sequential progression and explain how the progression provides increasing, cumulative mastery of subject matter leading to an academic credential.

❑ Each educational program must have a complete description and curriculum as well as a description of the individual courses.

❑ How does the institution ensure that the curriculum is updated to include changes in courses or course material or types of instruction? Provide examples of revisions or changes as a result of this process.

❑ What is the relationship between credits earned and hours of instruction? Provide an academic calendar and course schedule that supports the credit hour assignment. Describe a few examples of courses offered and their corresponding credit assignments

❑ Describe the methods of delivering instruction for the various courses offered and explain how the modes of delivery are appropriate for each 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, meet AIJS benchmarks with respect to student achievement, 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Statement of expected learning outcomes
- Samples of student learning outcomes
- Institutional catalog

Consider the following questions:

❑ Has your institution identified student outcomes that demonstrate the success of your educational program(s) with respect to student achievement, such as acceptance to institutions of higher learning, job placement, completion rates and

transfers to other postsecondary institutions? What are those outcomes? Does your institution collect and retain data of the identified student outcomes and are they available for examination?? Do they reflect the requirements of the curriculum? Do they meet AIJS benchmarks for success with respect to student achievement? Provide documentation supporting the outcomes identified. Describe how the identified outcomes reflect the institution's mission.

❑ Provide evidence that your institution monitors, reviews and assesses the outcomes and how the institution uses the results of the assessment to institute or revise policies or other aspects of the program(s).

❑ What are the policies for establishing satisfactory academic progress? How are these policies applied? What is the minimum Grade Point Average that must be maintained? Is there a maximum time frame for completion of the academic program? How is it measured?

❑ How are satisfactory academic progress policies constructed in a manner that encourages students to improve? Is there an appeals process? Are appeals documented? What procedures or services does the institution have in place to assist students with improving their academic progress? Are study plans included in the satisfactory academic progress policy?

❑ How are students informed of the consequences of not meeting satisfactory academic progress standards (for example, academic probation) Examples of student notification could be through the student catalog, personal notification, documented meeting with student, etc.

❑ Are there specific policies governing attendance? Is there a procedure to enforce these policies? Is this procedure known to faculty and students?

❑ In setting performance standards, how does your institution take into account the standards of similar institutions? Cite examples.

❑ Describe the procedures in place for assisting students who are not making satisfactory academic progress (for example: remedial classes, tutors, study plans).

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 or reaccreditation. 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. Libraries, computer and office facilities must also be adequate to support student learning and the institutional mission.

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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents

- Site map
- A copy of any rental/lease agreements
- A copy of campus security survey

Consider the following questions:

❑ Describe the facilities and demonstrate how they lend themselves to a positive learning experience. Describe the lighting, cooling and heating systems, restroom facilities and dining room/cafeteria and food service options.

❑ Are the facilities owned or leased? Describe the leasing arrangements and provide a copy of the lease.

❑ Is there room to expand? Are there facilities for a school-wide function? Describe options for campus expansion if applicable and provide details on ongoing expansion projects. Identify the sources of funding and

❑ Describe the maintenance of the facilities. Is there in-house maintenance personnel?

Is there a service contract for maintenance?

❑ Is the campus handicapped accessible? Describe the arrangements to assist handicapped students to the maximum extent possible?

❑ What are the parking options for students, faculty, staff and visitors? Is the institution accessible by public transportation?

❑ Does your institution use computers for instructional purposes? If so, are the computer facilities adequate for instructional needs? Is there tech support? Is it adequate?

❑ Are current facilities adequate for current level of operation and student body? Are there plans for campus expansion? What are these plans based on? Have sources for funding expenses been identified?

❑ Describe any major plant and equipment purchases over the last two years?

❑ What library facilities are available? Is there a budget for new acquisitions?

❑ How do the types of books and research materials relate to the areas of instruction in your institution?

❑ Provide evidence of how the institution in compliance with local health, fire and safety codes.

❑ How often does the institution conduct fire drills? Provide evidence.

❑ How is campus security dealt with? Who is responsible for campus security? Provide campus security procedures.

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 information on 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Sections of the student catalog, advertising and brochures, information sheets, or other recruiting materials that detail policies on admissions, transfer of credit, grading, refund policy, financial, academic and personal counseling and other student services.
- A copy of the application form
- Samples of any tests used in the admissions process
- A copy of any interview form used in the admissions process
- A description of how the institution recruits students including any understandings (formal or informal) with other institutions or individuals that serve as a source of applicants ("feeder arrangements")
- Complaint policy
- A description of the criteria for admissions
- A description, possibly in the form of a flowchart, showing the process used for admissions decisions. This diagram should indicate the titles,

or positions, of each individual making admissions decisions at each stage in the process.

- Sample grading sheets
- Samples of graded student work

Consider the following questions:

❑ What are the policies and procedures regarding admissions?

❑ Does the institutional material clearly describe the admissions policy? Are admissions criteria made known to prospective applicants?

❑ Are the requirements spelled out? Are the forms clear and user-friendly?

❑ What are the institutions admissions and transfer of credit policies for students transferring from other institutions? How is transfer credit evaluated from another postsecondary institution? Is this policy described in the catalog? Do student files reflect compliance to the institutional policies? Are these policies consistent with the educational norms of transfer of credit policy?

❑ Do the advertisements reflect the facts? Do students feel that all the academic and student service options that were advertised were available to them?

❑ What are the school grading policies? How are they communicated to the students?

❑ Are there accommodations for students with special physical and/or educational needs?

❑ How does the institution provide students with scholarship and/or financial aid assistance?

❑ What academic counseling or support is available to the student? Is it accessible, affordable, and widely publicized?

❑ Has your institution established procedures for assisting students who have not evidenced satisfactory academic progress (for example: remedial classes, tutors)?

❑ Describe the guidance and counseling services that are available or the information provided to students with personal challenges who seek guidance?

❑ What are the refund policies of your institution? How are students made aware of withdrawal, refund, transfer of credit policies?

❑ Describe the student support services. Describe the support system is in place for out-of-town students in their search for appropriate and affordable housing and board?

❑ What are the accommodations for students who have special physical and/or educational needs?

❑ Describe the information provided to students on how to obtain medical services.

❑ Describe the alumnae association- its officials, activities, scope of influence and assistance.

❑ Is there an alumni association? Who heads it and is this party a member of the school administration?

❑ What are the procedures for student to file complaints? Provide evidence of these procedures. Provide sample complaints and the process and manner in which they were resolved.

❑ What is the process for recognizing and dealing with the phenomena of multiple complaints in one particular area or regarding one particular staff member? Are there any examples of any action taken on the basis of this process?

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 loss or unauthorized access. Release of academic transcripts should follow established procedures.

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

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

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

Transcripts

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

Student Complaints

The institution must have 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Sample student records including financial and academic records
- Sample transcripts
- Sample grading sheets
- Compliance with FERPA
- The institution's complaint policy and sample records of complaints and resolutions

Consider the following questions:

❑ How are student records secured against fire and water damage, theft, misplacement or loss?

❑ How are students and parents ensured privacy guaranteed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regarding student records?

❑ What is the institutional policy regarding unauthorized access to student records? How are these safeguards implemented? Describe staff members' awareness of these safeguards.

❑ Do the students' permanent academic records include the following information or documents?
   1. Record of Admission to institution
   2. Documentation of high school graduation or equivalent
   3. Program and course registration
   4. Record of all courses completed
   5. Academic time period (term/semester/quarter) when each course was taken
   6. Grades for each course
   7. GPA for each term and cumulative GPA

❑ Which staff members are responsible for recording student records?

❑ What is the procedure for issuing a student transcript?

❑ How is confidentiality of information ensured?

❑ Where are records of student finances stored and who has access to those records? Are they stored separately from other files?

❑ Who maintains or updates the student financial records?

❑ Is there adequate separation of duties? Describe the separation of duties.

❑ Is there a system of internal control to ensure that records are complete and accurate?

❑ Who maintains the academic records?

❑ For how long are academic and financial records retained? Detail the retention policy for records.

❑ Describe the process and filing of records of complaints? Where are they stored and how do they reflect school policy in terms of how they were handled by the administration?

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 educational 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 be 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Institutionally generated credentials
- Institutional catalog
- State authorization to grant degree/credential if required
- Articulation agreements with other institutions, if applicable
- A sample form/letter for a student requesting a copy of credential

Consider the following questions:

❑ Describe the credentials granted at the completion of each program offered by the institution. Explain the consistency between the institutional mission and the credentials granted.

❑ Provide evidence that the institution has received authorization to offer postsecondary education?

❑ Describe how the credentials offered are clearly identified in your literature and student catalog so that students are aware of the credentials and the requirements for each credential.

❑ Are the requirements for each credential clearly listed in your literature and student catalog?

❑ How are the standards required to earn a credential comparable to that of similar postsecondary institutions?

❑ Provide examples of any of the credentials awarded that enabled access to higher training and education.

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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Personnel folders
- Faculty evaluations
- Faculty handbook

Consider the following questions:

❑ How do course instructors demonstrate subject competence and pedagogical skill?

❑ Collect faculty degrees, credentials and resumes. How do they show that the instructors hired are appropriate for their teaching responsibilities?

❑ Do clear job descriptions exist for all instruction personnel? Provide samples. Where are they filed?

❑ How often are instructors evaluated? What is the evaluation process?

❑ Who in the institution is responsible for faculty evaluation? How does he/she carry out this role? Where are the evaluations filed?

❑ Give examples of the roles that faculty play in the formation of your institution's academic policies.

❑ Give examples of how faculty members are involved in revising and updating the course curriculum.

❑ How does the institution encourage faculty development and growth?

❑ Describe how the instructors reflect the mission of the school.

❑ Give examples of how student suggestions are incorporated into institutional decisions.

STANDARD 9: ADMINISTRATION, HUMAN RESOURCES &

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 will 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 on 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Administrative personnel folders
- Institutional catalog
- Performance standards for employees
- Written evaluations
- Publications published and made available to the public
- Organizational flow chart

Consider the following questions:

❑ Describe the lines of authority. Attach an organizational chart that indicates the direction of authority. Include a short description of the role of each person listed on the organizational chart.

❑ Are personnel aware of their roles and responsibilities?

❑ Are there written job descriptions for administrative personnel? How do you view the match between the job description and the qualifications of the personnel?

❑ Are job descriptions periodically reviewed to assure relevance to the students and to the institution? How would this happen?

❑ Where are personnel files kept and how are personnel files secured?

❑ How does the institution attract candidates for new positions? Describe the process.

❑ How are new employees oriented to the organizational culture of the institution?

❑ What is the procedure for employee complaints and grievances and how is it implemented?

❑ Who makes decisions regarding hiring and dismissing administrative personnel? On what basis? Discuss an example of hiring and firing.

❑ How does administrative personnel feel regarding the adequacy of the support staff?

❑ Is the support staff adequate for the size and scope of the institutional activities? Are there staffing or responsibility changes that they might suggest if the budget would allow?

❑ Are personnel files of employees who left the institution maintained for reference purposes?

❑ Where is key staff listed so that students and members of the public know whom to contact with any questions?

❑ Does the institution have performance standards for its employees?

❑ What is the system in place for measuring individual performance?

❏ How does your institution provide feedback on individual performance?

❏ Are job requirements periodically revised to reflect changes in job responsibilities? Can your institution describe at least one such case?

❏ Does each employee have a complete personnel folder? What documents are in those files?

❏ Describe regular communication among the employees? Formal? Informal? Memos? Do they feel it is effective?

❏ Describe the relationship between the different offices? In particular describe the division of roles between the financial aid and business required for a Title IV eligible. Describe the coordination between the financial aid and registrar offices institution.

❏ Are there meetings with administrative, departmental, and instructional staff?

❏ How are new or updated policies and procedures communicated among appropriate personnel?

❏ Does your institution ask for student feedback, comments or suggestions in other than course evaluation contexts? How do you do this? Describe actions taken on the basis of this feedback.

❏ Describe the structure and functions of the alumni association? What role do alumni play in institutional matters? Does the institution maintain a list/database of graduates?

❏ Is there an alumni newspaper or publication? How often is it published?

❏ Is there a specific institutional member to deal with the local community? How does your institution describe your community relationships? Do community members describe a similar relationship?

❏ How does your institution build relationships with educational institutions from which they receive your students? How many secondary level institutions are represented in the student body? How do the feeder schools feel about your institution's outcomes? (Their graduates' success rates?)

❏ Are there adult education, community classes and lecture series, sponsored by the institution? Describe how your institution's facilities available to and used by the community?

❏ What are the cooperative relationships with other institutions and

organizations in the community that enhance your institution's educational programs?

❑ Does your institution have any formal or informal understandings with other institutions that serve as a source of applications or a destination after program completion? What is the nature of this arrangement?

❑ Describe the members of the Board of Directors. What are their roles and responsibilities? Describe their involvement in institutional policies and decisions. Give specific examples.

❑ Are individuals from important relevant publics represented on the institution's Board of Directors? How does the Board assist in community relations?

❑ Describe the relationship of your institution with its neighbors and the broader community.

❑ Describe the relationships your institution has with feeder institutions. How many secondary institutions are represented in your incoming class? Describe any plans you might have to increase the number of feeder schools. How do your feeder schools feel about your outcomes?

STANDARD   10:

FINANCIAL PRACTICES

Definition

This is the Standard as defined by AIJS:

The institution shall possess the financial resources necessary to fufill its mission and educational objectives. The instition shall demonstrate institutional financial stabilily.

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.

In addition to your institution's delivery of educational services, you must be able to demonstrate professional competence in your dealings with the financial aspects necessary for effectively carrying out your mission. The financial officers and staff must be qualified to handle finances by demonstrating competency in federal and state regulations for educational institutions and financial aid disbursement. This includes your financial dealings with your students, employees and suppliers and other key economic players including providers of student financial assistance programs.

Your institution must have in place professional and competent staff familiar with basic management and accounting principles as well as accepted internal control standards. Staff must ensure that the assets and resources of the institution are accounted for, monitored and properly safeguarded. They must devise and implement an adequate system of financial procedures to ensure that the financial responsibilities of your institution are being met.

A standard institutional accounting system is imperative to ensure that financial information has been properly and consistently recorded. An appropriate audit system 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 (preferably annually) and reviewed by designated parties such as the institution's board of 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 review, your 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 competed fiscal year are also necessary for re-accreditation.

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

Your institution should set tuition and related fees with the following considerations; the type, quality, and length of the educational programs provided, your institution's actual costs, your institution's mission, competitive environment, communities, and economic background form which your draw your students.

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

If your institution participates in federal governmental financial aid for its students, you 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.

Your 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.

To ensure a comprehensive response to this Standard, please provide the following supporting documents:

- Audited financial statement for the most recently completed fiscal year
- Financial statements for the two year period prior to the most recently completed fiscal year

Consider the following questions:

❑ Are there issues in either of the two most recent financial statements that might impact your institution's ability to continue in operation?

❑ Are there any unusual items on the financial statements and how can they be explained?

❑ Are there policies to monitor expenses? Are receipts obtained and retained for all expenditures?

❑ Does your institution have a budgeting process? Which personnel are involved in this process? How does the process work?

❑ Do alumni contribute to the fundraising efforts? How are they recruited?

❑ Does the institution have a designated and qualified Chief Financial Officer (CFO)?

❑ Are internal control policies reviewed and approved by a CPA? Have any recommendations regarding internal control been made and implemented?

❑ Are there considerations of community and student needs incorporated into determining overall tuition?

❑ Is there a current tuition schedule? If yes, is it reflected on the student's account card?

❑ Is the tuition comparable to similar institutions?

❑ Is there a clear tuition refund policy?

❑ Is the refund policy communicated in your institution's student catalog and other printed materials?

The following questions apply to institutions that currently receive state or federal student aid:

❑ Does your institution employ a trained Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) and/or contract with an outside consultant for student financial aid administration and compliance?

❑ Is the FAA a member of a recognized professional body?

❑ Are personnel dealing with student financial aid aware of regulatory changes and

current issues in the field?

❑ Has the institution ever been under review by state or federal student aid offices?

SECTION III: APPENDIX

INSTITUTIONAL GUIDE TO AIJS SITE VISIT

The effort and thought devoted to preparing for an event is usually reflecting in the ultimate outcome. This is certainly the case with an academic review. This section provides suggestions that may guide the institution's activities prior to the AIJS site visit of the institution.

ACTIVITIES PRECEDING THE ON-SITE VISIT

Both the institution and AIJS staff have important responsibilities prior to the site visit. These include the selection of the visit dates, selection of the evaluation committee, details for local arrangements, organization of the review schedule, and the distribution of the ISA and related documents.

SELECTION OF VISIT DATES

The site visit date is selected after the ISA has been formally accepted by AIJS. An AIJS on-site evaluation is an integral phase of the overall accreditation process. This visit should occur during an interval in the institution's academic year when the staff has adequate discretionary time to devote to the needs of the evaluation.

The visit will be scheduled during a period when the site visit team can observe the normal, typical rhythm of the institution. Thus, it is generally inadvisable to schedule a visit during the registration week or during the week of final exams, when one would expect the institution's staff to be distracted by other responsibilities. Similarly, it would not be suitable to plan a visit during the summer recess when classes are not in session.

The mission of AIJS, which is to serve educational institutions that specialize in Jewish Studies, clearly requires sensitivity to certain critical periods marked by the Jewish calendar. For example, this will normally preclude scheduling team visits either immediately preceding or following Jewish festivals.

For its part, AIJS too faces certain constraints in scheduling. The assembling of a qualified site visit team will call upon a number of professionals to temporally relinquish their normal commitments and responsibilities in order to dedicate their efforts to the visitation.

AIJS will endeavor to arrange visit dates that accommodate the needs of as many of the partners in the review as possible. While committed to a consultative process, AIJS reserves the right to exercise the prerogative of specifying the dates of the visitation. In setting these dates, an optimal balance of considerations of the constituent parties will be sought.

DISTRIBUTION OF INSTITUTIONAL SELF-APPRAISAL

The visitation cannot take place unless AIJS and each committee member receive a copy of the ISA. At least four copies of the ISA should be mailed to the AIJS office in advance of the anticipated, but not finalized visit. AIJS may request more copies if necessary.

AIJS will send a copy of the report and related materials to each committee member within reasonable time prior to the visit. Original documents used as support to the ISA should be filed as exhibits and made available to the visitors during the site visit. There should be a designated document room with sufficient tables to allow the site visitors to open and review documents as necessary.

PREPARATION OF ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

The ISA report 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. Frequently, however, additional materials may be required to supplement the facts provided by the report. In such cases, AIJS will identify these materials in advance.

Such 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. All additional materials should be available in the document room. In addition to, or in the document room, there should be space set aside for the committee work at the visitation site.

SELECTION OF THE SITE VISITORS

The process of the site review is discussed in the AIJS Handbook where it explains that the members of the site visit team are selected on the basis of their experience, expertise and commitment to quality in Jewish Studies education. These visit teams

will generally consist of three to five individuals with professional competence in such areas as academics, institutional administration, finance and student services, as reflected in the AIJS Standards.

AIJS site visit teams are selected on the basis of individual members' expertise and capacity to objectively evaluate an institution on the basis of its own stated mission and the presented Standards. While the selection of committee members is the responsibility of AIJS, a concerted effort will be made to work cooperatively with institutions in identifying potential committee members.

Prior to the site visit, AIJS will undertake the task of identifying and appointing the members of the site visit teams. A roster of proposed evaluators, 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 reviewer, citing a possible conflict of interest. The AIJS conflict of interest policy is included above in Section I of the Handbook.

An institution shares its strengths and weaknesses in a site visit. The site visitors are selected for their integrity and discretion and sign an affidavit that no information learned during a site visit may be shared outside the site-visit.

The critical element which guides the selection of the evaluation team is that they all approach their task as peers as well as agents of interested stakeholders (The Department of Education and potential students) who will appraise the value and validity of the education and services offered at your institution.

LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS

The site visit team is highly task-orientated. Each team member understands that he or she has a job to perform and wishes to fulfill this responsibility in the most efficient and effective manner possible. AIJS evaluators have a great deal of work to accomplish in a very condensed period of time. Everything the institution can do to provide suitable, adequate, and thorough arrangements will facilitate this work. The purpose of the host institution is to permit the team members to remain focused on their tasks.

Usually, committee members will make their own travel plans and reservations. Suggestions that may help shorten travel time or lower costs are always appreciated.

Visitors should be provided with clear instructions on how to reach their housing accommodations, if appropriate. When called for, the institution should arrange local transportation in advance. Normally, it is expected that evaluation committees will be housed away from the institution in a nearby hotel, motel, or in suitable private residences. When the housing arrangements are not within walking distance of the institution, transportation to and from the institution should be arranged.

It is especially important that an office, classroom or conference room be set aside for the duration of the visit and clearly designated as the visiting team's quarters. This area should be large enough to comfortably accommodate the entire committee and any other persons or groups that might be interviewed there.

Other interviews will normally be conducted in the appropriate institution offices or conference rooms, or in special instances may be conducted off-campus. The location assigned to the visitors should have a separate telephone line, a computer, and place for storing materials. There should also be unrestricted access to a photocopier.

It is expected that breakfast and lunch will be provided at the institution and, in most cases, it will take the form of a w orking luncheon. Appropriate refreshments should be available throughout the team's working day.

PREPARATION OF VISIT SCHEDULE

On-site evaluations usually occupy three working days, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying institution. The institution and the committee chair will prepare a detailed schedule in advance of the visit. This schedule should be as firm as possible, recognizing that adjustments may be called for as the visitation unfolds.

The institution should designate a staff person to act as liaison with the committee chair. This staff person will contact individuals in advance of their meeting with the committee, arrange schedule changes where necessary, provide additional documentation and materials as required, and serve as an overall facilitator for the duration of the review.

Typically, the visit begins with a meeting between the site visit team and the institution's dean or chief administrative officer. The chairperson of the institution's board of directors may also join this meeting. This is an opportunity for the key administrator to provide a historic overview that will help provide a context for the subsequent review. The mission, principle goals as well as the main challenges being addressed should be shared with the committee. At the same time, the committee members may raise certain key questions and seek to clarify important issues. The overall schedule should be briefly reviewed at this time and adjustments made if needed.

The meeting with the chief administrator is usually followed by interviews with other senior institution staff. The evaluation committee will organize themselves to allow different members to focus on specific Standards consistent with their expertise and areas of specialization.

Individual committee members will then conduct interviews with those staff

members most relevant to the particular Standards that are the main object of his/her attention.

Interviews are generally scheduled during the day, with evenings reserved for consultation among the members of the site visit team. The site visit is concluded with an exit conference at which time the major findings and conclusions that will comprise the substance of the written opinion are verbally transmitted to the chief administrator.

Institutions will receive a copy of the site visitor's summary within 45 days of the visit and will have 14 days to respond to the site visitor summary in writing.