Self-Study Design

Prepared for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Visit of May 14, 2014

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Section 1: Introduction

I. Brief History of The Jewish Theological Seminary

The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) was founded in 1886 through the efforts of two distinguished rabbis, Dr. Sabato Morais and Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, along with a group of prominent lay leaders from Sephardic congregations in Philadelphia and New York. Its mission was to preserve the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism. In 1887, JTS held its first class of ten students in the vestry of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, New York City’s oldest congregation.

Since then, JTS has greatly expanded its mission, creating a beautiful campus and evolving into the prestigious center of Jewish learning it is today. A Jewish university with a world-class faculty and a diverse student body, JTS grants undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees through its five schools and offers enriching programs for the Jewish community in the United States, Israel, and around the world.

JTS schools and facilities include The Graduate School; The Rabbinical School; H. L. Miller Cantorial School and College of Jewish Music; William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education; Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies; the Rebecca and Israel Ivy Prozdor High School, a model supplementary high school; a summer school; several research institutes; lay leadership and professional institutes; community education programs; student residence halls; and the incomparable collections of JTS’s world-renowned library.

In addition, JTS’s affiliation with The Jewish Museum and consortia with prestigious academic neighbors support and enhance the scholarly ambience of its community of learning.

As part of our mission (see next section), JTS is committed to introducing religious alternatives in Israel and eastern Europe through its affiliate, the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem; training a new Russian Jewish cohort through Project Judaica, its Jewish studies program in Moscow; and raising a generation of literate and observant Jews in North America through its intensive work with the Ramah camps and Schechter schools. JTS is also committed to providing adults with Jewish knowledge and experience through a wide range of innovative programs, helping to create a responsible and informed centrist Jewish voice on public issues from religious pluralism in Israel to bioethics.

Our multifaceted community is committed to making Judaism come alive for new generations, to bring the richness and vitality of traditional Jewish values into the twenty-first century.

II. Mission Statement

The current JTS mission, which replaced the mission statement that was in effect at the time of our previous decennial review, was adopted in May, 2010:

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America is a preeminent institution of Jewish higher education that integrates rigorous academic scholarship and teaching with a commitment to strengthening Jewish tradition, Jewish lives, and Jewish communities.

JTS articulates a vision of Judaism that is learned and passionate, pluralist and authentic, traditional and egalitarian; one that is thoroughly grounded in Jewish texts, history, and practices, and fully engaged with the societies and cultures of the present. Our vision joins faith with inquiry; the covenant of our ancestors with the creative insights of today; intense involvement in the society and State of Israel with devotion to the flowering of Judaism throughout the world; service to the Jewish community, as well as to all of the communities of which Jews are a part: our society, our country, and our world.

JTS serves North American Jewry by educating intellectual and spiritual leaders for Conservative Judaism and the vital religious

1 “Conservative Judaism” is named for its goal of conserving essential Jewish tradition while adapting to changing sociological and cultural conditions.
center, training rabbis, cantors, scholars, educators, communal professionals, and lay activists who are inspired by our vision of Torah and dedicated to assisting in its realization.

III. Important Recent Developments and Expectations for the Future

Since our previous decennial review in 2006, JTS has enacted structural changes in both academic and administrative areas and has initiated a number of projects affecting curricula of all JTS schools and programs. The following developments will be explained and explored at greater length in the full Self-Study:

a. **Academic Reorganization**

   JTS significantly streamlined its academic structure. In fall 2009, there were five schools, seventeen academic departments or programs, and forty-three graduate degree options. The large number of divisions and subdivisions inhibited efficiency and made it difficult to respond to changing needs and interests. As a result, we reorganized the faculty and academic programs to stimulate collaboration across schools and programs, facilitating interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teamwork, and highlighting distinctive areas of specialization. The academic administrative structure was likewise streamlined into three divisions (the Division of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies; the Division of Religious Leadership; and the Division of Educational Leadership). The array of departments and programs was replaced with a unified faculty of Jewish Studies in several broad areas: Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation; Rabbinic Literatures and Cultures; Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Studies; Modern Jewish Studies; Jewish Education; Jewish Professional Leadership; Jewish Languages; and Special Programs. The concept of this consolidation has generally been accepted, and during 2014-15 we will evaluate details of the restructuring to determine if it is meeting our intended objectives. This evaluation will be focused primarily within Standards 2, 7, and 14.

b. **Strategic Planning Initiatives**

   In addition to completing a strategic planning initiative for the entire institution in the spring of 2010, JTS has been engaged in – and, in some cases, continues – focused strategic planning projects for the Davidson School, The Cantorial School, List College, and The Library.

c. **Technology in Education**

   We have made major strides in this area during the past few years due, in large part, to our special collaboration with Columbia University’s Center for New Media and Technology (CCNMTL), an educational technologist in our William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, and through projects with other institutions, supported by grants from several important foundations. We continue to evaluate the best ways to make use of technologies for our matriculating students and for many others, outside of 3080 Broadway, throughout the world.

d. **Arts Initiative**

   Over the past several years, JTS added a significant focus by encouraging incorporation of the arts into Jewish studies courses and through special institution-wide events such as concerts, dramatic performances, art shows, multi-media exhibitions, and the like. We wanted JTS to come alive in new ways, enabling students to experience modes of learning that were previously not possible at JTS and drawing in visitors who had never before entered JTS.

e. **Jewish Education Initiatives**

   Beginning with the experiential Jewish education (EJE) MA “concentration,” The Davidson School will now integrate its components across its degrees so that all students can explore applications of EJE. This approach will mesh with ongoing work in training day school teachers and organizational leaders in synagogues and communal settings. The Liturgical Interpreters Project is designed to prepare our graduate students to become dynamic prayer leaders and teachers in a variety of communal settings. Finally, “Innovation Hubs” have been launched, bringing together coalitions of educators to generate new ideas about driving concerns in Jewish life.
f. **Hebrew Language Initiatives**

As the result of invited outside evaluators’ recommendations in 2010, JTS revised its Hebrew course offerings and foci, and we will expand our assessment of changes implemented. To benefit from new technologies and the great potential of flipped classrooms, we will continue to explore the most effective and creative ways to address the many, and varied, Hebrew language needs we find in all of our schools. This becomes especially important since, while our course lengths will increase for many courses, they have been reduced for others, including some Hebrew courses. We hope our review will help us find the balance between the most efficient settings for study of Hebrew with the best record of long-term language retention and use as our students find themselves in a fluid job market. To address the needs of a changing applicant market, we will also determine the most appropriate levels to begin or enhance Hebrew language courses fully online.

g. **Israel Education**

JTS has been devoting increased time and effort to the area of Israel education. Specific projects and JTS-based discussion programs, e.g., “Speaking about Israel,” have been enhanced by significant curricular activities over the past few years. The Rabbinical School has modified its year-in-Israel program, and the Davidson School has developed a successful one-semester “Kesher Hadash” (literally, “New Connection”) program for education students. In addition, a foundation grant has enabled JTS to increase course offerings and public programs about Israel for a period of at least three years. Such support enriches the ways in which JTS explores Israel education with an eye toward nuanced discussion of the complex roles Israel fills for the Jewish community.

h. **Community Engagement**

In order to broaden our reach, we have expanded efforts to reach individuals in cities throughout the US, experimenting with a variety of program formats, from a successful “Jewish University for a Day” model to mini-courses of four meetings, from full ten-session courses with a two-year curriculum to an enriched web presence at learn.jtsa.edu. Our Department of Community Engagement is now determining ways to proceed in the most effective manner over the coming years.

i. **New Branding and Message Project**

As a result of a request for proposals, we selected the Zehno firm to assist us in planning a new branding and marketing campaign. A steering committee—comprising faculty, administrators, students, and Board of Trustee members—oversees the project. It has completed the first phase of the project (a brand audit) phase and is now proceeding to the next phrase (the message audit). This branding and messaging initiative will help JTS develop programs that best reflect our current mission. Some of those will be started during the Self-Study process, while others are projected to begin after our Self-Study but prior to our next Periodic Review Report.

IV. **Steps Taken to Prepare for the Self-Study**

In November, 2013, the Associate Provost along with the Manager of Academic Planning attended the MSCHE Self-Study Institute and met with JTS’s MSCHE Staff Liaison, Dr. Tito Guerrero. In January, 2014, in consultation with Chancellor Arnold Eisen, the Self-Study Executive Committee was confirmed and conducted its initial meeting, during which the MSCHE Standards of Excellence, the Self-Study Design handbook and notes from MSCHE Self-Study Institute were reviewed and discussed. A Self-Study model, comprehensive design, was selected and a plan of action was developed to draft workgroup charges, research questions and membership. Later that month, the Executive Committee provided an initial explanation of the Self-Study goals and process to the Faculty Assembly, emphasizing the importance of faculty input in the Self-Study process as well as the importance of faculty members’ continued involvement in our ongoing assessment efforts.

By the end of February, 2014, the Executive Committee convened for its second meeting to identify workgroup co-chairs and a preliminary list of workgroup members. The Executive Committee also developed drafts of workgroup charges and research questions for Self-Study. A timeline for the Self-Study process leading up to the MSCHE liaison’s initial site visit was reviewed and confirmed. By mid-February, the full Self-Study Steering Committee, composed of the Executive Committee and workgroup co-chairs, met to discuss the purposes of the Self-Study, its structure, workgroups, schedule and initial tasks. Co-chairs of workgroups were invited to request changes to workgroup membership and to offer feedback on the draft workgroup charges and research questions. The Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, a co-chair of the Self-Study Executive Committee, conferred with the Board of Trustees Chair, to plan Board of Trustee involvement in the Self-Study process. He also announced the Self-Study project to the entire JTS staff at the semi-annual Staff Assembly, explaining the importance of Self-Study, again emphasizing the importance of community participation.
Over the next few weeks, each workgroup met independently to discuss and review charges and research questions. Additionally, workgroup co-chairs met with our assessment consultant, who helped each group determine scope and feasibility of each group’s charge. By mid-March, each workgroup had submitted a final draft of their respective charges, research questions, and an initial index of data sources to be used as evidence of compliance with MSCHE Characteristics. The final Self-Study Design document was drafted throughout the next month in preparation for the MSCHE staff liaison visit in mid-May, 2014.

To foster communication and collaboration, a Blackboard intranet was created for the Self-Study process. MSCHE resources, previous reports to MSCHE and responses, and documents that apply to various Standards are housed within this intranet. The Office of Academic Planning houses additional resources in hard copy and provides support to workgroups. To share the Self-Study process with the general JTS community, a Self-Study website will be launched by September, 2014.

Section 2: Nature and Scope of the Self-Study

Given JTS’s commitment to assessment, we chose to model our Self-Study as a Comprehensive Report in the Context of the current Standards in Characteristics of Excellence with an emphasis on institutional and academic assessment. This structure allows us to showcase the special strengths of our institution while also demonstrating our commitment to ongoing improvement. As shown in the chart on the next page, The Standards of Excellence are grouped into four overarching themes, each with its own workgroup. They are “Who We Are,” “Institutional Resources,” “The Student Experience,” and “Educational Mission.”

- “Who We Are”—will examine the extent to which the components of our mission inform and strengthen each other;
- “Institutional Resources”—will examine the extent to which JTS creates contexts to achieve its mission and devotes sufficient resources for them;
- “The Student Experience”—will examine the extent to which JTS is attracting students who can excel within its programs and have the co-curricular and extra-curricular support they need to succeed as they matriculate;
- “Educational Mission”—will examine the elements that are at the heart of student learning at JTS and will analyze the extent to which JTS provides sufficient learning opportunity for students to achieve expected educational outcomes.

While each of these groups will explore how each Standard in its purview is being met, two additional workgroups have been formed specifically to address Standard 7, Institutional Assessment, and Standard 14, Academic Assessment. This will provide additional opportunity for each of JTS’s departments and programs to take an active part in Self-Study through their annual assessment review process and to give the campus community a chance to speak collectively about mission, goals, and continual improvement. While each workgroup will address planning, implementation and review of their respective Standards, these two latter workgroups—spearheaded by campus assessment managers and faculty—will provide additional opportunity for the campus to benefit from the Self-Study process.
The workgroup structure, along with the MSCHE Standards associated with each workgroup, follows:

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<tr>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL</th>
<th>ACADEMIC</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workgroup 1:</strong> Who We Are</td>
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<td>Standard 1: Mission and Goals</td>
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<td><strong>Workgroup 3:</strong> Institutional Assessment</td>
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<td>Standard 7: Institutional Assessment</td>
<td>Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning</td>
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### Section 3: Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

“Do we do it? How do we know it? How do we show it?”

In the initial stages of Self-Study planning, the Executive Committee often repeated the above phrase to clarify the focus and direction of Self-Study. This phrase appeared at the top of each workgroup’s draft charge and is utilized to clarify the purpose of Self-Study to various stakeholder groups. It reflects the intentionality of the Self-Study process as it relates to the culture at JTS. As the institution continues the current Self-Study, we want our activities to inform ongoing work within the institution, and, therefore, our descriptions of the Self-Study process will use language to facilitate additional conversation and awareness of our goals. Our Self-Study is designed so that constituents find the exercise of Self-Study useful and, in the refrain we heard at the Self-Study Institute, that the process will be meaningful and manageable.

Specifically, the JTS campus community aims, collectively, to achieve the following outcomes through the process of Self-Study:

1. to bring together various constituencies throughout the campus community in order to deepen institutional self-awareness in relation to our mission;
2. to celebrate institutional growth and improvement since our last decennial review and to identify ways to strengthen and grow so that we may forcefully carry out our mission for years to come;
3. to demonstrate compliance with MSCHE Characteristics of Excellence; and
4. to monitor and strengthen ongoing planning and assessment processes as a reflection of our commitment to advance institutional improvement.
Section 4: Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Workgroups

The Executive Committee
Tsivia Finman, Manager of Academic Planning;  
Stephen Garfinkel (co-chair), Associate Provost; MSCHM Accreditation Liaison  
Officer; and Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation;  
Marc Gary (co-chair), Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer;  
Linda Levine, Registrar and Director of Financial Aid

Our Executive Committee is compact, ensuring effective management. All four members of the Executive Committee were selected as a result of their commitment to and experience with assessment and institutional effectiveness as well as the scope of their JTS responsibilities and their dedication to the Self-Study process. One co-chair and one member of the Executive have particular knowledge and oversight of operational aspects of the institution, and one co-chair and one member have more focused knowledge and oversight of academic activities. Marc Gary, one of the co-chairs, provides direct liaison with the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees, through its chair, Abby Joseph Cohen.

The role of the Executive Committee is to plan and guide the Self-Study process. An expanded group of twelve individuals (the Executive Committee and the eight individuals who are workgroup co-chairs), comprise the full Self-Study Steering Committee. Workgroup co-chairs and members are detailed below.

Workgroups:
Workgroup co-chairs were selected based on the following merits:
1. their expertise, institutional memory and/or roles within the institution;
2. the respect they have within large segments of the campus community;
3. their goal-oriented focus and their commitment to an inclusive and effective process.

Membership in each workgroup was carefully considered to ensure representation from diverse campus constituencies, scope and expertise related to specific themes or MSCHE Characteristics and/or ability to contribute to various parts of the Self-Study process (such as data collection, analysis and/or writing aptitude). Each workgroup contains at least one member of the faculty, one member of administration, and one member of the JTS Board of Trustees. During the coming academic year, most workgroups will involve student representatives. Each workgroup is also encouraged, as needed, to consult other individuals who are not formally members of the workgroup, but can add information and insight to the research questions and self-study process.

Working group 1: Who We Are
Co-Chairs:
Martin Oppenheimer, General Counsel and Assistant Secretary  
Bonnie Epstein, Senior Director of Development
Members:
Burton Visotzky, Associate Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies, and  
Director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies, and  
Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue  
Elise Dowell, Chief Communications Officer  
Akila Srinivasan, Executive Assistant, Legal Affairs, Board of Trustees  
Daniel Beller, Member, Board of Trustees
Working group 2: Institutional Resources

Co-Chairs:
Fred Schnur, Chief Financial Officer
Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Walter and Sarah Schlesinger Dean of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies, and Associate Professor of Jewish History

Members:
Jack Wertheimer, Professor of American Jewish History
Andrew Dorsch, Budget Manager
James Esposito, Director of Operations, Facilities Management
Josie Gray, Director Institutional Grants
Lewis Lane, Assistant Director of Information Technology
Shira Markert, Office Manager, Registrar and Financial Aid, Student Life, and Residence Life
Yoef Merves, Human Resources Generalist
Eric Rosen, Member, Board of Trustees

Working group 3: Institutional Assessment

Co-Chairs:
Diana Torres-Petrilli, Director of Human Resources
Marc Gary, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer

Members:
David Kraemer, Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics, and Joseph J. and Dora Abbell Librarian
Linda Levine, Registrar and Director of Financial Aid
Ned Gladstein, Member, Board of Trustees

Working group 4: The Student Experience

Co-Chairs:
Sara Horowitz, Dean of Student Life
Melissa Present, Director of Enrollment Management

Members:
Benjamin Gampel, Associate Professor of Jewish History
David Davar, Director of Student Counseling
Bradley Moot, Director of Residence Life
Naomi Steinberger, Director of Library Services
Randie Malinsky, Member, Board of Trustees

Working group 5: Educational Mission

Co-Chairs:
Shira Epstein, Assistant Professor of Jewish Education
Shira Kohn, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School

Members:
Alan Cooper, Provost and Professor of Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation
Lisa Gelber, Associate Dean of the Rabbinical School
Meredith Katz, Clinical Assistant Professor of Jewish Education
Amy Kalmanofsky, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation
Mimi Alperin, Member, Board of Trustees

Dr. Kohn became workgroup co-chair, replacing Rebecca Grabiner who is leaving JTS at the end of May 2014.
Working group 6: Academic Assessment

Co-Chairs:
Tsvia Finman, Manager of Academic Planning
Sarah Tauber, Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

Members:
Robert Harris, Area Coordinator and Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation
Jeffrey Kress, Associate Professor of Jewish Education
Barbara Mann, Area Coordinator and Associate Professor of Hebrew Literature
Yale Asbell, Member, Board of Trustees
Floy Kaminsky, Member, Board of Trustees

Section 5: Charges to the Workgroups and Guiding Research Questions

Below are the charges and research questions for each of the workgroups. Each group charge elaborates the rationale for the formation of each theme around specific Standards of Excellence. Research questions reflect careful consideration of each Standard, so that we comprehensively demonstrate compliance, while showcasing priorities and considerations exemplifying JTS and our institutional culture.

Group charge:
The three standards that are assigned to this group all relate to the vision and leadership that shape the culture of our institution. This group will examine the extent to which each part of our mission informs and strengthens the other. The current mission moves away from serving primarily an elite minority of scholars and rabbis and has been expanded to reflect the needs of the wider communities JTS serves. Our mission emphasizes our traditional strengths of rigorous Judaic Studies with an added focus to bring those strengths to new constituencies.

Research Questions to be addressed:

Standard 1: Mission and Goals
1. How are the institution’s operations consistent with its mission and goals?
2. How does the institution determine whether it is achieving each aspect of its mission, e.g., how effectively do stated purposes of scholarship and teaching guide all levels of planning?
3. To what extent are we succeeding in reaching our targeted audiences?
4. How can the institution’s constituencies become more involved in redirecting activities to better carry out the mission?

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
1. How has the Board of Trustees’ composition and mandate changed to reflect the new mission? To what extent do we have a leadership structure in place to support the new mission?
2. What are the criteria for selecting new Trustees, determining term limits, and setting expectations for all Trustees?
3. Does the Board of Trustees have sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity?
4. To what degree is the Board effective in raising resources?
5. To what extent do institutional constituencies (faculty/students/staff/advisory boards/alumni) have a voice in policy development and decision-making? Does that input lead to JTS actualizing its mission?
Standard 6: Integrity

1. What are the safeguards in place for ensuring academic integrity and preventing plagiarism?
2. What procedures are in place to review and update policy manuals?
3. How does JTS ensure policies are applied fairly and consistently - towards students, faculty and staff? How do we document and act on alleged violation of regulations or policies?
4. What are the procedures for addressing grievances and how do we collect data to assess if there are any patterns in grievances that indicate a problem requiring attention?
5. What evidence is there that the institution adheres to principles of academic freedom? When there have been challenges to academic freedom principles, how has the institution responded and what has been the outcome or resolution?

Group charge:

This group will examine the extent to which JTS conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on our mission and goals. How do we fund our institutional priorities? How do we ensure that departments and programs are funded to facilitate the JTS mission? This group will evaluate Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal; Standard 3: Institutional Resources, and Standard 5: Administration. These standards reflect institutional plans and actions that create a context for the institution to achieve its mission, and their review includes the extent to which infrastructure, resources and hierarchy support our educational and community priorities.

Research Questions to be addressed:

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

1. How does our current budget process provide resources necessary to achieve JTS’s mission and goals?
2. How does planning affect budgeting and institutional investment?
3. How do we assess and evaluate budget allocation and activities to reflect institutional priorities?
4. What changes have we instituted to align our institutional resources with our mission?
5. How do our budgeting and planning processes utilize assessment results of these processes to improve budgeting and planning?

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

1. What structures do we have in place to continue reviewing the alignment of institutional resources with our mission?
2. How do we ensure that resources (human, financial, technical, physical facilities) necessary to achieve JTS’s mission are available and accessible?
3. What policies and procedures are in place to determine allocation of assets and how consistently are they applied?
4. What are the strategies JTS uses to assess the level of and efficient utilization of institutional resources?

Standard 5: Administration

1. Is the administrative structure conducive to achieve JTS’s mission and goals?
2. To what extent does our structure foster quality and improvement?
3. To what extent do we have the optimal number, quality and level of staffing to properly perform the necessary functions?

Group charge:

This group is charged with analyzing the ways in which JTS conducts an ongoing review of its institutional (i.e., not directly academic) practices. In addition to assessment activities considered elsewhere in this report for specific standards, this group is charged with analyzing the extent to which institutional assessment is fostered by our overall organizational structure and procedures, that a culture of ongoing assessment exists and that assessment is a cornerstone of JTS day-to-day activities. To what extent are planning and resource allocation informed by careful analysis of institutional and departmental outcomes? How are assessment strategies being used to advance the institution?
Research Questions to be addressed:

**Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

1. To what extent does our structure facilitate ongoing assessment?
2. How are the results of those assessments used to improve ongoing departmental practices?
3. What institutional resources support a culture of assessment (Administrative/Technical/Financial)?
4. How do all the above support the institution’s mission and goals?

**Group charge:**

This group is charged with examining the extent to which JTS is targeting and admitting students who will excel within its programs, and that once these students matriculate, have the support they need to succeed. This working group will evaluate the extent JTS’s infrastructure, staffing, programming and departments devoted to student support are sufficient and adaptive to meet the needs of various student populations. Finally, this workgroup will explore related educational activities as these activities pertain to admissions and the overall student experience.

Research Questions to be addressed:

**Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

1. What are JTS’s admissions processes? How does JTS reach prospective students? To what extent does JTS target and admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with the JTS mission and culture?
2. How has increased competition from other academic institutions impacted enrollment at JTS and how does JTS respond to increased competition for each of its divisions and schools?
3. What plans and resources are needed to remain competitive and attract more students to JTS?
4. To what extent does JTS use data from enrollment trends and matriculating student surveys to refine future recruitment strategies?
5. How are recruitment, admissions and retention strategies assessed and revised?
6. How have recruitment/admissions strategies changed within the last five years, and on what basis?
7. To what extent are retention rates examined?
8. How are exit interviews or other assessments of graduating students utilized for program/school/degree improvement? What elements have been implemented specifically to target retention?
9. How does the institution evaluate that there are adequate institutional resources devoted to admissions/retention?

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**

1. How do student services at JTS support student learning outcomes?
2. How do student services at JTS impact recruitment/admissions?
3. What support is available for students at risk?
4. How do student services at JTS reinforce and extend the institution’s influence beyond the classroom?
5. How do co-curricular and extra-curricular programming (on-campus and in the residence halls) impact the student experience and further the mission of JTS?
6. How does student involvement shape the educational experience both in and outside of the classroom?
7. How does JTS convey to its students what is expected of them as members of this academic community? Does it provide them with guidelines for appropriate behavior both inside and outside of class? What policies and procedures are already in place that helps support the students, and contributes to their academic success?
8. How does JTS provide student support services for our diverse student population (including 2nd career students, LGBT students, students with disabilities, international students, distance learning students, students with components of their programs at other locations)?
9. To what extent is student feedback and participation used in shaping the support services?
10. How does JTS monitor student grievances? To what extent does the institution review grievances and their resolution to identify trends?
11. How does JTS assess whether support services sufficiently meet students needs?
Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

1. How does JTS ensure that all of its related educational activities are consistent with the JTS mission?
2. How do these related educational activities impact recruitment, enrollment and the overall student experience?
3. How does JTS provide remedial or other support for students who need it? What support is in place for students who are struggling? What elements are particularly effective and what elements need to be improved?
4. How are programs offered at other locations assessed to determine they are consistent with expectation for program content, quality and consistency with JTS missions and goals?

Group Charge:

This charge of this group comprises the elements that are at the heart of student learning at JTS. This group will analyze the extent to which JTS provides sufficient learning opportunity for students to achieve expected educational outcomes. The evaluation of these activities is closely related to Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning) but has several specific focal points.

Research Questions to be addressed:

Standard 10: Faculty

1. Does the current JTS faculty plan ensure the faculty is sufficiently diverse and numerous to meet JTS's institutional priorities for teaching, learning, research and service?
2. Are curricula designed and maintained by those having the expertise to do so, with collaboration of appropriate faculty?
3. To what extent is there appropriate institutional support for the advancement and development of faculty including teaching, learning, research and service?
4. What structures are in place to support adjunct faculty? How do we know these are effective? Are policies and procedures (including orientation, review, evaluation, professional development, and opportunities for integration) in place and developed appropriately for adjunct faculty members?
5. How do we ensure the responsibilities of faculty (instructional, research and service) are adequately balanced?
6. How are faculty policies communicated? To what degree is the Faculty Handbook sufficient in communicating standards, responsibilities, and procedures for appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline and dismissal?
7. How do we assess faculty development activities and support resources?
8. How does JTS ensure academic freedom within the context of its mission?
9. What measures are used to assess faculty effectiveness?

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

1. JTS prides itself on the strength of its scholarship. How does it ensure its programs are as rigorous as stated? What is the benefit added for study at JTS and how do we make that benefit known?
2. How does JTS encourage students to attain more personal/religious development in addition to achieving rigorous academic training?
3. How are statements of student learning outcomes shared with students at the division, school, degree and course level?
4. How does JTS use statements of expected learning to shape its programs of study so that programs are more than merely a “collection of courses”? To what extent do programs at JTS provide sufficient rigor, content and depth at each appropriate level?
5. Are there clear links between the design of specific courses, programs and learning activities to the institutional mission?
6. How are faculty members encouraged to respond to new research findings and modes of inquiry?
7. To what extent are opportunities provided for students to master information literacy, technological competencies, oral and written communication skills, and critical analysis and reasoning?
8. How are new courses developed to ensure they reflect division, school, or area learning outcomes and how are current courses evaluated?
Standard 12: General Education

1. What are the elements of “general education” at JTS?
2. How does JTS ensure and assess that students are learning essential skills?
3. How are essential skills incorporated across JTS programs?
4. What support services are available to assist students in further developing essential skills?
5. What general education skills do List College students gain through their Columbia/Barnard studies and how does JTS know if their students have acquired those skills?

Group charge:

This group is charged with analyzing the extent to which JTS has an effective, ongoing review and evaluation of what students are learning. In addition to assessment activities related to academic standards elsewhere in the report, this group is specifically charged with reviewing the assessment of student learning, how it is fostered by the current academic structure, the extent to which a culture of continuous academic assessment exists and to which it is a cornerstone of curricular planning, teaching and learning at JTS.

Research Questions to be addressed:

1. How do programs plan for assessment of student learning? How does academic assessment take place on a school-wide, program-wide and course-wide basis?
2. How are desired learning outcomes communicated to students?
3. How do programs assess whether students have achieved stated learning outcomes?
4. How is assessment information used to enhance student learning and improve programs? To what degree have assessment data influenced planning at the institutional, programmatic and course level?
5. How has the reorganization of JTS’s academic programs impacted assessment activities? To what extent are the multiple levels (e.g., school, program, and course) of assessment coordinated?
6. In what ways does JTS demonstrate evidence of institutional support for academic assessment (including the infrastructure, personnel, and institutional leadership)?
7. To what extent are JTS faculty engaged with assessment related activities? How does JTS support training for faculty in the various aspects of academic assessment and how does JTS encourage and facilitate a culture of ongoing academic assessment?
8. How does JTS assess the overall effectiveness of their current assessment of student learning activities?

Section 6: Preliminary Inventory of Support Documents

Workgroup 1: Who We Are

Standard 1: Mission and Goals
- Branding initiative results
- Interim reports on Context program, development outreach, expanded learning opportunities on the web, public events, arts initiatives
- Other new/expanded program announcements and surveys: Lectures, Center of Pastoral Education, Just City, Jewish Ethics programs
- Allocated financial reports directed to support outreach to new constituencies

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
- Board and committee minutes (with particular focus on Governance and Audit)
- Process statements for developing and implementing policies

Standard 6: Integrity
- Provost and Associate Provost Reports
- Human Resources, faculty committee, and Deans’ records – for patterns of grievances
- General Counsel Guidelines
- Faculty Handbook
- Staff Handbook
Workgroup 2: Institutional Resources

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal
- Financial Audits
- IPEDS Reports
- JTS 2010 Strategic Plan
- Financial Reports to Trustees
- List College Strategic Plan
- Davidson School Strategic Plan

Standard 3: Institutional Resources
- IT Plan
- Infrastructure Plans
- Facilities Master Plans
- Infrastructure Life-cycle Management Plan

Standard 5: Administration
- Annual Department Goal reports
- Annual Performance Review forms
- Organizational Chart

Workgroup 3: Institutional Assessment

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment
- Statement of mission and goals from each administrative department
- TaskStream reports from each administrative department
- Minutes of departmental meetings
- Organizational Chart

Workgroup 4: The Student Experience

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention
- Enrollment statistics, trends and projection reports
- Information on competitor programs
- Exit Interviews
- Graduation surveys
- Student applications
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Departmental goals and planning reports

Standard 9: Student Support Services
- Exit Interviews
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups with student leaders and residence hall staff
- Departmental goals and planning reports
- Reports from Student Life, Counseling, Residence Life, etc.
- JTS website, catalogue, Guide to Student Life (policies/procedures)

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Reports from relevant departments
Workgroup 5: Educational Mission

Standard 10: Faculty
- Five-Year Plan for Faculty Development
- Taskstream assessment reports
- Sample syllabi
- Committee on Instruction minutes
- Faculty Handbook
- Student course evaluations

Standard 11: Educational Offerings
- Taskstream assessment reports
- Final papers and rubric assessment from first-year seminars
- Reflective statements from capstone courses
- Final papers and rubric assessment from “capstone” courses
- Results of student surveys
- Reports from relevant student or faculty focus groups
- Student course evaluations
- Summary of Hebrew Placement Exam results
- Results from end-of-year and end-of-program assessments
- Interviews and surveys of faculty participants in new training/enrichment programs on arts, technological competency, and gender
- Exit interviews

Standard 12: General Education
- Taskstream assessment reports
- Final papers and rubric assessment from first-year seminars
- General education or institutional learning outcomes in Taskstream
- Columbia/Barnard Documents related to General Education
- Transfer articulation agreements

Workgroup 6: Academic Assessment

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
- Academic assessment plans (samples from schools, academic areas, degrees and concentrations)
- Academic operational plans (samples from schools, academic areas, degrees and concentrations)
- Sample rubrics
- Syllabi guidelines for faculty
- Updated New Course Proposal Form, spring 2014
- Records of faculty training in assessment
- Agendas and minutes of the Committee on Instruction, Faculty Assembly, School and Academic Area meetings
Section 7: Organization of the Self-Study Report

I. Executive Summary and Eligibility Certification Statement

II. Introduction
   A. Institutional Profile
   B. Rationale for Self-Study Workgroups
   C. Scope and Organization of the Self-Study
   D. Intended Outcomes

III. Self-Study Themes
   [Each to include points in template outlined in Section 8, below]
   A. Who We Are
   B. Institutional Resources
   C. Institutional Assessment
   D. The Student Experience
   E. Educational Mission
   F. Academic Assessment

IV. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Section 8: Editorial Style and Format of all Reports

Each workgroup will submit its report following these guidelines to facilitate consistency in the final Self-Study document.

Template for Workgroup Reports

Introduction—a summary of the workgroup charge and research questions addressed;

Research Process—a summary of the steps taken to undertake Self-Study by the workgroup, an analysis of the strengths and challenges presented in the process of Self-Study, and the outcomes of that process;

Findings—a summary of results of Self-Study inquiry:
   • the extent to which JTS shows excellence, demonstrated by answering the research questions related to the Commission’s Standards associated with the workgroup, and
   • a summary of any collaboration with other workgroups on overlapping topics;

Recommendations—a summary of critical issues identified and suggestions for improvement.

The six workgroup reports will be reviewed, revised as necessary, and incorporated into one Self-Study report. The final report will reflect the synthesized results comprising our singular Self-Study document to be submitted to MSCH£ as the basis for the Visiting Team’s exploration of JTS.
### Section 9: Timetable for the Self-Study and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month, Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November, 2013</td>
<td>MSCHE Self-Study Institute</td>
<td>11/13/2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>December, 2013</td>
<td>MSCHE Annual Conference</td>
<td>12/9/2013</td>
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<td>January, 2014</td>
<td>Steering Committee—Initial Meeting</td>
<td>1/13/2014</td>
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<td>Faculty Assembly—Faculty informed of MSCHE Self-Study</td>
<td>1/29/2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff Assembly—JTS staff informed of MSCHE Self-Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>February, 2014</td>
<td>Co-chairs and members of workgroups identified; research questions for workgroups drafted by Steering Committee</td>
<td>2/5/2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workgroup co-chairs—Initial Meeting; tasked with submitting changes to workgroup membership and initial review and feedback on group charges and research questions</td>
<td>2/18/2014</td>
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<td>March, 2014</td>
<td>Assessment consultant visit—Workgroup co-chairs meeting with assessment and accreditation consultant</td>
<td>3/17/2014</td>
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<td>Board of Trustee members of workgroups identified</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Final drafts of Group Charges/Research Questions submitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>April, 2014</td>
<td>Self-Study Design Report completed</td>
<td>4/30/2014</td>
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<td>May, 2014</td>
<td>Visit by Dr. Tito Guerrero, MSCHE Liaison</td>
<td>5/14/2014</td>
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<td>June, 2014</td>
<td>Document Inventory Appraisal</td>
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<td>July, 2014</td>
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<td>August, 2014</td>
<td>JTS Self-Study webpage launch</td>
<td>9/15/2014</td>
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<td>September, 2014</td>
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<td>October, 2014</td>
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<td>November, 2014</td>
<td>Data collection deadline</td>
<td>11/10/2014</td>
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<td>December, 2014</td>
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<td>January, 2015</td>
<td>Institutional workgroups (1 and 2) preliminary reports due</td>
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<td>February, 2015</td>
<td>Academic and Assessment workgroups (3-6) preliminary reports due</td>
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<td>Selection of Team Chair (MSCHE)</td>
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<td>March, 2015</td>
<td>Campus feedback from various constituencies</td>
<td>5/1/2014</td>
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<td>April, 2015</td>
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<td>May, 2015</td>
<td>Final drafts from workgroups due</td>
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<td>July, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>August, 2015</td>
<td>First draft of Self-Study completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>September, 2015</td>
<td>Initial revision of Self-Study draft completed</td>
<td>9/18/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>October, 2015</td>
<td>Campus review of Self-Study draft</td>
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<td>November, 2015</td>
<td>MSCHE Chair preliminary site-visit (Chair receives draft of Self-Study)</td>
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<td>December, 2015</td>
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<td>January, 2016</td>
<td>Self-Study report completed</td>
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<td>February, 2016</td>
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<td>March, 2016</td>
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<td>April, 2016</td>
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<td>May, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>June, 2016</td>
<td>MSCHE review</td>
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Section 10: Profile of the Visiting Evaluation Team

The characteristics below are designed to guide MSCHE in constructing a visiting team whose members can most effectively evaluate the Jewish Theological Seminary. We believe that peer review will be most useful and meaningful if the visiting team’s members are selected because of their positions at institutions that display characteristics and challenges similar to those of JTS.

- Theological programs (e.g., Princeton Theological Seminary; Hartford Theological Seminary);
- Graduate programs of Jewish Studies (e.g., University of Pennsylvania; Brandeis University);
- Small, private, liberal arts-based institutions (e.g., Middlebury College, Swarthmore College);
- Institutions with an emphasis on experiential learning (e.g., Manhattan College);
- Colleges with technological initiatives (e.g., Connecticut College)
- Universities that have undergone restructuring/consolidation of academic programs (e.g., University of Chicago Divinity School).

We look forward to discussing these characteristics with MSCHE before a visiting team is selected.