

HIGHER INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (ISSR)

HISTORY

The Higher Institute of Religious Studies continues the teaching and theological research tradition of the Saint Joseph University of Beirut, which began with the Faculty of Theology inaugurated in 1881 and traces back to a seminary established in Ghazir in 1846. In 1963, the Institute merged with a religious education program, formally named the “Higher Institute of Religious Formation” (ISFR) in 1970. This institute was created in response to the request of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious in Lebanon.

In 1974, when the clergy-specific study program was transferred to the Catholic hierarchy of the Churches of Lebanon, the Faculty of Theology became the Faculty of Religious Studies. Then, in 1980, both the Faculty of Religious Studies and the ISFR, except for the Department of Muslim-Christian Studies, were integrated into the Higher Institute of Religious Studies (ISSR).

In June 2000, a coordinated center for teaching and research in religious studies was established at the Saint Joseph University of Beirut, reviving the Faculty of Religious Studies, and attaching the ISSR as an institute within this Faculty. With the new statutes of the Faculty established in February 2009, the ISSR, fully integrated, became one of the Faculty’s major components.

MISSION

The Higher Institute of Religious Studies offers university-level education Christian theology and religious studies, aimed at:

- Enabling individuals to understand and live their consciously, structurally, and responsibly in a constantly changing world.
- Equipping students with the necessary skills to serve the Church in various capacities.
- Offering foundational training for specialization in pastoral theology (Master degree), preparing students for professional engagement in the field.

Located within the academic environment of the ISSR, particularly within the Faculty of Religious Studies (FSR), which also encompasses the Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies (IEIC), the Department of Religions Studies (DSR), the Center of Research in Religious Studies (CRSR, and) the Center for Arab Christian Research and Documentation (CEDRAC), the theological education at the ISSR offers a comprehensive approach structured around four complementary dimensions:

- Rooting, especially in the heritage of the Eastern Churches, particularly in Christian patristic and Arabic traditions.
- Openness, primarily embracing theological approaches from various Christian Churches and communities, emphasizing mutual understanding and unity; and secondarily, enhancing understanding of other religions and principles of interreligious dialogue, particularly Christian-Muslim dialogue.
- Engagement, considering the cultural and socio-political context of Lebanon and the broader Middle East, addressing contemporary cultural indicators and social challenges crucial for the pastoral work of the Churches.
- Critical thinking, enriched by contributions from sciences, linguistic and cultural openness, enabling better understanding, analysis, evaluation, and adaptation of personal or ecclesial pastoral activities, as well as addressing current religious issues within both local and global contexts.

ADMINISTRATION

Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies, Director of the Higher Institute of Religious Studies: Sister Yara MATTA

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Academic Affairs Administrative Coordinator: Mireille BOU NADER

Administrative Support Officer: Micheline SKAFF MEDAWAR

Communication Officer: Claude MATTA EID

FACULTY

Professors

Edgard (EL) HAIBY, Yara MATTA, Souraya BÉCHAALANY

Associate Professor

Roula TALHOUK

Lecturers

Grazia MAGGESE, Rami WAKIM, Rouphael ZGHEIB, Lina ISKANDAR HAWAT (EL), Raymond known “Guy” SARKIS

Instructors

Tidola ABDO, Wissam ABDO, Jean ABDOU, Rose ABI AAD, Bachir AOUAD, Elias (EL) AZZI, Antoine AZZI, Hilda BAIRAMIAN, Nazem BASSIL, Samir BECHARA S.J., Khalil CHALFOUN, Charbel CHLELA, Noha DACCACHE, Issa DIAB, Robert FADDOUL, Elie HADDAD, Sami HALLAK S.J., Lodine KANBAR FAHED, Liza (EL) KAREH, Charbel KHACHAN, Joumana KHALIL, Zeina (EL) KHAWAND, Antranik KURUKIAN, Elisée MARZIN, Georges MELKI, Paolo Giovanni MONFORMOSO (Visiting Professor), Charbel NASSIF, Sami NEHMÉ, Marc RASTOIN (Visiting Professor), Jamilé RICHA, Maryse SAGHBINI, Nehmé SALIBA, Nayla TABBARA, Pascale TABET, Dany YOUNES S.J., Lina YARED, Mohammad ZARAKET

DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED

- Bachelor in Religious Studies (French): 180 credits
Three concentrations:
 - Catechetical Agent
 - Pastoral Agent
 - Theologica
- Bachelor in Religious Studies (Arabic): 180 credits
- POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS: Master, University Diploma, PhD:
 1. Master in Pastoral Management: 120 credits, 5 semesters
 2. Master in Religious Studies, Theologica concentration: 120 credits, 5 semesters
 3. University Diploma in Pastoral Project: Diagnosis and Design (DUPP): 23 credits, 2 semesters
 4. University Diploma in Pastoral Development: Theological and Managerial Tools (DUDP): 20 credits, 2 semesters
 5. University Diploma in Catechetical Coordination: 45 credits, 2 semesters
 6. University Diploma in Healthcare Pastoral (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
 7. University Diploma in Spiritual Accompaniment (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
 8. University Diploma CREDO I: Initiation to the Christian Faith (French): 45 credits, 4 semesters
 9. University Diploma CREDO I: Initiation to the Christian Faith (Arabic): 45 credits, 4 semesters
 10. University Diploma CREDO II: We Believe as a Church (French): 45 credits, 4 semesters
 11. University Diploma CREDO II: We Believe as a Church (Arabic): 45 credits, 4 semesters
 12. University Certificate in Social Pastoral: 32 credits, 4 semesters
 13. PhD in Religious Studies (Shared FSR): 180 credits

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Teaching school catechesis, engaging in pastoral missions (school, parish, and diocesan levels), conducting theological research in religious studies, and teaching at the university level.

TUITION FEES

Basic degrees, Bachelor, University Diploma, and Master: 47 USD Fresh + 1,118,000 L.L.; totaling 59 USD, (Exchange rate: 89,500 L.L. per USD as of May 13, 2024)

PhD (shared FSR): 65 USD Fresh + 1,550,000 L.L.; totaling 82 USD, (Exchange rate: 89,500 L.L. per USD as of May 13, 2024)

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE INTERNAL REGULATIONS OF STUDY

Special Provisions of the Higher Institute of Religious Studies of the Faculty of Religious Studies (October 2017)

(Continuation of Article 2 of the RI) Programs, Cycles, and Diplomas

The study programs at ISSR enable the attainment of the following diplomas:

1. Bachelor in Religious Studies: 180 credits (6 semesters) (French), with three concentrations: “Theologica,” “Pastoral Catechetical Agent,” and “Pastoral Agent.”
2. Master in Religious Studies – “Theologica” concentration (FSR - ISSR): 120 credits (4 semesters) (French). This master’s program, under specific provisions and upon review of the file application, prepares students for further studies in Canonical License in theology.
3. Master in Pastoral Management: 120 credits (4 semesters) (French - Arabic). This master’s program also serves as a pathway to a PhD in Religious Studies –Theology Concentration.

Supplementary to regular education, additional training is offered in the form of University Diplomas (DU) or specialized Certificates:

1. **DU CREDO, Introduction to Christian Faith:** 45 credits (2 semesters) (French and Arabic). Can be extended over 4 semesters.
2. **DU in Catechetical Coordination:** 45 credits (2 semesters) (French).
3. **DU in Health Pastoral Care: 35 credits (3 semesters) (Arabic).** An extended version over 5 semesters is available.
4. **DU in Spiritual Guidance: 35 credits (3 semesters) (French and Arabic).**
5. **University Certificate in Diaconate and Social Pastoral Care:** 32 credits (6 semesters) (Arabic).
6. **Certificate of Proficiency in Religious Culture:** As part of the “*Opération 7e jour,*” ISSR provides this training to requesting centers in collaboration with relevant authorities, outside of ISSR premises.

(Continuation of Article 2.a of the RI) Non-Degree Programs

1. The Integrated Path is a program that primarily incorporates the courses of the Bachelor in Religious Studies.
2. Students registered in this program are subject to the same assessment and validation conditions for courses as those in force for the Bachelor’s degree.
3. The Integrated Path does not lead to obtaining a diploma. However, students may request a certificate for the completed and validated courses.
4. Students registered in this program who have met the prerequisites for registration in the Bachelor’s program may request a transfer from the Integrated Path to the Bachelor’s program, provided that the period between the date of registration in the Bachelor’s program and the date of obtaining the Bachelor’s degree is not less than three semesters. The Director of ISSR reviews the student’s application file and, after approval by the Board, submits it to the USJ Equivalence Commission.

(Continuation of Article 5 of the RI) Tutoring

1. According to the tutoring regulations at ISSR (Annex 1), undergraduate students are supervised by a tutor appointed by the Director. They are required to meet with the tutor at least twice per semester. Academic supervision includes selecting optional courses, organizing personal workload, progressing in studies, readings, research, and any other matters related to their studies.
2. At the end of each academic year (during the month of June), students submit a summary report of their year of study to their tutor.

(Suite des articles 12-24 du RI) Registration and Admissions

1. Every registration is handled by the concerned student with the Director or their designated representative during the registration period preceding each semester.
2. Upon review of their application and with the Director’s approval, candidates who do not hold a Lebanese baccalaureate or equivalent diploma may be admitted to register and pursue the offered programs. They will be subject to the same assessment requirements as other students. Upon completion, they may receive a certificate for the completed coursework.



Annex: Tutoring of Undergraduate Students at ISSR

1. Objectives:

Tutoring aims to provide academic support to undergraduate students throughout their university education to:

- Ensure their education is coherent and cohesive.
- Successfully integrate the knowledge acquired and assume an active role in the learning process.
- Establish a mutually enriching link between education and personal, ecclesial, and pastoral Christian engagement.

2. Approach:

- Help students connect the various courses they take and understand the coherence of their education.
- Upon recommendation from the Director, guide students in selecting their courses.
- Monitor the student's progress in their studies (class notes, coursework, research papers, and other assignments), paying particular attention to difficulties encountered and organizing their work, seeking suitable solutions tailored to their pace and needs.
- Support students in their readings related to the courses or general readings for further exploration or extension of their education.
- Assist students in linking their studies with their daily life context and personal or pastoral commitments.

3. Procedure:

- Every undergraduate student must have an assigned tutor.
 - Auditors may also receive customized academic support.
 - The tutor is appointed by the Director from among the qualified faculty members of the Institute, following these criteria:
 - Granting students the opportunity to choose their tutor, as much as possible.
 - Maintaining the same tutor throughout the duration of the program (except in exceptional cases).
 - Assigning a tutor who has already taught the student in at least one course.
 - Students meet their tutor at least twice per semester.
 - A schedule of tutor availability is posted at the beginning of each semester.
 - At the end of the academic year (June), students submit an annual report (typically 3 pages) evaluating their overall work (studies, readings, experiences) and the personal and pastoral benefits derived.
 - Tutors meet with the Director once per semester to assess the entire tutoring process.
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