

HIGHER INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (ISSR)

DESCRIPTION

The Higher Institute of Religious Studies continues the tradition of theological teaching and research at Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ), which began with the Faculty of Theology, inaugurated in 1881, and traces back to the seminary established in Ghazir in 1846. In 1963, the Faculty 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. 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, USJ established a coordinated center for teaching and research in religious studies, thereby reviving the Faculty of Religious Studies, and attaching ISSR as one of its institutes. With the adoption of the Faculty's new bylaws in February 2009, ISSR became fully integrated into the Faculty as one of its principal components.

MISSION

The Higher Institute of Religious Studies offers university-level education in Christian theology and religious studies. Its mission is to:

- Enable students to understand and live their lives consciously, structurally, and responsibly in a constantly changing world.
- Equip students with the necessary skills needed for service within the Church.
- Provide foundational training for specialization in pastoral theology at the master's level, and preparation for professional practice in the field.

As part of the Faculty of Religious Studies (FSR), alongside the Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies (IEIC), the Department of Religious Studies (DSR), the Center for Research in Religious Studies (CRSR), and the Center for Arab Christian Research and Documentation (CEDRAC), ISSR offers theological education grounded in four complementary dimensions:

- Rooting, in the heritage of the Eastern Churches, particularly the Christian patristic and Arabic traditions.
- Openness, through engagement with the theological traditions of different Christian Churches and communities, fostering mutual understanding and unity while promoting knowledge of other religions and interreligious dialogue, particularly Christian-Muslim dialogue.
- Engagement, with the cultural and socio-political context of Lebanon and the broader Middle East, addressing contemporary cultural indicators and social challenges facing Churches and society.
- Critical thinking, enriched by contributions from sciences, linguistic and cultural openness, fostering the ability to understand, analyze, evaluate, and adapt personal and ecclesial pastoral practices, while addressing current religious issues within both local and global contexts.

ADMINISTRATION

Director: Rev. Sr. Yara MATTA

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Academic Affairs Administrative Coordinator: Mireille BOU NADER

Administrative Support Officer: Micheline SKAFF MEDAWAR

Communication Officer: Claude MATTA EID



FACULTY

Professors

Fr. Edgard (EL) HAIBY, Rev. Sr. Yara MATTA, Souraya BÉCHAALANY, Roula TALHOUK

Associate Professor

Fr. Raymond known as “Guy” SARKIS, Fr. Rami Wakim

Lecturers

Grazia MAGGESE, Fr. Roupheal ZGHEIB, Lina ISKANDAR (EL) HAWAT

Visiting Professor

Paolo Giovanni MONFORMOSO

Instructors

Rev. Sr. Tidola ABDO, Wissam ABDO, Fr. Jean ABDOL, Rev. Sr. Rose ABI AAD, Bachir AOUAD, Fr. Elias (EL) AZZI, Fr. Antoine AZZI, Fr. Samir BECHARA, SJ, Fr. Khalil CHALFOUN, Rev. Sr. Noha DACCACHE, Robert FADDOUL, Fr. Elie HADDAD, Fr. Sami HALLAK, SJ, Lodine KANBAR FAHED, Rev. Sr. Liza (EL) KAREH, Fr. Charbel KHACHAN, Joumana KHALIL, Zeina (EL) KHAWAND, Rev. Sr. Elisée MARZIN, Georges MELKI, Fr. Sami NEHMÉ, Rev. Sr. Jamilé RICHA, Maryse SAGHBINI, Nayla TABBARA, Pascale TABET, Fr. Dany YOUNES, SJ, Lina YARED.

DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED

- Bachelor in Religious Studies (Arabic and French sections): Catechetical Agent, Pastoral Agent, Theologica - 180 credits
- Master in Pastoral Management: 120 credits, 5 semesters
- Master in Religious Studies, concentration: Theologica: 120 credits, 5 semesters
- University Diploma in Catechetical Coordination (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 2 semesters
- University Diploma in Healthcare Pastoral (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
- University Diploma in Spiritual Accompaniment (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
- University Diploma in CREDO I: Initiation to the Christian Faith (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 4 semesters
- University Diploma in CREDO II: We Believe within the Church (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 4 semesters
- University Diploma in Advanced Biblical Studies: 30 credits, 3 semesters

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Graduates may pursue careers in school catechesis, pastoral ministry at the school, parish, and diocesan levels, theological research in religious studies, and university teaching.

TUITION FEES

Bachelor in Religious Studies (Arabic and French sections), Master in Pastoral Management, Master in Religious Studies, concentration: Theologica, University Diploma in Catechetical Coordination, University Diploma in Healthcare Pastoral, University Diploma in Spiritual Accompaniment, University Diploma in CREDO I: Initiation to the Christian Faith, University Diploma in CREDO II: We Believe within the Church, University Diploma in Advanced Biblical Studies: 70 Fresh US Dollars and 2,685,000 Lebanese Pounds, equivalent in Fresh US Dollars to 100 (exchange rate= 89,500 LBP)

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:** Theologica, Pastoral Catechetical Agent, and Pastoral Agent: 180 credits (6 semesters) (Arabic and French).
 2. **Master in Religious Studies,** concentration: Theologica: 120 credits (4 semesters) (French). This Master's
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program, under specific provisions and upon review of the application file, prepares students for further studies in Canonical License in theology.

3. **Master in Pastoral Management:** 120 credits (4 semesters) (French and Arabic). This master's program also serves as a pathway to a PhD in Religious Studies, specialty: Theology.

In addition to its academic programs, the Institute offers supplementary training through University Diplomas (DU) and specialized certificates:

1. **University Diploma in Catechetical Coordination** (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 2 semesters
2. **University Diploma in Healthcare Pastoral** (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
3. **University Diploma in Spiritual Accompaniment** (Arabic): 35 credits, 3 semesters
4. **University Diploma in CREDO I: Initiation to the Christian Faith** (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 4 semesters
5. **University Diploma in CREDO II: We Believe within the Church** (Arabic and French sections): 45 credits, 4 semesters
6. **University Diploma in Advanced Biblical Studies:** 30 credits, 3 semesters
7. **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 IR) Non-Degree Programs

1. The Integrated Path is a non-degree program that primarily consists of courses from the Bachelor in Religious Studies.
2. Students enrolled in this program are subject to the same course assessment and validation requirements as those applicable to the Bachelor's degree.
3. The Integrated Path does not lead to obtaining a degree. However, students may request a certificate for the completed and validated courses.
4. Students enrolled in the Integrated Path who subsequently meet the admission requirements for the Bachelor's program may apply for transfer to the Bachelor's degree. In such cases, the period between enrollment in the Bachelor's program and the award of the degree must be no less than three semesters. The Director of ISSR reviews the application and, following approval by the Board, submits it to the USJ Equivalence Commission.

(Continuation of Article 5 of the IR) Student Guidance

1. In accordance with the ISSR Student Guidance Regulations (Annex 1), undergraduate students are assigned a tenured instructor appointed by the Director. They are required to meet with them at least twice each semester. Academic advising covers the selection of elective courses, workload planning, academic progress, 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 academic activities to their appointed instructor.

(Continuation of Articles 12-24 of the IR) Registration and Admissions

1. Registration is completed by the student with the Director or a designated representative during the registration period preceding each semester.
2. Candidates who do not hold a Lebanese Baccalaureate or an officially recognized equivalent may, upon review of their application and with the approval of the Director, be admitted to enroll in the programs offered by the Institute. They are subject to the same assessment requirements as other students. Upon successful completion of their coursework, they may receive a certificate of completion.

Annex: Guidance of Undergraduate Students at ISSR

1. Objectives:

Guidance provides undergraduate students with ongoing support throughout their studies in order to:

- Ensure their education is coherent and cohesive.
 - Foster the integration of acquired knowledge and active engagement in the learning process.
 - Strengthen the connection between academic formation and personal, ecclesial, and pastoral Christian commitment.
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2. Approach

- Help students connect the various courses in their program and understand the overall coherence of their education.
- Guide students in course selection, upon the recommendation of the Director.
- Monitor academic progress, including coursework, research papers, assignments, and class performance, while identifying challenges and helping students organize their work according to their needs and pace.
- Support students in course-related readings and in broader reading that enriches and extends their academic formation.
- Help students relate their studies to their daily lives and to their personal, ecclesial, and pastoral commitments.

3. Procedure

- Every undergraduate student is assigned a guiding tenured instructor.
 - Non-degree students may also benefit from individualized academic support.
 - Instructors are appointed by the Director from among the Institute's qualified faculty members, taking into account the following principles:
 - Whenever possible, students are given the opportunity to choose their instructor.
 - The same instructor remains assigned throughout the program, except in exceptional circumstances.
 - Preference is given to appointing an instructor who has previously taught the student.
 - Students meet with their instructor at least twice each semester.
 - A schedule of instructor availability is published at the beginning of each semester.
 - At the end of the academic year (June), students submit an annual report, typically three pages in length, reflecting on their studies, readings, and experiences, as well as the personal and pastoral benefits derived from them.
 - Instructors meet with the Director once per semester to review and assess the guidance process.
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