

# The Placement of Newly-Ordained Rabbis

## A Handbook of Procedures

The Rabbinical Placement Commission,  
Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion  
and  
The Class of 2017/5777



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
היברו יוניון קולג - מכון למדעי היהדות

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## INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, we would like to thank you for participating in our placement program for our senior rabbinical students. This booklet is the product of many years of placement experience – sometimes learning what should be done and occasionally, what would be best not to do! Our goal and yours is to maintain fairness for all candidates and congregations, and to guarantee an orderly and dignified system for this important process.

The Placement Handbook explains the procedures established by the Rabbinical Placement Commission (RPC) and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) for the placement of senior rabbinical students. This document incorporates by reference [Guidelines for Rabbinical-Congregational Relationships](#).

This handbook is intended for use by both congregational search committees and senior rabbinical students. It is our hope that the guiding principles and the placement procedures outlined here will create an environment for placement that will benefit both congregations and rabbinical candidates. It is important for all participants in the placement process to review this handbook carefully as they enter placement; it will answer many questions.

### **The Partnership between Rabbi and Congregation**

For more than two millennia, the synagogue has served our people as *Beit T'fillah*, House of Prayer; *Beit Midrash*, House of Study; and *Beit K'nesset*, House of Assembly. As it fulfills these classic roles, the modern congregation becomes worthy of the designation *kehillah kedoshah*, a holy community.

Sacred Jewish values underlie the partnership between rabbi and congregation; it is a covenant through which each party undertakes the obligation of working together in the service of God and the Jewish people. That covenant begins as early as the placement process.

### **A Vision of the Placement Process**

*Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said, "Which is the proper path that one should select? The one that seems honorable for oneself and brings honor bestowed by others." [Pirke Avot 2:1]*

It is our hope that these guidelines will serve the following purposes: 1) to create the best possible matches between candidates and congregations; 2) to afford all candidates equal access to available positions; 3) to afford all congregations equal access to candidates; and 4) to ensure fairness, dignity and order in the placement process for all congregations and soon-to-be-ordained rabbis. This handbook is designed to help facilitate communication, the gathering and sharing of information, and participation in the rabbinical placement process.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

### Rabbinical Placement Office:

Rabbi Alan Henkin, Director of Placement  
Ms. Jean Bowdish  
355 Lexington Avenue  
New York, NY 10017  
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(212) 542-8783 – Ms. Bowdish  
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### HUC-JIR Los Angeles Campus:

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Director of the Rabbinical Program  
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Los Angeles, California 90007-3796  
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### HUC-JIR Cincinnati Campus:

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Ms. Lynn Hudson  
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### HUC-JIR, New York Campus:

Rabbi Renni Altman,  
Director of the Rabbinical Program  
Ms. Jamie Bowser  
Brookdale Center  
One West Fourth Street  
New York, New York 10012  
(212) 824-2230 – Rabbi Altman  
212- 824-2278 – Ms. Bowser  
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## **THE PLACEMENT PROCESS**

### **I. Available Positions**

- A. Newly-ordained rabbis are eligible for congregational positions that fit into four broad categories. There can be great diversity within a category and we encourage students to review every job description closely:
1. **Solo Rabbis**: Seniors are eligible to seek solo positions classified by the Rabbinical Placement Commission as Category A Congregations (up to 300 member units). They are not eligible for solo positions with larger congregations. A solo rabbi is responsible for working with the other professionals in the congregation, fulfilling the many roles that might arise as the only rabbi in a congregation, including but not limited to life-cycle events, holidays, worship, teaching, counseling, and much more.
  2. **Assistant Rabbis**: Seniors are eligible to seek positions listed as assistant rabbi. Primarily the senior rabbi, in consultation with the appropriate congregational body, shall define an assistant rabbi's duties. In performing these duties, the Assistant shall be supervised by the senior rabbi and be responsible to the senior rabbi and the Board of Trustees.
  3. **Rabbi/Educator**: Some congregations look to the new rabbi to take charge of the congregation's educational program. There are some students who are uniquely equipped to do so, either because they have earned a Master's Degree in Jewish Education at HUC-JIR or elsewhere, have pursued education courses or a degree in a secular university, or have had extensive practical experience in Jewish education. Some may have qualified for the title of Reform Jewish Educator. These jobs will typically include some rabbinical tasks, such as conducting services or sharing in holiday experiences, in addition to the many tasks of the Educator in the congregation.
  4. **Part-Time Positions**: Congregations may engage a senior to serve on a part-time basis, either as rabbi or assistant rabbi. The duties and responsibilities should be precisely defined in writing, specifying how many hours each week and how many days per month are to be devoted to the part-time post. The part-time rabbi should be elected for a fixed term and receive prorated pension and all other benefits when that service is considered to be half-time or more.

**All of these positions are handled through the Placement Process.**

## II. Student Eligibility for Placement

1. All students must be in good academic standing in order to participate in placement. They must have no outstanding incompletes or outstanding failures by the end of the fall semester. They must submit an approved thesis/final project by the assigned due date in order to participate in placement.
2. Students must successfully complete all academic and fieldwork requirements of the spring semester in order to be ordained. Students failing to do so will not be ordained and will not be able to start a rabbinic position, even if they have already accepted a position through placement. It is the students' responsibility to meet these requirements.

## III. The Steps of the Placement Process

### A. For Congregations

1. Congregations wishing to hire a rabbi should contact the Director of Placement. The congregation will receive application forms appropriate to the position being listed. The application itself should be completed by the president or chairperson of the search committee, perhaps in consultation with other congregants. All documents should be completed electronically and submitted to the Placement Office. We urge congregations to complete the section of remuneration and benefits with as much detail as possible so that the students can be fully informed. Inclusion of information such as the congregation's mission statement is also helpful. It is in the congregation's best interest to submit these forms as soon as possible; **for the fullest consideration of your application by the students, please submit the application by December 5, 2016**. Congregations may add links to information about the congregation and the broader community in their application.

Congregations should make arrangements to be in Los Angeles for the three days of placement. You will receive recommendations for hotels and restaurants from the Rabbinical Program Director's office in Los Angeles and the Placement Office.

2. There will be a conference call for participating congregations with the Placement Director and the Rabbinical Program Director for the host campus on **Monday, January 9, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. EST**. All steps of the placement process will be reviewed and questions addressed.

3. **By December 22, 2016** congregations will receive resumes of interested students from the Director of Placement.
4. Communication between students and congregations prior to their interview on campus shall be limited to acknowledgement of the receipt of their resume and personal statements; students will be directed not to respond to each acknowledgement so as not to encourage on-going communication. At conventions and gatherings at which students and congregational leaders might attend, no meetings are permitted.
5. By **January 11, 2017** congregations will inform the Placement Office of their intention regarding participation in the on-campus interviews in Los Angeles, February 5-7, 2017 and which students they would like to interview. **Congregations that choose not to participate in placement may only contact students whose resumes they have received on or after February 9 and proceed according to RPC Handbook of Placement Procedures.**
6. The Placement Office will inform the students which congregations are participating in campus placement and of their interviews. The Director of the Rabbinical School in Los Angeles prepares the interview schedules and will send a tentative schedule to congregations and students between January 25-27, 2017. Given the nature of the scheduling process, it is not always possible to consolidate the interviews for either students or congregations in an ideal manner. Please understand that every attempt is made to maximize congregations' and students' time while on campus so that interviews are not set too far apart and that appropriate breaks are scheduled. It is inevitable that a congregation enters the placement process late because of a new opening or a congregation withdraws; such changes impact the scheduling and make it difficult to set a realistic schedule too far in advance of the campus interviews.
7. Students may find themselves serving as HUC-JIR academic year student rabbis or interns in a congregation that is considering hiring a Rabbi. In such a case, the congregation may enter placement and the student may apply for the position. The congregation also has the option of offering the position to the student before placement. The student may choose to accept the position or enter into placement. In such a case, the congregation and student must notify the placement director and their program director in writing of their decision by **January 11, 2017.**

**B. For students**

1. In preparation for interviews, students need to complete their resumes and personal statements, compile samples of their work and contact those whom they wish to serve as references. Resumes and personal statements must follow the [guidelines](#) listed on the Rabbinic Placement website of the CCAR.
2. Resumes and personal statements are due to the CCAR Placement Office by **December 2, 2016**.
3. Following Placement Office guidelines, students should prepare a list of references with contact information to present to congregations during the campus interview. Students should have at least four-five references that should include: a rabbi with whom you have worked, a lay leader, a rabbinic mentor/home rabbi, and HUC-JIR faculty member/s. References must be invited and informed of the placement schedule so they can anticipate they will be contacted during or after campus placement.
4. Introducing the Available Positions: Prior to the on-campus interview period, the Director of Rabbinic Placement meets with the senior class, both as a group and individually, to better acquaint them with the positions available for their consideration and to offer counsel as they make their preliminary choices.
5. Students should complete the on-line form provided by the Placement Office indicating the congregations where they want their resumes sent, beginning **December 16, 2016**. The Placement Office will then forward the students' resumes and personal statements to the congregations requested by the students after **December 21**. Part of the nature of the placement process is that congregations will enter and withdraw from the process after the submission date.
6. Students may not drop congregations from their list, but may add additional congregations as they come into placement. Students may also add congregations they had not previously listed, but now wish to apply to. Congregations may not drop students from their list once it has been submitted, but they may add students. While congregations may decide to extend an interview to students not on their original list, for scheduling purposes and to enable the students to prepare appropriately, we ask that congregations try to submit their full list at one time.
7. Students should bring a portfolio with samples of their work to leave with the interview committees. This portfolio should include a photo of the student. Recommended items include a sermon, eulogy,

course curriculum, bulletin article, etc. Ideally, portfolios should be available both in electronic and paper form.

8. Applying for positions outside of this placement process:
  - a. A student who chooses not to go through CCAR/HUC-JIR placement is free to pursue a non-congregational position (Hillel, chaplaincy, organizational, etc.) or WUPJ congregation.
  - b. A student who wishes to enter CCAR/HUC-JIR placement and pursue a non-congregational position or a WUPJ congregation may do so but may not accept a non-congregational or WUPJ position until after March 7.
  - c. Once a student begins the placement process, s/he must complete it. Students may not pursue positions with non-URJ or non-WUPJ congregations until after March 7.

C. **Information Gathering: Congregations and students will want to learn as much as they can about one another in advance of the interviews.**

1. **Appropriate sources of information:**

- a. For students: students may visit congregational websites, clergy websites, blogs, and public presence on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and request copies of bulletins and membership information. Students may choose to speak with their rabbinical mentors or colleagues in the field. They may also contact the [URJ Consulting and Transition Management Team rabbis](#) as well as former staff members of the congregation. They may also speak to the rabbi who is leaving the advertised position.
- b. For congregations: Resumes and personal statements, student websites and blogs, students' public presence on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

2. **Inappropriate sources of information:**

- a. For students: To limit the potential for self-advocacy, a student may not seek information about a congregation by contacting those who are likely to be directly involved in the congregation's rabbinical search. These people include: the continuing rabbi(s), other continuing members of the congregation's professional staff, members of the search committee, and current board members. Students who are currently serving a congregation participating in the placement process should make every attempt to refrain from

inappropriate self-advocacy or information gathering. Students may not send invitations to “friend” a rabbi, search committee chair or other members of the staff or congregation on social media sites.

- b. For congregations: Rabbis and search committees may not send invitations to “friend” a student on social media sites. When contacting HUC-JIR faculty, congregations should be aware that FERPA (The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits anyone associated with HUC-JIR from speaking about a student without that student’s permission. Students will give their references permission to speak about them; anyone not listed as a reference will have to ask the students to sign a FERPA permission form before they can speak in the student’s behalf.

D. **Advocacy:**

Seniors may not advocate for their employment interests with an employee or member of a searching congregation. Self-advocacy includes, but is not limited to: forwarding of resumes or other materials outside the standard placement process; use of electronic media or social networking sites for self-promotion; intentional social contact for the purpose of advocating employment interests (including at rabbinical conferences or URJ functions); encouraging others to advocate on the student’s behalf, and any other oral or written expression of interest in a position with a congregation, whether direct, indirect, expressed, or implied.

IV. **On-Campus Interviews: HUC-JIR Los Angeles, February 5-7, 2017**

- A. Dates and Times of Interviews: The interviews this year will be held on the Los Angeles campus of HUC-JIR and will extend **from 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 5, 2017, until 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 7, 2017.** Students are expected to be available for interviews throughout this period. Students from the Cincinnati and New York campuses will be in Los Angeles for interviews. Because creating an interview schedule that accommodates a large number of students and congregations is a complex undertaking, we ask that congregations plan to be in Los Angeles all three days, particularly if they anticipate conducting a large number of interviews. We ask that congregations that cannot be in Los Angeles for three days inform the Placement Office which days they plan to be in Los Angeles so we can schedule their interviews accordingly.
- B. There will be a brief welcome and orientation for all congregations and students Sunday morning at approximately 9:00 a.m. On Monday during lunch,

there will be a meeting for congregations to discuss the post-Los Angeles process. A parallel meeting will be held with the students on Tuesday during lunch.

- C. Interviews will last 40 minutes, allowing some time between interviews for deliberation or relaxation. Congregations with a large number of interviews may expect to interview from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; congregations with fewer interviews scheduled may have a shorter day or longer breaks between interviews.
- D. Students and congregations should not interact before their scheduled interview. Once this interview has taken place, contacts between students and congregations are not restricted. Some congregations have the practice of inviting a student for coffee or a meal to get to know the student better and for more informal follow-up conversation. *While certainly well-intentioned, our experience over the years leads us to strongly discourage such meetings for the following reasons: they raise expectations in both students and congregations, heightening the anxiety level of an already stressful experience; they add more strain to exhausted students and congregational representatives; and they prevent congregations and students from devoting time and energy to appropriate reflection upon the days' interviews and preparation for interviews still to come.* While we strongly recommend against this practice, if such meetings must take place, they should involve only one student at a time.
- E. Content of the On-Campus Interview:
  - 1. Interviews should be seen by both parties as an opportunity to get to know each other, ascertain compatibility and present one's best self. It is essential for each to be honest with the other, remembering that, as with any successful relationship, the relationship between a rabbi and a congregation begins with finding a well-suited partner.
  - 2. Questions of a personal nature, such as those relating to physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status, are inappropriate in an interview. The Reform Movement, in numerous resolutions, has clearly expressed its opposition to any form of discrimination.
  - 3. The on-campus interviews are not auditions; students should not be asked to demonstrate their skills by giving an impromptu d'var Torah, singing a song, playing the guitar, designing a lesson plan, etc.
  - 4. Invitations for second interviews, phone or skype interviews may be made as of **Thursday, February 9, 2017** but not during the campus interview period.

- F. HUC-JIR in Los Angeles will provide a light breakfast, lunch, snacks, and refreshments for all students, rabbis and congregational representatives. The food at HUC-JIR will be kosher and vegetarian options will always be available. Please share any food allergies with Ms. Sue Koches in advance by email at [skoches@huc.edu](mailto:skoches@huc.edu) or by phone at (213) 765-2102.
- G. Separate areas for students and for congregations will be set up for meals and relaxation between interviews. Given the anxiety that is naturally felt in interview situations and the opportunity for personal conversations that “down time” provides, we ask that congregational representatives respect students’ privacy by not entering the student area and vice-versa.
- H. The taking of photographs, video or audio recording is prohibited at any time during the campus interviews. Students will include photographs in their portfolios.

**V. The On-Site Interview Phases – February 10 through March 6**

- A. The On-Site Interview phase begins with the extending of invitations for congregational visits commencing on Thursday, February 9, 2017 and concluding on Monday, March 6, 2017.
- B. The On-Site Interview phase is for interviews ONLY; **job offers may not be made between February 9 and March 6.** This period has been established to ensure that congregations and students have the opportunity to explore all of their options without undue pressure. However congregations should review the compensation package without making an offer until March 7.
- C. Selecting candidates for on-site interviews: The search committee, guided by those members who conducted the on-campus interviews, decides which candidates it will invite to the community for a second interview. Please note that once an invitation has been extended, it may not be withdrawn. Similarly, if a student accepts the invitation, he or she must follow through with the on-site interview.
- D. Congregations that conducted interviews in Los Angeles will be in touch directly with students to invite them for follow-up interviews according to the following schedule:
  1. **Wednesday, February 8, 2017** is a travel day both for students and for congregational representatives. On this travel day, no invitations for second interviews should be made or received.
  2. **Thursday, February 9, 2017** begins the next phase of placement. Congregations may issue invitations for on-site interviews beginning

at 11:00 a.m. EST. Students may accept or decline these invitations, A student may request a short amount of time (a couple of hours) to consider all the invitations received and make a thoughtful determination regarding positions to be pursued. Giving the student a short time to decide will spare the congregation from spending scarce resources on a student who has less enthusiasm to serve your congregation. Some congregations may choose to hold a phone or Skype interview as an interim step before inviting students for an on-site interview. Such congregations should bear in mind that students will be pursuing other interviews within the same time frame. The Handbook of Placement Procedures of the RPC apply throughout the remainder of the placement process.

3. **Saturday, February 11, 2017** is Shabbat. Both students and congregations should be respectful of the holiness and rest of the seventh day throughout the placement process.
- E. Congregations that received student resumes, but did not participate in on-campus interviews, may be in touch directly with students to invite them for interviews **after February 9.**
  - F. Congregations that interviewed students on campus and chose not to pursue their application any further should, out of courtesy to the students, contact them as soon as possible to let them know of that decision.
  - G. Congregations that set up phone or Skype interviews and wish to record them may do so but only with permission of the candidate and only for use by search committee and/or board of the congregation; the discussion of recording should take place when the interview is set up.
  - H. Students should be in contact with the Placement Office if they have questions and if they want resumes sent to additional congregations after February 9, 2017. Students should check the Placement List on the CCAR website for new postings. Congregations should continue to be in contact with the Placement Office for guidance throughout the placement process.

## **VI. Student Visits to Congregations**

- A. **Planning a travel itinerary:** Students will arrange flights and travel times, considering the schedule of the congregations involved. Students will submit travel receipts to the congregations they visit for reimbursement of travel expenses. Congregations should be sensitive to the travel expenses that students may have to incur during placement and consider pre-paying the student's travel where possible or reimburse those expenses in a timely manner. Candidates should not be expected to travel on Shabbat.

- B. Inviting the Spouse or Significant Other:** It is customary to invite a candidate's spouse or significant other to accompany the candidate on a congregational visit, since he or she will be involved in making choices. If the congregation extends this invitation, then the congregation is assumed to be responsible for the expenses of the spouse or significant other as well as the candidate. The spouse or significant other is not to be interviewed, however, unless he or she is formally applying for a position within the congregation. Congregations should put the spouse or significant other in touch with resource people for information on jobs, housing and cultural life. No undue pressure by the congregation, its affiliates, or its members may be placed upon the spouse or significant other to accept or to decline any job offer.
- C. The content of the on-site interview:** Congregations and students should discuss, in advance, what will be scheduled in the on-site interview.
1. Suggested areas of exploration: theology, religious practice, social issues, particular interests for the congregation or the candidate, programs they would like to establish, and past experiences.
  2. It is certainly understandable that a congregation would want to ensure a rabbi's happiness in their congregation and community. However, questions of a personal nature (i.e., regarding one's spouse, future family plans, etc.) are inappropriate to an interview setting and an invasion of an applicant's privacy. It is appropriate to ask open-ended questions such as, "Do you have any concerns about moving to our city?" (see [Appendix D](#) for more suggested questions). Congregations also get to know candidates through informal meetings during an on-site visit and can glean that which a candidate is willing to share in conversations over dinner, etc.
  3. **Meetings:** In addition to meeting with the search committee and the professional staff, many congregations use the on-site interview to allow various constituencies within the congregation to meet the candidate. Visits with youth groups, religious school committees, adult learners, and other congregational committees and auxiliary groups are all appropriate.
  4. **Activities:** The itinerary of an on-site interview should be designed to best promote the process by which congregations and candidates evaluate each other. At the same time, care should be taken to prepare a worthwhile informative visit that does not overburden the candidate. Congregations and students, by mutual consent, may decide in advance of a candidate's arrival, to include in the on-site visit some activities in addition to individual and panel interviews. These activities should be limited in duration and in a natural and

authentic setting. Such activities may include such offering divrei Torah, invocations and benedictions at board meetings and brief teaching opportunities. These additional activities should not constitute the bulk of the on-site visit and must be agreed upon in advance so that the student will have adequate preparation time. **Students may not be asked to deliver sample sermons or divrei Torah in a service, lead services, or participate in mock counseling sessions. If it happens that a student is visiting a congregation on Shabbat, s/he may not participate in any aspects of leadership in the service and should have no interview related responsibilities until Motzei Shabbat.**

5. Should the congregation want to take any photographs of the student or record the interview or any part of a student's visit, they may do so only with the consent of the student and only for viewing purposes of the search committee and board of the congregation. That permission must be requested in advance of the visit.
  6. Financial Arrangements: It is understood that when a congregation seeks to engage a rabbi, a fair salary and benefits package will be offered. **The disclosure and discussion of the specific salary and benefits should occur during the student's visit to the congregation.** Congregations and students should discuss openly all employment information including, but not limited to: health insurance for the rabbi's family, vacation, pension, parental leave, other benefits, and any other concerns of either party that may be part of an employment agreement. (See [Appendix A.](#))
  7. Job description: The student should leave the on-site interview with a clear understanding of the job description and responsibilities.
- D. Preparation for on-site interviews: In advance of the interviews, congregations should prepare questions for each applicant that will enable them to evaluate that candidate's skills and fit for the congregation. Students should anticipate the kinds of questions they will be asked and prepare their responses. In as much as the student is being interviewed, so, too, is the student interviewing the congregation and should, therefore, have questions prepared in advance that will help her/him learn more about the congregation and determine if it is a good match. (See [Appendix D](#) for suggested questions.)
- E. Communication following on-site interviews: communication is open and encouraged for follow up and clarifying questions. Our experience has shown that attempts to ascertain a candidate's level of interest in a position is experienced as pressure and can actually work against the congregation.

## VII. Job Offers

A. **On Tuesday, March 7, 2017 beginning at 11:00 a.m. EST, congregations may extend offers to students and enter into negotiations with them. No offers may be made before that day and time.** To facilitate a fast response, congregations should review the terms of their offer with each student during their on-site visit, and the congregation should have a written terms sheet to present to the student at the time of the actual offer. It is reasonable for students to ask for up to two hours to consider an offer, to consult with spouses and partners, and/or to review it with mentors.

B. Defining a job offer

When the search committee reaches a decision regarding the candidate whom they would like to hire, the authorized leaders (usually the chair of the search committee) of the congregation will make an offer to the student. That offer should set forth specifically the terms of the offer and describe the major provisions of the final agreement that will be contained in the subsequent contract. (See [Appendix A](#) for Guidelines for Financial Arrangements.)

C. Acceptance of an offer

1. Once the student receives a firm offer and accepts it, both the student and the congregation must end their respective searches. The congregation must inform other active candidates that an offer has been made and that their candidacy is no longer being considered and the student must inform other congregations at which he or she might be a candidate that s/he is no longer a candidate. This can be done either by contacting the parties directly or through the Director of Placement. **Even in the absence of a signed contract, so long as there is an oral agreement and a meeting of the minds, acceptance of the position has taken place for this purpose. A written contract or letter of intent should follow as soon as possible.**
2. Should the student receive a firm offer from one congregation while negotiations for another pulpit are incomplete, fairness dictates the following options: The student may accept the present offer or decline it. The student may ask for time to consider the offer. The first congregation will have the right to stipulate how long they will wait for a decision. Congregations should try to be as flexible as they can and grant the student a reasonable amount of time to consider all of his/her options so as to make the most well-thought out decision possible. If a congregation cannot delay the decision, the student will be obliged to accept or reject their offer at that time.

### **VIII. Contribution towards the cost of campus placement**

Congregations that participate in campus placement and hire a student are asked to make a contribution of \$500 to help defray the costs incurred by HUC-JIR in bringing all of the students to one campus and hosting the three days of interviews. Please send payment to HUC-JIR c/o Rabbi Dvora Weisberg, Director of the Rabbinical School, HUC-JIR, 3007 University Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007. Your support is greatly appreciated.

### **IX. Enforcement**

Failure to uphold the guidelines contained in this booklet or their inherent spirit is viewed with great concern by all those who, in good faith, take part in this process. Any breach of these guidelines is subject to the rules and procedures for ethics complaints contained in the [Code of Ethics for Rabbis](#) adopted by the CCAR. Any candidate or congregational search committee is encouraged to express concerns about possible violations immediately to a Rabbinical Program Director at HUC-JIR or the Director of Rabbinical Placement.

## **Appendix A: Guidelines for Financial Arrangements\***

- A. Term of Election for Newly-Ordained Rabbis: Newly-ordained rabbis may be engaged as assistant rabbis for a period of two to three years with possible renewals. Some congregations limit the tenure of an assistant rabbi to three years. These congregations should make this known at the time of the placement process. However, from the viewpoint of the congregation, this limiting arrangement may not be advantageous. The first year of the three-year tenure is devoted in large measure to the rabbi becoming acquainted with congregants and gaining familiarity with rabbinic responsibilities and much of the third year will be devoted to securing another position. Thus it may prove beneficial to the congregation for an assistant to remain for five years. In addition, a rabbi who has had five years of experience has a better chance of finding a Category B or Category C congregation. Newly-ordained rabbis may therefore be attracted to congregations that will be open to their remaining in the position for five years after ordination.
- B. The Rabbi's Compensation and Benefits: The ideal of *tzedek*, (justice, fairness, and sincerity) should permeate negotiations between congregation and rabbi.
- C. An understanding of the complexities of synagogue finances and the realities of the newly-ordained rabbi's fiscal concerns is of high importance to both the congregations and to newly-ordained rabbis. Congregations and students have free access to the [latest salary study](#) published jointly by the offices of the URJ and CCAR.
- D. Base compensation, figured in US dollars, is the amount to be paid directly to the rabbi as salary and parsonage, with the parsonage percentage to be determined by the rabbi later. (Parsonage should be declared in the synagogue's minutes and the parsonage amount of the rabbi's base compensation becomes non-taxable and is not reported to the IRS.) The valuation of benefits is not part of the salary figure. It is understandable that the precise definition of benefits will vary with locale.
- E. Housing Allowance: If the congregation provides housing, the details of that arrangement shall be specified in writing. If the congregation does not provide housing, that portion of the rabbi's income used to house the rabbi and his/her family, plus all expenses pertaining thereto, shall be declared as parsonage or housing allowance and so recorded in the minutes of the congregation in order to conform with the IRS regulations for tax exclusions (I.R.C. Section 107).
- F. Health insurance for the rabbi and his or her dependents should be provided either through a group policy or through some other arrangement.
- G. The congregation and the rabbi should participate in the Reform Pension Plan, administered by the [Reform Pension Board](#) of the URJ/CCAR. This plan includes group life insurance to provide for the rabbi's dependents. The Reform Pension

- Program requires the congregation to pay 15% of the rabbi's annual salary into the Fund each year. The rabbi makes a yearly contribution as well.
- H. The Reform Pension Board offers long-term disability insurance that provides benefits after a waiting period of six months. During this time, the congregation is obligated to continue the rabbi's salary and benefits.
  - I. Conference Allowances: Congregations benefit from granting the rabbi time and funds for attending conferences held under the auspices of the CCAR, URJ, NATE, WRN and WUPJ.
  - J. Moving Expenses: On electing a new rabbi, the congregation provides a realistic moving allowance for the rabbi, the rabbi's family and possessions to their community. Some congregations also choose to include the rabbi's family trips made prior to moving to allow the rabbi to set up housing, schooling, and other necessary arrangements.
  - K. Family and Parental Leave: Given Judaism's traditional commitment to the family, congregations should gladly support the decision of rabbis to raise a family. Fathers, as well as mothers, should be afforded every opportunity to devote themselves to parenting. Therefore, congregations should grant at least a two-month parental leave at full pay for their rabbis. Parental leave should apply to all rabbis regardless of marital status, gender, or sexual orientation. This applies to adoptive parents as well. We ask for sensitivity to various family structures and special needs cases, including the need for time to take care of family members with serious health conditions.
  - L. Time Off: The rabbi is entitled to at least one free day each week and to a paid vacation of at least four weeks during each year of service to the congregation. Time spent on the staff of URJ congregations, camps or conclaves, at professional conferences, in leading trips to Israel or on other congregational trips should not be counted against annual vacation time.
  - M. Other possible items to consider: Family membership included for rabbi and family; religious, early childhood and/or day school fees; agreement on non-member services and fees related to them; retreat fees for family; housing subvention to enable the rabbi to purchase home.
  - N. Letter of Intent: The Placement Commission recommends the composition of a letter of intent from the congregation to the student. This letter should come from the president or another qualified officer of the congregation, addressed to the soon-to-be-ordained rabbi, and should confirm the specifics of base compensation, benefits and term of service to which the congregation has agreed. The letter of intent should cover all categories of compensation and benefits outlined above, and should specify the dates when these terms of contract will be in effect.

- O. It should be understood that all parties will be guided by [Guidelines for Rabbinical Congregational Relationships](#), adopted by the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.
  
- P. It is understood that if the letter of agreement is signed before the date of ordination, the student has not yet fulfilled all of the requirements to be ordained and must do so by the date set by HUC-JIR. Failure to meet those requirements will prohibit the student from being ordained and from being able to fulfill the agreement. The responsibility to meet the requirements for ordination is upon the student. HUC-JIR cannot be held accountable for any student who fails to do so.

When the student has countersigned or otherwise indicated acceptance of these terms, a copy of this letter should be: 1) Filed with the Minutes of the Board of Trustees, and 2) Given to the student. [The URJ Consulting and Transition Management Team](#) will gladly offer guidance on re-evaluating your congregation's finances, should that be necessary in order to engage a rabbi.

\* adapted from "*Guidelines to Offering a Rabbinic Contract, Rabbinical Placement Commission of the Reform Movement*"

**Appendix B: Summary Checklist**

Friday, December 2, 2016	Placement Office receives resume from students.
By Monday, December 5, 2016	Congregations: Notify the RPC of the opening. Appoint a Search Committee. Complete and return the application. Send materials on your congregation and community to Cincinnati, Los Angeles and New York campuses.
Friday, December 16, 2016	Students inform Placement Office of congregational interests.
December 21-22, 2016	Student resumes and personal statements sent out by Placement Office to congregations whose applications were submitted by December 7. Students will receive an email confirmation from the Placement Office after December 24.
<b>Monday, January 9, 2017</b> at 1:30 p.m. EST	Conference call for participating congregations with Placement Director and Director of the Rabbinical Program on the host campus.
Wednesday, January 11, 2017	<b>CONGREGATIONS INFORM THE PLACEMENT OFFICE OF THEIR PLANS AND STUDENT INTERESTS.</b>
January 17-20, 2017	Placement Office will inform students which congregations will interview them.
January 25-27, 2017	Tentative on-campus interview schedules sent to students and congregations.
February 5-7, 2017 (Sunday – Tuesday)	<b>ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES. CONGREGATIONS AND STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE FROM 9:00 A.M. ON SUNDAY TO 4:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY FOR INTERVIEWS.</b>
Thursday, February 9, 2017 after 11:00 a.m. EST	Invitations for on-site visits may be proffered from this date. Congregations that did not participate in the on-campus placement may now contact students whose resumes they have received.
Friday, February 10 through Monday, March 6	Students may visit congregations. Congregations may also conduct follow-up phone, Skype or video interviews with students during this period. No offers may be made or accepted.
Tuesday, March 7, 2017 beginning at 11:00 a.m. EST	Congregations may offer students positions and students may respond to offers.

## **Appendix C: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Where will information regarding resumes, interviews and schedules come from?**

The assistant to the Placement Director, will collect student resumes and send them out to the appropriate congregations. The assistant will inform the students of the congregations with whom they will interview.

The scheduling of the interviews is coordinated by the office of Director of the Rabbinical School in Los Angeles, Rabbi Dvora Weisberg. Her assistant, Sue Koches, will send the schedules to students and congregations.

### **2. How far in advance can I anticipate receiving the interview schedule?**

Because there are always last minute changes to the placement schedule, it is impossible to finalize the schedule more than a week in advance of placement. We will do our best to get the schedules to everyone as far in advance of placement as is possible.

### **3. Do I really need to be on campus from Sunday morning to Tuesday late afternoon?**

Yes. The most challenging aspect of scheduling is when congregations cannot be there all three days. The more flexibility congregations can provide in timing, the more balanced a schedule we will be able to set up, making the interview experience more pleasant for congregations and students.

### **4. How late in the day will the interviews go?**

That is impossible to answer until closer to the start of placement, when we will know all of the congregations who will be participating and the number of interviews they will have. We try to end by late afternoon, but there are always a couple of interviews that go into the early evening, usually on Sunday and Monday.

### **5. What is the recommended size for a search committee for the intital interviews?**

We recommend no more than three people in this initial interview. Larger search committees with representatives from different groups within the congregation interview the candidates during their on-site visit. It is difficult in these short, initial meetings for too many people to participate.

### **6. May a student meet a congregation for coffee or a meal in Los Angeles?**

While we strongly discourage this practice as both exhausting and stressful to both students and congregational representatives, if such meetings must take place, they can do so only after the initial interview. Such meetings are not required or anticipated.

### **7. Should students consider applying to a WUPJ congregation?**

Yes, these are wonderful opportunities. WUPJ congregations do not interview within the RPC/HUC-JIR time frame. You can find the list of WUPJ openings on the CCAR Placement page; interested students should contact those congregations directly. For more information about WUPJ congregations, contact [Rabbi Joel Oseran](#).

**8. May an interview be cancelled by a student or an invitation be withdrawn by a congregation?**

Once a student submits his/her resume to a congregation, the student may not withdraw that resume. Similarly, a congregation may not cancel an interview unless the congregation is withdrawing from placement.

**9. If travel arrangements have been made for an on-site interview and then the interview is cancelled, who is responsible for the costs associated with the visit?**

In the event that an interview has to be cancelled, the party that cancels the interview is responsible to pay the costs associated with the visit (i.e., airfare or other travel-related expenses).

**10. Should a student engage an attorney or other representative in contract negotiations?**

The answer to this question depends on many factors:

- a. The culture of the synagogue: is the leadership of the synagogue accustomed to working with a negotiator? Have other members of the staff used negotiators? Do the synagogue leaders expect to keep negotiations 'friendly' by negotiating directly with the student? Will the use of a negotiator hurt the relationship with the leaders?
- b. The complexity of the contract: Usually first-time contracts for assistant rabbis are straightforward and simple. Asking the rabbinic program director or the placement director to look at them is often sufficient.
- c. The expense of the negotiator: It goes without saying that while attorneys often discount their rates for rabbis and students, they still charge for their services.
- d. The student's skill and comfort in negotiating: If the student is experienced and skilled in negotiating, engaging a professional negotiator might not be necessary. If negotiating makes the student anxious, the use of a negotiator might be a good idea.
- e. The way in which the negotiator will be used: A negotiator can be used to negotiate directly for the student or to act as a guide and coach behind the scenes.

The Rabbinical Placement Director and the HUC-JIR Rabbinical Program Directors are available to consult on this question as with any concerns throughout the placement process.

## **Appendix D: Suggested Interview Questions**

### **For Congregations to ask of students:**

- We'd like to begin by giving you a couple of minutes to tell us about yourself. Why did you become a rabbi?
- What is your own Jewish background?
- Why are you a Reform Jew?
- What modern Jewish thinker do you feel most akin to?
- What are the some of the classes that you enjoyed the most at HUC-JIR and why? Tell us about your thesis and why you chose that topic?
- What is your approach to outreach to non-Jews?
- What is your position on interfaith wedding officiation, and how did you arrive at it?
- Tell us your thinking on gay marriage.
- What are your requirements for conversion?
- Tell us about a book that you are reading now or have read recently.
- Tell us three interesting things that are not in your resume.
- Do you wear a kippah? Talit? Robe?
- What episode in the Torah best illustrates your leadership style?
- How do you see the role of the rabbi in relation to the staff? The Board?
- We are looking for a rabbi to guide us collaboratively into the future. What does the rabbi-congregational partnership mean to you?
- What social justice issues do you feel most passionate about?
- Can you share with us any experience that has given you "second thoughts" about becoming a rabbi?
- What is a meaningful worship experience for you?
- What role does God play in your own spirituality?
- What do you think are the most important issues facing Reform Judaism today?
- What is the most exciting program you have developed?
- What do you do for fun? How do you spend your leisure time? Do you have hobbies?
- What are the two or three things that you would most want to know about us?
- Describe an accomplishment of yours that you believe best qualifies you to become our rabbi.
- Identify the unique qualities about yourself that would motivate us to select you as our rabbi.
- Please tell us about your theology.
- Illustrate how you would bring wonderment, awe and joy to your pulpit.
- Describe some of the courses and programs you might like to teach in religious school and to the congregation.
- Share with us your ideas regarding retention of students after bar/bat mitzvah. How would you encourage students to be involved in Jewish life generally?
- Describe your ideal model of education in a congregational setting.
- In what ways can you, as the rabbi, promote Jewish values and customs in interfaith homes?

- What direction would you like to see the Reform Movement take in the decade ahead?
- What have you learned about our temple which makes you interested in becoming our next rabbi?
- What excites you the most about being the rabbi at Temple XYZ?
- What causes you the most anxiety about being the rabbi at Temple XYZ?

**Don't Forget: Is there anything you would like to ask us?**

For Students to Ask of Congregations:

- What are three things that you are most proud of about Congregation XYZ?
- Where do you envision the congregation in five years? Ten years?
- Why are you a member of Congregation XYZ?
- What are you looking for in an (assistant rabbi/rabbi educator/rabbi)?
- What are some of the congregation's challenges?