



**SEMINARY & COLLEGE
ADMISSIONS HANDBOOK**

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Seminary & College Handbook

For Parents & Students

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The Seminary Experience: A Guide for Parents and Students

TGA encourages families to give the idea of attending seminary for a year after high school significant thought.

Each student has a unique opportunity in seminary to deepen her Jewish education, develop her *ruchniyus*, and establish the principles and goals that will serve her for the rest of her life. The additional aspect for students enrolled in seminary programs in Israel is the opportunity to forge a deeper bond with Eretz Yisrael and find inspiration in the country's ambiance. At the same time, we acknowledge that not every student would benefit from attending an Israeli seminary, and we respect and support each family's decision-making process.

It can be difficult to choose the seminary that is best for each student, especially in light of the growing number of programs.

It is crucial that the fit between the seminary, the student, and the student's family be appropriate because seminaries are typically largely homogenous and focused on specialized areas. While the TGA administration works closely with each student to make the seminary application process easier, it's crucial that parents and students conduct impartial research of their own to make sure the seminary year will be as beneficial as it can and should be.

It's beneficial to start by deciding on objectives for the seminary year. This is a crucial moment for the student and her parents to have an honest discussion about their respective goals, priorities, expectations, and concerns. After everyone is in agreement, the investigation can start. Prepare your questions and start interacting with people to gain more insight into the distinctive qualities of each seminary you are thinking about. Getting knowledge from a range of sources is a smart concept. Speaking with recent seminary graduates, high school guidance counselors, and instructors who are acquainted with the student and/or her family may be beneficial. Websites for seminaries are a wonderful place to find information, however, blog sites should be avoided as they are often misleading.

You can use the following queries to help you discern between several seminaries:

1. **What is the hashkafa and religious orientation of the seminary?**
2. **What is the seminary's student profile? (How many students are enrolled? Which high schools serve as important "feeder schools"? How can "in town" and "out of town" be balanced?)**
3. **What are the typical post-seminary activities of alumni? (Working, University, Shana Bet in Israel, etc.)**
4. **What kind of curriculum does the seminary offer? How important are text-based learning and text skills? How demanding are the workload and schedule of classes? Is the traditional lecture format the main method for teaching? Chavrusa learning? Independent learning?**
5. **What are the guidelines (rules, expectations, curfew, clothing code, security, etc.)?**
6. **How is the general environment in the dorm and at school?**
7. **What are the rules for Yom Tov, Shabbos, and free time?**
8. **Where is the seminary located—in what city and neighborhood?**
9. **What kind of housing is available? Are there any meals provided?**
10. **What type of transcript is published, and where is it recognized?**
11. **Does the seminary participate in the Israel Option programs offered by Stern College, TTI, or Touro?**
12. **How much are tuition and fees? Are there any scholarships available? Is the seminary a part of MASA?**

Seminary Admissions Schedule

AUGUST - OCTOBER

- Discuss your goals and obtain a list of tasks to achieve them in a meeting with Mrs. Wolbe.
- Do research on seminaries to help you focus on your options.
- Create a resume.
- Begin drafting a personal essay to submit with your applications.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opens October 1, 2024.
- Download applications or request them from your Seminary Advisor.
- Verify application deadlines and request teacher recommendation letters in advance before the deadline.
- Applications due in December should be submitted first.
- Complete applications for 2-5 seminaries.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY

- Interviews for seminaries are scheduled and done.
- Many seminaries mail acceptance letters in February.

FEBRUARY - MARCH

- Apply for the Jewish Agency's MASA scholarship, which enables American students to participate in *gap-year* programs in Israel. Visit www.masaisrael.org for information and application.
- Lander College for Women (Touro) Israel Option Program applications are due in March.
- Applications for Chabad seminary are due in February. Interviews take place in late February, and acceptance letters are delivered in March.
- Express your gratitude to everyone who submitted recommendation letters on your behalf.

Seminaries in Israel

*Below is a list of seminaries in Israel; although the list is not extensive, it covers several new seminaries & ones that previous students have applied to.

Name of Seminary	Location	Seminary's Identification
Ateres Bnos Yerushalayim	Ramot	Bais Yaakov
BJJ - Bais Yaakov Yerushalayim	Sorotzkin	Bais Yaakov
Be'er Miriam	Har Nof	Center of Spectrum
Beit Chana	Tzfat	Chabad
Bnos Avigail	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Bnos Batsheva	Geula	Bais Yaakov
Bnos Chava	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Bnos Sarah	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Bnot Torah/Sharfman's	Ramat Eshkol	Center of Spectrum
Chemdas	Sorotzkin	Bais Yaakov
Darchei Binah	Bayit v'Gan	Bais Yaakov (starting Elul 2025)
Hadar	Kiryat Belz	Bais Yaakov
Kesser Chaya	Kiryat Moshe	Bais Yaakov
Ki Tov Sachra	Geula	Bais Yaakov
Lahav	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Machon Alte	Tzfat	Chabad
Machon Bnos Yehuda-BYA	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Machon Raaya	Geula	Bais Yaakov
Machon Sara	Yerushalayim	Bai Yaakov
Mesores Rochel	Mekor Baruch	Bais Yaakov

Seminaries in Israel continued

Name of Seminary	Location	Seminary's Identification
Me'ohr	Beit HaKerem	Bais Yaakov
Michlalah	Bayit veGan	Center of Spectrum
Midreshet Tehillah	Har Nof	Center of Spectrum
Nachlas	Shmuel HaNavi	Bais Yaakov
Neimas	Yerushalayim	Bais Yaakov
Nishmas Bais Yaakov	Yerushalayim	Bais Yaakov
Pninin	Har Nof	Bais Yaakov
Rinas Bais Yaakov	Yerushalayim	Bais Yaakov
Seminar Yerushalayim	Bayit v'Gan	Bais Yaakov
Shoshanat Yerushalayim	Ramat Shlomo	Chabad
Tehillas	Shmuel HaNavi	Bais Yaakov
Tomer Devorah	Sanhedria Murchevet	Center of Spectrum

Seminaries in U.S., Canada, and Europe

Name of Seminary	Location	Contact Information
Bais Yaakov Academy	Brooklyn, NY	718-339-4747, ext. 1187
Bnos Binah	Brooklyn, NY	(347) 374-2982
Bnos Chaim	Lakewood, NJ	732-730-7589
Lakewood Teachers Seminary	Lakewood, NJ	732-730-1470
Maalot	Baltimore, MD	410-358-3144
Seminar L'Moros/ Bais Yaakov Institute	Brooklyn, NY	718-851-2900
The New Seminary (Rebbitzen Bulka)	Brooklyn, Monsey and Lakewood	718-769-8160
Yavne Teachers' College	Cleveland, OH	216-371-8566
Bais Sara Schenirer	Manchester, England	845-352-0985
Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary	Toronto, Canada	416-256-7233
Beth Jacob Teachers' College	Montreal, Canada	aisenstark@gmail.com 514-738-2100
Gateshead Jewish Academy	Gateshead, England	Croyde@bcrsem.org.uk 44-191-477-4449
V'At Alis (The New York Seminary)	Brooklyn, NY	718-298-2600
Migdal Bais Yaakov	Lakewood, NJ	migdalseminary@gmail.com
Ateres Nava	Brooklyn, NY	347-462-2445

Applying to Seminary

Seminary Application

Application packages are sent straight to the school by Bais Yaakov seminaries. Students can apply online via applytosem.org or the respective seminary website directly to the Center of Spectrum, Bais Yaakov, and Chabad seminaries. The majority of seminaries request an essay and multiple passport-sized photos of the applicant along with the application form. Preparing these ahead of time will help reduce stress at the last minute. Essays could be submitted for review.

Letters of Recommendation

Recommendation letters have an enormous effect on seminary admissions decisions. The majority of seminaries demand one or two teacher recommendations in addition to a recommendation from the high school principal. Teachers who are familiar with the student and can attest to her qualities and highlight her accomplishments are the best individuals to offer recommendations.

Teachers take a great deal of care in writing recommendation letters for their students, making sure the letters present the student in the best possible light. This is something that students should be aware of, and they should politely and sincerely request recommendations well in advance of the deadline. If the seminary requires a special recommendation form as part of their application, the teacher should also receive that form, which should already have the student's details completed.

On the recommendation form, students may be asked to affirm that they waive their right to receive and see recommendations that have been prepared for them. Seminaries will give more weight to recommendations that are private and cannot be shared with the student or her parents, so we strongly advise students to accept this waiver.

To ensure that a copy is retained in the student's file, all recommendation letters must be turned in to the school office. Unless the seminary employs an online recommendation system, recommendations are delivered by the school office to the seminary with the student's transcript. In these situations, the teacher will be asked immediately to upload a recommendation if the student provides the seminary with the teacher's school email address.

Letters of recommendation may either be submitted through a letter, paper form, or digital form (Joint Sem App). The system will get in touch with the teachers as soon as you submit this section of the Joint Sem App, asking them to complete the online form after providing an email address under references.

Financial Aid for Seminary

As seminary education in Israel has become increasingly costly, many families are seeking ways to reduce the financial burden. One option is to consider American seminaries, which are less expensive and do not incur the additional travel expenses of learning in Israel. Some Israeli seminaries do provide financial aid for students who can demonstrate need, and many offer tuition incentives for students whom they especially hope to attract to their schools. There are a number of private sources of financial aid, including MASA grants (www.masaisrael.org) and <https://jeffseidel.com/scholarships-to-israel/>.

Additional Scholarship Opportunities

Apply to all types of organizations, including student associations, Jewish Federations, schools, and synagogues.

Reach out to individuals and establishments in each community where you have resided. Share with individuals that you would like to study in Israel. You never know who may hear that you need help. And who knows? They may be able to help you.

Jewish National Fund (JNF) “Plant Your Way to Israel” Initiative

You can help JNF and also help yourself by selling trees to be planted in Israel and earn money toward your Israel trip. For every \$36 donation that you receive, \$18 will go to the purchase of new trees and \$18 will go towards your tuition. Start your own personal fundraising web page at www.jnf.org/pyw.

Local Jewish Organizations

Many synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, and other community organizations provide scholarships for Israel programs. It's worthwhile taking the time to see what funding is available for you. Should you require financial assistance, we encourage you to seek out and contact these funding sources as early as possible to meet any required deadlines.

Synagogue

Many synagogues have scholarship funds to assist young members in participating in Israel programs. In addition, some Rabbis have discretionary funds available that they may award as they deem responsible. Call your family's synagogue and inquire what assistance may be available to you. Ask your Rabbis if they know of other sources of possible funding.

Israel Option Program

Students applying to seminaries in Israel can take advantage of the Israel Option programs offered by Lander College for Women (Touro College) and Stern College for Women (Yeshiva University). These programs enable a student to attend a seminary in Israel while being enrolled as an overseas student at an American college.

If any of the following benefits apply to them, students who intend to attend one of these universities after seminary should think about registering for one of the Israel Option programs:

1. If a student's family meets the financial requirements, enrollment in these programs makes her eligible for federal financial help.
2. Seminary coursework completed by students enrolled in an Israel Option program will automatically earn them college credit, which will appear on the transcript of the college where the student enrolled in the program. This is only valid if the seminary graduate enrolls and attends that college.

If a student decides to enroll in one of these programs to attend seminary in Israel, she must apply to the college officially and specify that she is interested in the Israel Option. She needs to confirm that the Israeli seminaries she is applying to are on the college's list of accredited institutions. To participate in these programs, there is a non-refundable fee in addition to the college application fee.

In addition, students who plan to attend seminary in Israel through the Israel Option programs of TTI, Stern College, or Touro College are eligible to apply for federal grants and loans. This requires completing the FAFSA form (www.fafsa.ed.gov), which becomes available online on October 1, 2024.

Applying to College: A Guide for Students and Parents

College application preparation starts long before the application process itself. It is crucial that students take demanding classes across the entire spectrum of academic areas throughout high school. A student will be more prepared for standardized examinations and college-level work if she reads more, both for pleasure and for school. Critical reading and writing abilities are especially vital. Along with developing leadership abilities, high school is a time to choose and pursue personal interests through a range of extracurricular activities and to build strong mentorship relationships with teachers. All of these activities have inherent worth and are investments in the future that will pay off when the official college application process begins.

After high school, each student chooses her own unique route, and there are many opportunities for her to fulfill her aspirations in terms of her career, personal life, and education. Among them are:

1. Four-year, secular universities and colleges

These range widely in terms of price, scope of programs, level of competition in the admissions process, and the standard of Jewish life on campus. They comprise both public and private colleges and universities. Generally speaking, these institutions only grant a few credits or none at all for a year spent at seminary.

2. Four-year colleges under Orthodox Jewish auspices

There is a commuter program in Brooklyn and a residential campus in Manhattan for Lander College for Women (Touro College). Midtown Manhattan is home to Stern College for Women, a residential school of Yeshiva University. In addition to their regular college courses, Limudei Kodesh courses are mandatory for students at these women's colleges. If students spend a year in a seminary that is on their approved list, these colleges will provide them with a full year of college credit. Students can now finish their undergraduate degrees in three years or less, thanks to this. Additionally, several Jewish accelerated programs grant a four-year degree from a recognized university.

3. Community Colleges

These schools provide a low-cost alternative for students looking to complete prerequisites for professional training, and they give two-year associate degrees. A lot of community college students enroll in classes with the goal of transferring to four-year degree programs later on. The majority of community institutions don't require ACT or SAT results.

4. **Online Degree Programs**

The number of online degree programs is growing quickly. While some are managed by for-profit businesses, others are affiliated with conventional colleges. When choosing a school, make sure you've done a lot of research because there have been numerous worries about fraudulent activities in this industry. For determined students who work well alone, they can be a good alternative.

5. **Combined Seminary-College Programs**

Programs that combine seminary education with college coursework typically incorporate online learning, CLEP assessments, and traditional classroom instruction. A recognized degree-granting organization is the foundational system of seminary-college programs like Ma'alot in Baltimore and Jerusalem, Sarah Schenirer Institute in Brooklyn, Lakewood, and online, The New Seminary (Rebbitzen Bulka) in New York and Lakewood, and Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) in New Jersey. Students can often finish these programs in one to two years, earning an undergraduate degree from an authorized college.

6. **Career Training Programs**

Associate's degrees are available from community colleges and other professional training programs, preparing students for jobs as medical assistants, certified nurse assistants, court reporters, dental hygienists, radiology and ultrasound technicians, and paralegals.

The application

Most college applications today are completed online through the college's website or through the Common Application Service (Common App).

Letters of recommendation

It is best to ask instructors who taught you in the eleventh or twelfth grade and whose class you received a B or above if the universities you are applying to require teacher references. For secular colleges, request general studies subject teachers for references. To give the teacher enough time to write a compelling letter of recommendation for you, ask for the recommendation well in advance of the deadline.

Institutions of higher learning will request that the student indicate whether she is giving up her right to view her recommendation letters going forward. Accepting this waiver is highly encouraged, as universities place far more weight on recommendations that are private and cannot be disclosed to the student or her parents.

To ensure that a copy is retained in the student's file, all recommendation letters must be turned in to the school office. Unless the institution has an online recommendation system, recommendations are delivered by the school office to the college with the student's transcript. In these situations, the instructor will be asked directly to post a recommendation, and the student will provide the college with the teacher's TGA email address.

High School Transcripts

Transcripts from prior high schools must be requested by students who transferred to TGA. TGA is only able to give official transcripts for high school coursework completed at TGA. Since it frequently takes time, this should be completed early in the senior year. The TGA transcript does not include the results of standardized tests (SAT, ACT, AP, and SAT). These results must be supplied through College Board directly. Score requests can be made online through College Board.

Timeline for College Admissions

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- The PSAT exam is taken during the first or second semester. This is a SAT practice exam. Exam results give teachers, parents, and students a starting point for assessing each student's abilities and areas for improvement in the curriculum. Colleges do not view these results, and they have no effect on admissions.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Research the colleges you're interested in and see which test scores are required.
- Register for the respective tests (SAT, ACT, TSI, etc.)
- Find scholarships and complete application forms. Certain scholarships have deadlines during summer between junior and senior year, keep this in mind to avoid missing deadlines.
- Learn about which government financial aid you are eligible for on <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements>

SENIOR YEAR

- Students will begin finalizing college applications. Visiting prospective colleges and speaking with students at these schools will help narrow down college choices. Meeting with teachers, college counselors, and parents in regards to college applications is recommended.
- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) opens on October 1, 2024. Details and applications are at <https://studentaid.gov/>
- Letters of recommendation should be requested well in advance of the application deadline.
- Check each college's application deadlines and schedule to meet them.
- Fill out and send in applications. Your personal statement and any other needed pieces should be polished and edited. Check your application for errors, and before submitting it, create a copy. Fill out the application and send it in before the deadline.
- Inform the universities of your choice. Send a letter of intent to attend the college of your choice along with a financial deposit. Politely decline the offer made by the other universities through the acceptance letters.
- Send out thank-you letters to everyone who submitted recommendation letters on your behalf, and let them know about your acceptances and your ultimate decision.

Colleges and Universities in the U.S.

Name of College	Location	Website
Stern College	New York, NY	https://www.yu.edu/stern
Touro University	6 locations: Manhattan Forest Hills Flatbush Starrett City Kings Highway Neptune Avenue	https://www.touro.edu/
Maalot College	Phoenix, AZ	https://maalotcollege.org/
Yeshiva University	New York, NY	https://www.yu.edu/
Sara Schenirer Institute	Brooklyn, NY	https://sarasch.com/
TTI	Online	https://testingandtraining.com/

Standardized Testing

Colleges, along with some seminaries, use standardized test scores to augment the information they receive from transcripts and recommendation letters, to learn more about each applicant's overall level of achievement, and to assess a candidate's qualifications in comparison with students from other schools and other backgrounds.

Students must be familiar with the test requirements of each college they apply to. Most colleges require SAT or ACT test scores and accept them interchangeably.

Students should take into consideration, when deciding whether to take the SAT or ACT exams, that there are important factors between the two. Students should take the exam that is best aligned with their strengths. There are sample questions available on the SAT and ACT websites that could help students decide which exam they feel confident taking.

The American College Testing Service offers the ACT exam, which is a curriculum based test that evaluates the students knowledge of subjects and skills taught in high school. The ACT exam consists of five sections: math, english, reading, science, and an optional section on writing. It is recommended that students take the optional writing section since many colleges are interested in seeing it. The math portion focuses on arithmetic, algebra, data, geometry, probability, and trigonometry. The english portion evaluates grammar and punctuation. While the science section focuses on student's ability to interpret scientific charts and tables. Per section, there are more questions and less time given than the SAT.

The SAT and ACT share a lot of the same topic. The methods used to test the concepts differ. Even in the math part, which has a lot of word problems, verbal abilities are crucial. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and data analysis are tested in the math part. Some math questions (but not all of them) allow the use of calculators. Numerous questions, both written and mathematical, need several steps to solve, and the reading passages frequently have complex vocabulary and structure. Unlike the ACT, where questions are more direct and content-based, reasoning and critical thinking skills are prioritized more. Together, the verbal and math portions make up 50% of the composite score.

Without the optional essay, the length of the SAT and ACT is roughly three hours. Both provide students with the "Score Choice" option, allowing them to select which test results to submit to colleges and which to withhold. Nevertheless, some universities require that all test results be submitted and prevent students from using Score Choice. The technique of "super scoring" the SAT and/or ACT has been embraced by numerous universities. This implies that the college will take into account the student's highest english and math scores if they have taken the same exam more than once.

The chart below offers a way to compare the scores from the two tests, which have different scores. Every ACT section has a maximum score of 36. A composite score is calculated by averaging the results of each component. Thirty-six is the highest possible composite score. Every component of the SAT is graded out of 800 potential points. The combined results from math and critical reading make up the composite score, which has a maximum of 1600.

ACT® VS SAT® SCORE CONVERSION CHART

ACT Score Range	SAT Score Range	ACT Score Range	SAT Score Range
36	1570-1600	24-25	1160-1220
35	1530-1560	22-23	1100-1150
34	1490-1520	20-21	1030-1090
33	1450-1480	18-19	960-1020
32	1420-1440	16-17	880-950
31	1390-1410	14-15	780-870
30	1360-1380	12-13	690-770
28-29	1300-1350	10-11	620-680
26-27	1230-1290	1-9	400-610

Financial Aid Terms Glossary

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): College financial aid offices use this form to determine eligibility for state and federal grants and scholarships. FAFSA forms become available on October 1, 2024, and are based on the previous year's federal income tax filing. There is no fee for filing the FAFSA. Funds are distributed on a first-come first-served basis, so be prepared to submit your FAFSA paperwork as early as possible after October 1, 2024. Application and information at www.fafsa.ed.gov

GAP: This phrase refers to the possibility that a family's needs may only be partially met by a college, leaving a "gap" that the family will need to fill with loans or other resources. (Not to be confused with "gap year" programs offered after high school.)

GRANT AID: This is scholarship funding from the federal government or the college that does not need to be repaid.

LOAN: This is money that comes from the federal government, the college, a state program, or a private organization like a foundation or bank. The federal government provides student loans through two programs: Stafford loans and Perkins loans. Loans must be repaid. Federal Student loans are lower interest loans, and do not come due until after the student has graduated. Be sure you understand when repayment begins for each loan, what the interest rate will be, and what the total cost is over the life of the loan.

MEET FULL NEED: This indicates that a family's estimated need will be entirely met by a college. Fully meeting needs usually involves a combination of *grant aid* and *self help aid*.

MERIT AID: This is typically *grant aid* provided by a college in recognition of a candidate's high academic achievement or other special talent.

NEED AWARE: This means that a college may take a family's ability to pay into account when making an admissions decision.

NEED BASED AID: This refers to scholarships and financial aid based solely on a candidate's financial need.

NEED BLIND: This means that college admissions decisions are made without regard to an applicant's ability to pay.

PROFILE: The Profile is a financial aid form required by many private colleges. The list of schools that require the Profile may be found at the College Board website: www.collegeboard.com. There is a fee for using the Profile.

SELF HELP AID: This refers to the student's and family's portion of the financial aid package. Self-help may include summer and academic year employment by the student, including *work study*, as well as funds contributed from the parents' income and/or assets and *loans*.

WORK STUDY: This is a federal government program that subsidizes wages for student employment during the school year. Students receiving financial aid are frequently expected to work for a limited number of hours per week while in school. The income from this work is typically directly to the student to cover incidental costs, such as food, books, and miscellaneous expenses.