

Yeshiva University - RIETS

BA / Semicha Program

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Who should apply?** Prospective students interested in maintaining a sharp focus on intense Torah learning while pursuing a quality undergraduate education. This program is especially exciting for those with career aspirations in the areas of chinuch or rabbanut. However, it should be considered seriously by all those who are motivated to push their Torah learning beyond the already rigorous YU Torah curriculum.
- **What if I am still undecided about my career plans?** The six-year program may still be a terrific opportunity for you to maximize your Torah growth while at YU. You can major in one of a number of majors, including psychology, sociology, computer science, math, Jewish studies, history, or political science, as well as majors within the Sy Syms School of Business. Alternatively, you can join a new option **within the Psychology Major, called “community track”, designed especially for this program**, which in addition to the basic core undergraduate psychology courses, incorporates the opportunity to take graduate courses at Azrieli School of Education, Ferkauf Psychology School, and Wurzweiler School of Social Work. After four years you will have the quality, respected college degree you need to pursue general employment and will be uniquely prepared for your aspirations in chinuch or rabbanus.
- **How is this program different than the current route of undergrad through semicha? Didn't my brother also get semicha after six years at YU?** Yes - but no. Currently, many talmidim complete their undergraduate degree in 3-3.5 years and then go on for three years of semicha. This new program encourages talmidim to spread out their college degree over four years and builds in an afternoon seder into the schedule, thereby maximizing time spent on learning throughout the six years. Furthermore, while the average RIETS student must continue for three years of semicha after college (and the equivalent of Shana Bet beforehand), you will need only two - having spent more time during college years focusing on learning.
- **Exactly how are the six years divided up?** Talmidim who have studied for at least two years in Israel continue their undergraduate education for 4 years, followed by two years of additional learning and professional training to finish semicha. The first semester on campus is particularly geared toward Torah and personal growth. **During this “transition semester”, students take one or two core college courses, thereby allowing easier transition to yeshiva and campus and additional learning opportunities.** Future semesters combine a lightened college load thereby allowing time for afternoon seder.
- **Is there a set limmud during the afternoon seder?** In 5778 we studied Hilchos Shabbos in-depth, beginning with Hilchos Bishul. The chevre learned together in the Glueck Beit Midrash, with guided sources and chaburah once a week. **The limmud for 5779 has not been determined yet.**

➤ **Are there any unique learning objectives for the program participants?** Since the program is spread out over six years we decided to include the learning and mastery of the six chalakim of the Mishna Berura during these six years.

➤ **Which Rebbeim make up the staff of the 6-year Program?**

o **Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky** offers a weekly chaburah on the pages covered in the weekly Mishna Berura limmud [next year the group is covering the third chelek of the Mishna Berura].

o **Rabbi Tanchum Cohen** oversees the afternoon seder and offers a weekly chaburah.

o **Rav Moshe Weinberger**, our Mashpia, meets once a month with the group and engages them in intimate discussions of personal and spiritual growth.

o **Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky** directs the program, curriculum, and hosts monthly get-togethers for the participants.

➤ **So I don't need to major in Psychology?** Most majors offered by Yeshiva College can be substituted for the Psychology major. The advantages of the new psychology track are twofold: the major provides the future rabbi a uniquely designed set of courses for his career with a focus in areas of education, social work and psychology. Furthermore, the class schedule will be designed whenever possible in such a way as to assure time for the set afternoon seder (4:30-6:15 pm) every day. If you choose a different major, you should have no problem arranging your afternoon seder for the first two years of your undergraduate years. In years three and four, as you take more advanced courses towards your major, you may not have the same flexibility to design your schedule. However, as you will only be taking 3-4 college courses a semester, the academic load should not be so great as to derail your learning goals.

➤ **Are there any majors that won't work with this program?** All Talmidim at YU will benefit from the increased afternoon energy in the batei midrash and are welcome to attend the late-afternoon chugim. However, students who choose majors with more significant graduation requirements will, obviously, have less time to take advantage of the additional learning opportunities. As such, should they choose to continue with semicha after three or four years undergraduate work, they would require three more years - and not two - to complete semicha.

➤ **What if I'm not even sure if I want to stay for all six years?** After four years you will receive your undergraduate degree. If you choose to stay an additional two years you can receive RIETS semicha, and, for those going into education, a master's degree in Jewish Education through additional courses at the Azrieli Graduate School of education.

➤ **If I can participate for four years - and don't need to complete semicha - why is it called a six year BA semikha program?** An excellent shailah. You seem ready for the program! Yes - you can simply space out your years of college and learning over four years so as to give you more time to focus on your Torah learning during these crucial years. Because we want to encourage the right fellows to choose this path, we offer through this program, the four year undergraduate experience at a cost that is not much

higher than those fitting their experience into three years. However, the program was originally conceived - and makes obvious sense - for our many serious Talmidim who end up staying six years in the yeshiva anyway.

➤ **How can I finish semikha in just two years?** RIETS semicha is awarded to talmidim who not only pass certain bechinot, but have demonstrated a true proficiency in their learning. Much of the time spent studying for semicha involves the learning of Gemara, Rishonim and Achronim and becoming familiar with halachic seforim. While the actual limmud of certain key areas of Halacha will be reserved for post-college years, your extensive beit midrash time during college will play a crucial role in preparing you for ordination. In addition, certain parts of the semikha program will be weaved into the undergraduate years so that you can already sharpen your focus on preparation for semicha.

➤ **Can you tell me what a typical semester schedule would look like?** Following the "transition semester", students take 12-13 college credits each semester. This may include three college credits for shiur. Students take two courses at 3:00pm (one Mon/Wed and one Tue/Thu) but preferably not at the 4:30pm slot – thereby opening the afternoon between 4:30pm and 6:15pm to learn in the Beit Midrash.

➤ **Can I also do the Post-Pesach Program?** Also, what about summer school? Both excellent questions and they even sort of answer each other. Yes – you can return for the Post-Pesach Program at the end of your shana bet year and then begin the 6-year program the following Fall semester. In fact, while we strongly encourage you to complete your shana bet year in Israel, you may actually get ahead by coming back for the post-Pesach program. In order to allow for the very light course load in the first semester, students may have to take two or three summer courses at some point to complete your 128 credit requirement for graduation. Those that begin Post-Pesach can count the secular courses taken during that program towards that gap.

➤ **What is the difference between the Masmidim Honors Program and the Six-Year program?** The Masmidim Program requires specific study of bekiyut, parsha, and time commitment in Yeshiva on Fridays, Shabbatot, June etc. and is connected to an academic scholarship. Additionally, some Masmidim talmidim do not continue on to semicha after college. The six-year program is geared towards talmidim interested in a career in the area of chinuch or rabbanus and looks at the undergraduate and semicha years on campus as one unit.

➤ **Can I join both the Masmidim Program and the Six-Year Program?** Absolutely.

➤ **What do the Roshei Yeshiva have to say about this new program?** Of course, many of the Roshei Yeshiva are at the core of developing this program. They feel that, for most talmidim, it is much more advantageous to spread your intense learning more evenly through your six years at YU, than to focus so much more on courses in college for three to three-and-a-half years and then learning during semicha. This program will maximize all six years for Torah learning. The typical reaction of Ramim and Kollel fellows went something like this: "Wow - that's exactly what I would have wanted when I was at YU!" It's a very good time to come to YU.

➤ **Can I join the program after a year or more on campus?** In order to lock in the discounted tuition rate, you must elect to join the program at the beginning of your college career. Students are able to join the extra learning and sederim at any point.

➤ **Did you say “discounted tuition rate”?** A student who applies, gains admission, and commits to enroll in the BA/Semicha track before his first semester on campus, is able to stay a fourth year on campus as a full-time undergrad student without paying tuition fees. Furthermore, during the final two years, as a full-time student in RIETS tuition is free.

➤ **What if I want to join after studying one-year in Israel?** You can join the program immediately and reap the benefits of the Torah-focused undergraduate experience. At the end of the four undergraduate years with additional years of learning, you can finish semicha over the following three years.

➤ **What do the fellows in the program have to say?**

“It’s really the best of both worlds to be able to get exposed to secular knowledge from college classes while still spending the majority of your day focused in Torah”

“It’s also great how they keep trying to test out and tweak various parts of the program in an attempt to make it perfect”.

OK. You’ve convinced me.

How do I apply?

www.yu.edu/Academics/Torah-Studies/

Bahatzlacha! Looking forward to seeing you in Yeshiva!