

# FACULTY OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (FSR)

## HISTORY

### **The Faculty of Theology: A Century of Forming Eastern Clergy (1875-1974)**

The Faculty of Religious Studies of USJ traces its origins to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting with “[...] the humble beginnings of the Saint Francis Xavier Seminary in Ghazir on March 19, 1845 [...] By October 30, 1875, both the college and seminary had relocated to Beirut. On February 25, 1881, Pope Leo XIII [...] “elevated the Beirut Seminary to University status, granting it the authority to confer academic degrees, including PhDs in philosophy and sacred theology” (Ducruet, SJ, and Awit, Henri. “The Faculty of Theology”. In The Saint Joseph University of Beirut and its Institutions... (1875-2002), Beirut: USJ Publications, 2006, p. 27).

The establishment of seminaries aimed at forming clergy for the Lebanese Maronite Order, Melkites, Catholic Syrians, and Catholic Armenians, coupled with directives from the Second Vatican Council, prompted the Society of Jesus to express readiness, in April 1972, to collaborate with local ecclesiastical authorities without asserting control over a unified faculty structure. In 1974, they formally relinquished the title of Pontifical Faculty of Theology, which they had held since 1881. “This marked the end of an era during which the Faculty of Theology at the Saint Joseph University had trained numerous priests, including 70 bishops” (id., p. 29).

### **From the Faculty of Theology to the Faculty of Religious Studies (FSR)**

In 1974, the Society of Jesus formally notified the Ministry of National Education that the “Faculty of Philosophical and Religious Studies retained exclusive authority over degrees conferred by the Faculty of Theology and the Institute of Philosophical Studies with respect to the Lebanese State” (id., p. 29). During its meeting on December 20, 1980, the USJ Board approved the Bylaws of ISSR. The institute was “established to provide academic programs in religious studies to clerics, nuns, and laypersons interested in Church activities” (id., p. 31). That same year, the Department of Islamic-Christian Studies founded in 1977, was established as the Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies (IEIC). It was not until 1999 that Decree 1947 formally authorized the incorporation of these institutions into the Faculty of Religious Studies, leading to the official inauguration of FSR on October 1, 2000.

The Faculty of Religious Studies (FSR) at the Saint Joseph University of Beirut comprises two institutions and a department, each specializing in distinct academic areas:

- The Higher Institute of Religious Studies (ISSR) provides training for Eastern Churches through a theological and multidisciplinary approach to address pastoral realities.
- The Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies (IEIC) fosters dialogue between Christians and Muslims, with an inclusive stance towards Judaism. It critically examines interreligious relations within the Middle East.
- The Department of Religious Studies (DSR) offers education in a hermeneutical approach to religions, particularly Abrahamic ones. It emphasizes understanding and interpreting religious phenomena across various dimensions, primarily within the Eastern context.

FSR also includes:

- PhD program (CED)
- Center for Religious Studies Research (CRSR)

## MISSION

The Faculty of Religious Studies aims to:

- Provide innovative, pedagogical, and scientifically rigorous university education.
- Foster a hermeneutical approach to religions, encompassing critical perspectives on interreligious relations and the pastoral reality of churches.
- Contribute to the advancement of knowledge in religious studies, theology, and humanities.

## ADMINISTRATION

**Dean:** Fr. Salah ABOUJAOUDE, SJ

**Vice-Dean:** Rev. Sr. Yara MATTA

**Director of the Higher Institute of Religious Studies (ISSR):** Rev. Sr. Yara MATTA

**Director of the Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies (IEIC):** Roula TALHOUK

**Director of the Center for Religious Studies Research (CRSR):** Souraya BECHEALANY  
**Director of the Center for Arab Christian Research and Documentation (CEDRAC):** Fr. Ronney GEMAYEL, SJ  
**Academic Coordinators:**  
**Coordinator of the PhD Program:** Lina ISKANDAR HAWAT  
**Coordinator of the Caravane Certificate of Study in the Historical and Religious Reality of the Middle East:** Lina ISKANDAR HAWAT  
**Coordinator of the Master's Programs:** Roula TALHOUK  
**Coordinator of the Department of Religious Studies Programs:** Marguerite ASMAR BOU AOUN  
**Coordinator of Democratic Citizenship Education:** Marguerite ASMAR BOU AOUN  
**Coordinator of CREDO:** Fr. Rami WAKIM  
**Coordinator of the University Diploma in Religions and Media:** Marguerite ASMAR BOU AOUN  
**Coordinator of the University Diploma in Healthcare Pastoral:** Fr. Charbel KHACHAN  
**Coordinator of the University Diploma in Spiritual Accompaniment:** Wissam ABDO  
**Coordinator of the Certificate in Initial Religious Training - *Opération 7e jour*:** Fr. Samir BECHARA, SJ  
**Coordinator of Lifelong Learning in Muslim-Christian Dialogue:** Rita AYOUB  
**FSR Delegate to the Research Board:** Fr. Rami WAKIM  
**Editor-in-Chief of Proche-Orient Chrétien:** Fr. Gaby HACHEM  
**Editor-in-Chief of Horizons et conjonctures:** Lina ISKANDAR HAWAT

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

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**Communication and Lifelong Learning Officer:** Claude MATTA EID  
**Documentalist at CCSR:** Josette MEHANNA BARHOUCHE  
**Academic Affairs Administrative Coordinator:**  
**FSR and IEIC:** Josette NASRALLAH FREM  
**ISSR:** Mireille BOU NADER  
**Administrative Support Officers:**  
**FSR:** Jimmy MALLAH ASSOUAD  
**ISSR and IEIC:** Micheline SKAFF MEDAWAR

## **FACULTY**

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**Professors:**  
Fr. Gaby HACHEM, Fr. Salah ABOUJAOUDE, SJ, Souraya BECHEALANY  
**Associate Professors:**  
Lina ISKANDAR HAWAT, Marguerite ASMAR BOU AOUN  
**Lecturers:**  
Nadine ABBAS, Walid ABOU HAMAD, Rock AL ACHY, Marguerite ASMAR BOU AOUN, Souraya BECHEALANY, Khalil CHALFOUN, Fr. Jad CHEBLI, SJ, Fr. Salim DACCACHE, SJ, Nicole GEHA ABDELNOUR, Gloria GHANTOUS, Antoine GHAZAL, Raffi GERGIAN, Rami EL HADDAD, Fr. Edgard EL HAIBY, Samia ISSA, Liza EL KAREH, Christophe-Georges KHADIGE, Jean EL KHAWAND, Paul KATSIVELIS, Marwan KHODARI, Viviane EL KHOURY BOU SREIH, Noha MALAEB, Ghiane MANSOUR ABOU JAOUDEH, Rev. Sr. Yara MATTA, Charbel NASSER, Charbel NASSIF, Carole NEHME, Fr. Zaki SADER, SJ, Elie SALIBA, Roula TALHOUK, Ahmad (EL) ZOABI.

## **DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES AWARDED**

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- Bachelor in Religions (Currently Frozen)
- PhD in Religious Studies
- Certificate of Study of the Historical and Religious Reality in the Near-East
- University Diploma in Religions and Media

## **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

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- University instructors
- Researchers in religious studies

## **TUITION FEES**

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PhD in Religious Studies: 76 Fresh US Dollars and 2,865,000 Lebanese Pounds (for semester 1), equivalent in Fresh US Dollars to 108 (exchange rate = 89,500 LBP).