



**Committee for the Evaluation of English Teacher Education
Study Programs**

Achva Academic College

Department of English

Evaluation Report

April 2018

Contents

Chapter 1:	Background.....	3
Chapter 2:	Committee Procedures.....	4
Chapter 3:	Evaluation of English Teacher Education Study Program at Achva Academic College.....	5
Chapter 4:	Summary of Recommendations.....	11

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letter of Appointment

Appendix 2 – Schedule of the visit

Chapter 1: Background

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) decided to evaluate study programs in the field of English Teacher Education during the academic year of 2016-2017.

Following the decision of the CHE, the Vice Chair of the CHE appointed a Committee consisting of:

- **Prof. Claude Goldenberg**, Stanford University, USA - committee chair
- **Prof. Charlene Rivera**, The George Washington University, Washington DC, USA.
- **Prof. JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall**, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA.
- **Prof. Malatesha Joshi**, Texas A&M, USA.
- **Prof. Janina Brutt-Griffler**, The State University of New York at Buffalo, USA.
- **Prof. Penny Ur**, Oranim Academic College, Israel.
- **Prof. Bernard Spolsky** (Emeritus), Bar-Ilan University, Israel.
- **Prof. Hana Wirth-Nesher**, Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

Ms. Maria Levinson-Or and Ms. Molly Abramson served as the Coordinators of the Committee on behalf of the CHE.

Within the framework of its activity, the Committee was requested to:¹

1. Examine the self-evaluation reports, submitted by the institutions that provide study programs in English Teacher Education, and to conduct on-site visits at those institutions.
2. Submit to the CHE an individual report on each of the evaluated academic units and study programs, including the Committee's findings and recommendations.
3. Submit to the CHE a general report regarding the examined field of study within the Israeli system of higher education including recommendations for standards in the evaluated field of study.

The entire process was conducted in accordance with the CHE's Guidelines for Self-Evaluation (of September 2015).

¹ The Committee's letter of appointment is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Chapter 2: Committee Procedures

The Committee held its first meetings on 21.05.2017, during which it discussed fundamental issues concerning higher education in Israel, the quality assessment activity, as well as English Teacher Education Study programs in Israel.

In May 2017, the Committee held its first visit of evaluation, and visited the David Yellin Academic College of Education, Talpiot College of Education, Jerusalem College, Orot College, Kaye Academic College of Education, and Herzog College. During the visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff, and students.

In June 2017, the Committee held an additional visit of evaluation, and visited Levinsky College of Education, Beit Berl College (including the Arab Academic Institute), and Kibbutzim College of Education. Similar to the previous visits, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff and students.

In December 2017, the Committee held its final visit of evaluation, and visited Oranim Academic College, Ohalo College in Katzrin - Academic Institute for Education, Sciences and Sports, Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, the College of Sakhnin for Teacher Education, the Academic Arab College of Education in Haifa, the Gordon College of Education, Shaanan Academic Religious Teachers' College, Achva Academic College, Givat Washington Academic College of Education, and Hemdat HaDarom Academic College of Education. As conducted in May and June 2017, the Committee met with various stakeholders at the institutions, including management, faculty, staff and students.

This report deals with the Department of English Teacher Education at Achva Academic College. The Committee's visit to Achva took place on December 10, 2017.

Due to scheduling considerations, the committee split into two groups and held simultaneous visits in the institutions. The group that visited Achva Academic College of was chaired by Professor Goldenberg, and included Professor Rivera, and Professor Wirth-Nesher.

The schedule of the visit is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The Committee thanks the management Achva Academic College and the Department of English Teacher Education for their self-evaluation report and for their hospitality towards the committee during its visit at the institution.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of English Teacher Education Study Program at Achva Academic College

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the visit to the institution, and does not take into account any subsequent changes. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Evaluation Committee based on the documentation provided by the institution, information gained through interviews, discussion and observation, as well as other information available to the Committee.

1. Executive Summary

Achva Academic College serves a diverse student body primarily from the south and central regions of Israel. Generally, the students in the English department are considered more qualified for higher education than their counterparts in other fields. They are highly motivated, idealistic, and committed students, many of whom see their roles as teachers of English within a broader mission to raise the level of education in their communities. The faculty is passionate about working with the students and sets a very positive atmosphere for learning. The College places an emphasis on diversity and supports students with special needs and physical disabilities.

The English Department is in a transitional stage, having lost a number of faculty members over the past two years through retirements and the untimely death of their department head. The College administration has made the department a top priority and is committed to appointing new faculty. The College and Department have an opportunity at this juncture to rebuild the faculty, and they are rising to the occasion admirably, although it is difficult to find qualified faculty in the region.

The greatest challenge facing the College is integrating the Bedouin students who make up over one-quarter of the student body. Their English is reportedly at a lower level at admission than that of other students, and they often speak relatively little Hebrew. It is commendable that the department has a system in place to test English proficiency prior to allowing students to begin student teaching. The innovative 'broadcasting' course is unique and an interesting addition to the program.

The College/Department feels it has a responsibility and would like to admit more Bedouin students; the Department chair and faculty acknowledge that increasing the enrollment of Bedouins will require additional support.

Overall, with a few exceptions, the program provides adequate preparation for successful beginning teaching. We have a number of suggestions in three categories: Study Programs, Faculty/Human Resources, Infrastructure, and Alumni.

2. Study Programs

Observations and findings

Overall curriculum

The English department sets high standards. As a result, not all students are able to complete the program, resulting in high dropout rates. There is an acknowledged need for additional English teachers to support students struggling to achieve higher levels of English proficiency.

There is in general an emphasis on theory with perhaps insufficient attention to practical application (see pp 26-27 of the self-evaluation). An entire year's course on the use of computers places an overemphasis on learning digital skills and use of hand-held devices without enough on critical thinking about the use of online tools and content.

“Learning styles” is a dubious theory that is discussed or featured in several courses. There is virtually no valid evidence that learning styles actually exist, or that even if they do, teaching according to learning styles may promote student learning. It is true that learning is enhanced if students receive input through multiple channels (e.g., visual and auditory), but there is no evidence that “auditory learners” learn most effectively only through auditory means, “visual learners” only through visual means, etc.

The situation is similar with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which appears in one of the linguistics courses. The strong version of Sapir-Whorf—that language determines or constrains thought—has long been discredited. However, there are weak versions supported by research. Their educational implications and utility are uncertain.

Syllabi

Course syllabi lack several important elements, such as objectives and weekly assignments/readings. The syllabi should be updated and bibliographies reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Literature courses

Nearly all of the literature courses are given by one instructor. Although she is a dedicated, qualified, and charismatic teacher who was praised by several sources, it would benefit the program to have greater diversity of faculty. The syllabi do not indicate any specific literary critical or theoretical readings, to enable students to understand diverse approaches to literary study. The syllabi also do not reflect an international approach to Anglophone writing, which would be in keeping with teaching English as an international

language. Since there are very few course offerings in English literature, it is advisable not to offer courses such as Holocaust literature where nearly all of the readings are translations into English rather than works originally in the English language.

Linguistics

In general, there was good coverage of topics in the linguistic courses. The syllabus of the Textual Analysis syllabus, however, is identical to that of the Applied Linguistics course.

Proficiency

Throughout the program, there is a need for a more intense focus on the development of English proficiency. The courses in proficiency importantly emphasize oral proficiency but do not sufficiently stress writing proficiency. It is problematic that no proficiency courses are offered in the third year of the program.

Some rubrics appear inappropriate or extremely difficult to implement. For example, the rubric for the Oral Proficiency Exam (found in appendix folder, examples of rubrics) focuses on a number of isolated aspects of grammatical accuracy, and very little on the ability of the candidate to express him/herself fluently and effectively in English, which ought to be the main goal. Rubrics should serve as both an instructional tool and a measurement instrument. They should contain criteria that tell students what the teacher is expecting them to know and demonstrate.

Pedagogy

The English methodology courses generally have good coverage of topics but in some cases do not provide enough practical guidance. For example, the course on assessment does not address test design.

There is insufficient attention to the teaching of grammar; the syllabus for “Lexicon and Pedagogical Grammar” is not sufficiently clear about the practical content of the course.

The courses on learning disabilities focus only on one type of learning disability: dyslexia. There is no discussion of other types of learning disabilities or how to deal with students who have difficulty or who need extra support in acquiring different aspects of language (e.g., speaking,) in general.

Teaching Practice and Practical Training

The teaching practicum only allows for one hour per week of actual teaching. This is insufficient time for students to gain needed classroom teaching experience. The observation and final assessment forms/rubrics for practice teaching focus only on specific surface

features of the student’s performance (such as their use of English, relationships etc.), and makes no attempt to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the student in bringing about or facilitating learning by pupils, which should be the key criterion.

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Essential/Important/Desirable</u>
Overall curriculum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or learning styles defined, for example, as visual/auditory/kinesthetic that have no valid research support in educational contexts should not be presented as bases for pedagogical decisions. 	Important
Syllabi	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabi should include a uniform format, including at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title ○ Year offered ○ One- or two-semester ○ Year of program, if relevant ○ How often given, if relevant ○ Number of hours/credits ○ Prerequisites ○ Mandatory or elective ○ Goals/Learning outcomes (as defined in the self-evaluation guidelines) ○ Course description/summary ○ Week-by-week content, assignments, and readings ○ Assessment ○ Bibliography 	<i>Essential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course bibliographies should be updated annually. 	<i>Essential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course titles of the syllabi documents should clearly correspond to course content. 	<i>Essential</i>
Literature courses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature courses should focus on works written in the English language, on English literature and culture as international. They should also provide some instruction on approaches to literary study and refer to some critical as well as primary readings. 	<i>Essential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory literature courses should address issues of different approaches to interpretation of literary texts, genre, cultural and historical context, and the multicultural dimension of Anglophone literatures (including majority and minority perspectives expressed in literary texts and methods of analysis). 	Important

Linguistics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A non-redundant syllabus for the textual analysis course should be added to the curriculum. 	Essential
Proficiency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be an increased emphasis on reading and writing proficiency added to the present offerings on oral skills. 	Essential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proficiency course should be added to the curriculum of the third year of the program. 	Essential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The department should offer supplementary oral and writing proficiency classes for students who require additional support prior to beginning practice teaching. 	Essential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional supports such as courses, tutoring, extra-curricular resources, and other opportunities for English development should be provided for students with lower levels of English proficiency. 	Important
Pedagogy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methodology courses should include more content on practical classroom procedures and strategies. 	Important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubrics for evaluation should be clear and operationally defined. 	Important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a course or section of a course devoted to classroom management. 	Important
Teaching Practice and Practical Training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should receive a minimum of two days/week of teaching practice in the third year. In year one there should at least be some guided/focused observations each week (preferably with some opportunities to teach individuals, small groups, and a class) and in year two additional practical teaching experience with a mentor teacher. 	Essential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rubric to assess practice teaching should include overall teaching effectiveness (the ability to bring about or facilitate student learning) as a major criterion. 	Important

3. Faculty/Human Resources

Observations and findings

Qualifications of teaching faculty

The College faces the challenge of staffing and replenishing faculty. Attention should be given to identifying educators with credentials in teaching English as second language.

With regard to pedagogical advisors, we noticed that not all pedagogical advisors working in the program have a Master's degree.

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Essential/Important/Desirable</u>
Faculty qualifications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department should ensure that all pedagogical advisors have a Master's degree. They do not necessarily need a PhD. 	<i>Essential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department should have medium and long-term plans for replacing faculty who have or are planning to retire. 	Desirable

4. Infrastructure

Observations and findings

Some of the main books needed for the program are in outdated editions in the library. There is no full-text online access to key journals in English teaching.

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Essential/Important/Desirable</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English department faculty should make sure that textbooks in the library are the most current editions. 	<i>Essential</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college library should obtain online full-text subscriptions to key journals for English teachers. These should include <i>ELT Journal</i>, <i>TESOL Journal</i>, <i>Language Teaching</i>, <i>English Teaching Professional</i>, <i>The English Teaching Forum</i>. 	Important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As appropriate, articles from the key English journals should be used in courses and included in course syllabi. 	Important

5. Alumni

Observations and findings

There is no systematic effort on the part of the college to maintain contact with program alumni. Alumni could be an excellent resource for locating cooperating teachers, suitable schools to place students, and providing feedback for program improvement.

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Essential/Important/Desirable</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College should make efforts to create and maintain systematic connections with program alumni through a constantly updated database and regular communication. 	Important

Chapter 4 – Summary of Recommendations

Essential:

- Syllabi should include a uniform format, including at least:
 - Title
 - Year offered
 - One- or two-semester
 - Year of program, if relevant
 - How often given, if relevant
 - Number of hours/credits
 - Prerequisites
 - Mandatory or elective
 - Goals/Learning outcomes (as defined in the self-evaluation guidelines)
 - Course description/summary
 - Week-by-week content, assignments, and readings
 - Assessment
 - Bibliography
- Course bibliographies should be updated annually.
- Course titles of the syllabi documents should clearly correspond to course content.
- Literature courses should focus on works written in the English language, on English literature and culture as international. They should also provide some instruction on approaches to literary study and refer to some critical as well as primary readings.
- A non-redundant syllabus for the textual analysis course should be added to the curriculum.
- There should be an increased emphasis on reading and writing proficiency added to the present offerings on oral skills.
- A proficiency course should be added to the curriculum of the third year of the program.
- The department should offer supplementary oral and writing proficiency classes for students who require additional support prior to beginning practice teaching.
- Students should receive a minimum of two days/week of teaching practice in the third year. In year one there should at least be some guided/focused observations each week (preferably with some opportunities to teach individuals, small groups, and a class) and in year two additional practical teaching experience with a mentor teacher.
- The department should ensure that all pedagogical advisors have a Master's degree. They do not necessarily need a PhD.
- English department faculty should make sure that textbooks in the library are the most current editions.

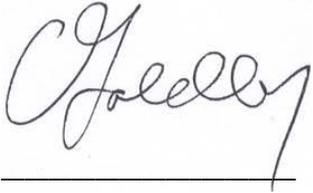
Important:

- Theories such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or learning styles defined, for example, as visual/auditory/kinesthetic that have no valid research support in educational contexts should not be presented as bases for pedagogical decisions.
- Mandatory literature courses should address issues of different approaches to interpretation of literary texts, genre, cultural and historical context, and the multicultural dimension of Anglophone literatures (including majority and minority perspectives expressed in literary texts and methods of analysis).
- Additional supports such as courses, tutoring, extra-curricular resources, and other opportunities for English development should be provided for students with lower levels of English proficiency.
- The methodology courses should include more content on practical classroom procedures and strategies.
- Rubrics for evaluation should be clear and operationally defined.
- There should be a course or section of a course devoted to classroom management.
- The rubric to assess practice teaching should include overall teaching effectiveness (the ability to bring about or facilitate student learning) as a major criterion.
- The college library should obtain online full-text subscriptions to key journals for English teachers. These should include *ELT Journal*, *TESOL Journal*, *Language Teaching*, *English Teaching Professional*, *The English Teaching Forum*.
- As appropriate, articles from the key English journals should be used in courses and included in course syllabi.
- The College should make efforts to create and maintain systematic connections with program alumni through a constantly updated database and regular communication.

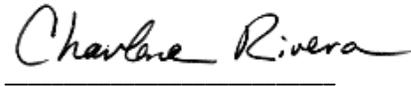
Desirable:

- The department should have medium and long-term plans for replacing faculty who have or are planning to retire.

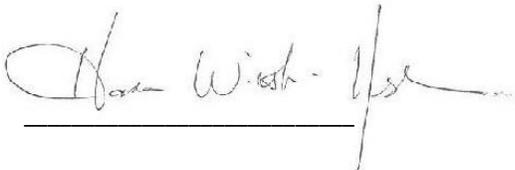
Signed by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Claude Goldenberg". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Prof. Claude Goldenberg - Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charlene Rivera". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Prof. Charlene Rivera

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hana Wirth-Nesher". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Prof. Hana Wirth-Nesher

Appendix 1: Letter of Appointment



January 2017

Prof. Claude Goldenberg
Graduate School of Education
Stanford University
USA

Dear Professor,

The Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) strives to ensure the continuing excellence and quality of Israeli higher education through a systematic evaluation process. By engaging upon this mission, the CHE seeks: to enhance and ensure the quality of academic studies, to provide the public with information regarding the quality of study programs in institutions of higher education throughout Israel, and to ensure the continued integration of the Israeli system of higher education in the international academic arena.

As part of this important endeavor we reach out to world renowned academicians to help us meet the challenges that confront the Israeli higher education by accepting our invitation to participate in our international evaluation committees. This process establishes a structure for an ongoing consultative process around the globe on common academic dilemmas and prospects.

I therefore deeply appreciate your willingness to join us in this crucial enterprise.

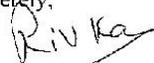
It is with great pleasure that I hereby appoint you to serve as chair of the Council for Higher Education's Committee for the Evaluation of the study programs in **English Teacher Education**. In addition to yourself, the composition of the Committee will be as follows: Prof. Janina Brutt-Griffler, prof. JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall, prof. Malatesha Joshi, prof. Charlene Rivera, prof. Bernard Spolsky, Penny Ur and prof. Hana Wirth-Nesher.

Ms. Maria Levinson-Or will be the coordinator of the Committee.

Details regarding the operation of the committee and its mandate are provided in the enclosed appendix.

I wish you much success in your role as a member of this most important committee.

Sincerely,


Dr. Rivka Wadmany
Vice Chair,
The Council for Higher Education (CHE)

Enclosures: Appendix to the Appointment Letter of Evaluation Committees

cc: Dr. Varda Ben-Shaul, Deputy Director-General for QA, CHE
Ms. Maria Levinson-Or, Committee Coordinator

Appendix 2: Site Visit Schedule

<u>English Teacher Education - Schedule of site visit</u> <u>Achva Academic College</u>		
<u>December 10^h, 2017</u>		
09:00-09:45	Opening session with the heads of the institution	Prof. Shosh Arad, President of Achva Academic College Dr. Yael Fisher, Rector
09:45-10:30	Meeting with the Head of the School of Education	Dr. Raisa Guberman, Dean of School of Education Dr. Marita Barabash, Former Dean of School of Education
10:30-11:15	Meeting with the Head of the Study program	Dr. Laura Major
11:15-11:30	Break	Closed-door meeting of the committee
11:30-12:15	Meeting with senior academic staff * (up to 8)	Dr. Yulia Muchnik Dr. Alla Meyerovich Dr. Lara Kwalburn Dr. Gazit Sharabi Dr. Tamar Shmerler
12:15-13:00	Meeting with pedagogical instructors* (up to 8)	Amanda Caplan Laura Shashua Jennifer Hoyzman
13:00-13:45	Lunch (in the same room)	Closed-door meeting of the committee
13:45-14:30	Tour of library	Dr. Irena Vladimirski
14:30-15:15	Meeting with B.Ed students** (up to 6)	
15:15-16:00	Meeting with Alumni** (up to 6)	
16:00-16:20	Closed-door meeting of the committee	
16:20-16:45	Closing meeting	Prof. Shosh Arad Dr. Yael Fisher Dr. Raisa Guberman Dr. Laura Major