

# EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

## **Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics**

College of Arts  
King Saud University  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**APRIL 2020**

Rapport publié le 26/05/2020

## CONTENTS

Evaluation report	pages 3 to 14
Comments of the institution	pages 15 to 18
Accreditation decision	following pages

## EVALUATION REPORT

### **Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics**

College of Arts  
King Saud University,  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**OCTOBER 2019**

The King Saud University has mandated the Hcéres to perform the evaluation of its MA in Applied Linguistics programme. The evaluation is based on the “External Evaluation Standards” of foreign study programmes, adopted by the Hcéres Board on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

**For the Hcéres<sup>1</sup> :**

Nelly Dupin, Acting President

**On behalf of the experts committee<sup>2</sup> :**

Julien Zarifian,  
President of the committee

In accordance with the decree n°2014-1365, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014,

<sup>1</sup> The president of Hcéres "contresigne les rapports d'évaluation établis par les comités d'experts et signés par leur président." (Article 8, alinéa 5) — "countersigns the assessment reports made by the experts' committees and signed by their president" (article 8, alinea 5).

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation reports "sont signés par le président du comité". (Article 11, alinéa 2) — "are signed by the president of the committee" (article 11, alinea 2).

# CONTENTS

I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET.....	6
II. ON-SITE VISIT DESCRIPTION .....	8
Composition of the experts panel.....	8
On-site visit description .....	8
III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	9
1 – Presentation of the study programme .....	9
2 - Presentation of the programme's self-evaluation approach.....	9
IV. EVALUATION REPORT .....	10
1 - AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME.....	10
2 – POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME .....	10
3 – STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE.....	11
4 – PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT .....	11
V. CONCLUSION .....	13
Strengths.....	13
Weaknesses .....	14
Recommendations	
VI. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION .....	15

## I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET

1. University/institution: King Saud University
2. Component, faculty or department concerned: College of Arts
3. Programme's title: Master in Applied Linguistics
4. Training/speciality: MA with two tracks: thesis/non thesis
5. Year of creation and context: 1987 (revised in 2015)
6. Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus): Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, main campus (male and female campuses)
7. Programme director:
  - a. Khalid Alghamedi
  - b. Assistant Professor
  - c. Applied Linguistics

## METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION(S)

8. There is no previous evaluation or accreditation

## HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES DEDICATED TO THE PROGRAMME

9. The Department of English Language and Literature (DEL&L) to which is attached the MA in Applied Linguistics counts 98 teachers (40 for the Male campus and 58 for the Female campus) who can be made available to the programme. That includes, for the year 2018/2019, 4 Professors (3 males, 1 female), 8 Associate Professors (5 males, 3 females), 31 Assistant Professors (13 males, 18 females), 16 Lecturers (1 male, 15 female), 32 Teaching Assistants (12 males, 20 females) of Saudi nationality, in addition to 2 (1 male and 1 female) non-Saudi Associate Professors and 5 non-Saudi Assistant Professors (males only).
10. The male campus is older than the female one (a new one was built and opened in 2013), but both are perfectly designed and adapted, and well equipped. The female campus counts 54 teacher offices (for a total of 58 teachers), all computer-equipped, and 2 staff offices, in addition to 1 writing center, 1 English Club "headquarters", one Language Lab. The male campus has 30 teacher offices (for a total of 40 teachers), all computer-equipped, and 3 staff offices, in addition to a Lab. Both campuses are perfectly connected to the internet and students have computers and printers at their disposal (1 computer for every 5 students and 1 printer for every 177 students for the female campus; 1 computer every 2 students and 1 printer every 45 students for the male campus). They are provisioned with the latest technological equipment with several labs, printers, Internet bandwidth and extensive wireless coverage. Information has been given that the English department is constructing a complete Linguistics Research Lab for post graduate students (MA and PhD) and faculty members, with an observation classroom and computers including all the necessary software.

## STUDENT POPULATION: EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS

The figures relating to students registration show that the number of registered students has been considerably fluctuating and remains quite low, far lower than the maximum number of students that can be admitted, especially on the male campus, keeping in mind that for quality purposes, the Department of English Language and Literature demands that the admitted students should not be more than 30 (15 females & 15 males). The thesis track attracts only a few students, with only one student registered in the last three years.

In 2016, when the new programme was launched, 6 female students registered in the non-thesis track, 1 in the thesis track, no male student registered. 6 graduated the year after.

In 2017, there were registrations only in the non-thesis track, 13 female students, 10 of them being graduated the year after.

In 2018, the same phenomenon occurred with only 9 female students who registered.

The figures are presented in detail below:

Year	Non-thesis track		Thesis track		Graduates (Females Only)	Graduates (OLD programme)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females		Males	Females
2013*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	7
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	5
2015	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	2
2016	0	6	0	1	0	1	3
2017	0	13	0	0	6	3	0
2018	0	9	0	0	10	0	0

## II.ON-SITE VISIT DESCRIPTION

### COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

- Dr Julien Zarifian, Associate Professor, University of Cergy-Pontoise (President)
- Dr Gloria Awad, Associate Professor, University of Artois
- Ms Mizgin Demir, student, University of Rouen
- Dr Annick Rivens-Mompean, Professor, University of Lille
- Dr Sébastien Rouquette, Professor, University of Clermont-Auvergne.

Hcéres was represented by Dr Anne Vial-Logeay, science advisor.

### ON-SITE VISIT DESCRIPTION

- Date of the visit: September 29-31, 2019
- Summary of the proceedings: The two campuses (male and female) were visited. Meetings with professors, staff, students, and alumni were organized. The visit lasted three days. A meeting of the Hcéres team only took place at the end of day of the visit. The meetings and visits relating to the MA in Applied Linguistics took place on the second day of the visit (Monday, September 30, 2019).
- Organisation of the visit: On September 30, 2019, after visiting the campus and the classrooms, offices and equipment of the Department of English, the experts had a meeting and respectively one-hour discussions with, separately, students, alumni, and professors.
- On the female campus, a specific meeting was organized with the students' clubs of the College of Arts, with a huge variety of topics offered: Reading Group, Drama Group, Debate Group, Documentary Group, Muse, the club's magazine, The Speaking Center, Creative Writing, etc.
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited: Excellent. The Hcéres experts were taken in charge by a few KSU professors on the male and female campuses. The KSU team of professors organized the visit perfectly and did their best to satisfy the requests of the Hcéres team providing extra information when required.
- People met: During the three above-mentioned meetings, the experts met between 5 and 10 students, alumni, and professors, respectively as well as students in charge of their respective associations on the female campus.
- Any problems: No.
- Other: No.



### III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

#### 1 – PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics of King Saud University is delivered by the Department of English Language and Literature of the College of Arts. It is delivered to both male and female students, and the courses take place both on the male and female campuses. This MA was established in 1987 and has both a thesis track and a non-thesis track (established in 2015). The programme covers a wide variety of subjects, including language acquisition, phonetics, syntax, language disorders, and social interaction with language. As indicated by the programme, it aims at training students specialized in academic instruction and research in applied linguistics, who know how languages work and who can use these concepts and information to resolve real-life language problems. It is true that this variety of topics provides a good generalist training, yet, notwithstanding a few specific areas, very close and more information from the alumni's employers there exists a global risk to remain too general and superficial, not providing students with a more specific and focused diploma. It is said that the aim is to train graduates who are qualified and ready to prepare various types of language teaching materials and specialized dictionaries, who can carry out investigations on language policy and planning, and improve language instruction programs and language assessment in the country. The graduates are also acquainted with the new developments in technology and its role in language teaching, research and training and can deal with linguistic issues and problems facing the community.

This will to grasp a large variety of topics is very ambitious. Yet, it gives the impression that the students are not specialized enough, either in (1) lexicography and corpus-treatment, or in (2) language policy, curriculum and material design, or also in (3) online learning with technologies. These three topics could represent the content of three different electives but are all part of a single MA.

A different choice has been made with the existence of two tracks: the non-thesis track, also called taught-courses track, aims at providing knowledge in applied linguistics, and the thesis track complements that knowledge with extensive research. The instructors and the department encourage MA students to publish their papers and publishing in itself is a requirement for continuing the postgraduate studies for the PhD degree at the department.

These two tracks are very close and more information from the alumni's employers could help distinguish their goals more clearly.

Research is supported within the department through the work of many committees such as the scientific research and academic improvement, with workshops dedicated to writing, research design organized by the applied linguistics committee. Currently, there are no guest lecturers. However, the Academic Improvement Committee and the Yearly Symposium of the English and Literature Department invites speakers to present their research and students are encouraged to attend these events.

#### 2 - PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

The self-evaluation provides well-presented information and was taken seriously by the in-charge staff. The self-evaluation report is a 28 page-long document, to which were added 15 appendixes. Each section and sub-section is carefully filled in and includes, most of the time, both data and qualitative analysis. In general, the information is relevant, detailed, and corresponds perfectly to the themes addressed in the section or subsection. Some further questions were asked and KSU has provided precise figures and complementary information about the content of some courses, that have permitted to answer the questions raised, which is very appreciable.

## IV. EVALUATION REPORT

### 1- AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The goals of the programme are clearly stated, programme which is not focused on training future English teachers as such but which rather provides both depth and breadth topics related to the areas of specialty. The double track (thesis track and non-thesis track) is adapted to this field of study even if the tracks do not differ that much in content. The main goal is to boost the students' capacity for critically analyzing the issues affecting the current pedagogic practices relevant to the fields of applied linguistics and language teaching, and developing ideas that can be applied on real ground, as experts in the English language teaching and learning field, even beyond English.

One of the admission requirements for the MA programme in Applied Linguistics at KSU is to prove an advanced proficiency in English language in all its components (reading comprehension, speaking, listening & writing) since all the courses are taught exclusively in English. This could provide the possibility to invite foreign guest lecturers and it also enables the students to have a direct access to the world-wide literature of this field of research, a large amount being published in English, and also to be published. Yet even if the MA of Applied Linguistics is offered by the Department of English Language and Literature of the College of Arts and fully taught in English, its name does not refer to English studies, and offers a broader focus.

Details are not provided about the outcome of the programme in terms of jobs opportunities but many potential career opportunities are mentioned as available to graduates with an MA in Applied Linguistics, due to the number of fields with links to applied linguistics. Indeed, language problems can occur in psychology, computer science, sociology, education, communications, or governmental issues. Yet as mentioned above, the list of jobs remains very general and open. It can be seen as a good point, as it provides access to a variety of job offers, yet the diploma lacks specificity and cannot be identified as unique and providing an original qualification. One wonders if the students can truly be considered as specialists in any of the three topics, or if they have a specialty in addition to a common core shared by all.

### 2 – POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The MA in Applied Linguistics offered by the English department is a long running programme, which was revised in 2015 after going through a process of benchmarking against other well-established international programs in applied linguistics in the USA and Canada. It shows that the College of Arts and the professors have a very thorough knowledge of the requirements of this type of programme. No reference is made to benchmarking in European institutions, where the requirements may differ. Locally, other MA programmes in linguistics are mentioned such as those at King Abdulaziz University (Jeddah), Umm Al-Qura University (Mekkah), Taif University (Taif), King Faisal University (Dammam), and Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal university (Dammam). The programmes vary in the number of credit hours, the range of courses, and the requirement of a thesis or a project. The MA in Applied Linguistic of KSU clearly states its learning outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies. Yet, the programme seems to state its legitimacy by showing its similarity with the other programmes, either American or local. If it is true that there are some necessary requirements and basic courses that need to be offered, it is also true that a programme needs to have its specific identity and to be recognized as "the" only one to offer either a specialty or an international opening or even a professional goal. There are enough elements in the content of the course to identify three main sub-tracks.

The link between the study programme and research is obvious and strong, and materialized, in particular, by the fact that in the final semester of the program, students are required to write a 15,000-18,000-word research project (6000-8000 words in the non-thesis track). The department through the Academic Improvement Committee and the Joint Supervision Program sometimes hosts international academics to deliver research papers in a conference where the graduates participate. In addition, the college organizes annual forum for graduate students' research projects. There also are opportunities for post-graduate students to become involved in joint research projects. The fact that many professors are leading Saudi researchers in their field, that the teaching is research oriented and that the department is closely affiliated with the Saudi Society of Linguistics (SSL) which is a newly launched society with board members from the English department faculty reinforces the link between teaching and research. The society offers great support to the MA and PhD linguistics programs. The programme also mentions some international partnerships, with a list of international agreements held by KSU (e.g. Bologna University, British Council, Groningen University, Indiana University, etc.). Yet information is not provided about the type of agreements strictly related to the programme. Local agreements are mentioned with actions related to the Ministry of Health, General Administration of Education in Riyadh, General Authority for Statistics or with Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, but more information is required to know more exactly in which circumstances and what kind of jobs are offered.

### 3 – STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE

The presentation of the structure of the courses is coherent and well thought. As mentioned earlier, the study programme has a course track (or non-thesis track) and a thesis track but there is no further specialization and the main and only focus is in applied linguistics. Do students from thesis and non-thesis track get different jobs, depending on the track? That should be made clearer. The course track includes 42 hours distributed over four study semesters; each semester is of approximately 16 weeks and represents an academic level. Students study 12 weekly contact hours (credit) each semester and 6 hours in the final semester; the research project (3 credit hours) and a course (3 credit hours). The thesis track offers 26 hours distributed over four study semesters; each represents an academic level with 12 credit hours each semester. The final two semesters are credited one hour each: semester 3: thesis proposal; semester 4: thesis. If maintained, the difference between the two tracks should be made clearer.

Anyway, the progression throughout the semesters is coherent and clearly explained. There is a gradual process in which the students move from theoretical grounding to learning and implementing research skills and producing papers in preparation for the final project or thesis.

Students start with courses including Structure of English (ENG 500), Trends in Applied Linguistics (ENG 501), Semantics (ENG 508), and Language Teaching Materials (ENG 528). These courses introduce students to linguistics in general and applied linguistics in particular. They give students the theoretical parts that are needed to pursue their postgraduate studies in linguistics as offered in Structure of English (ENG 500), and then moving them gradually to think in particular way how research and ideas are developed in applied linguistics as in Trends in Applied Linguistics (ENG 501), Semantics (ENG 508), and Language Teaching Materials (ENG 528).

Being equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge, students move to acquire more advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in the second level courses: Language Assessment (ENG 502), Research in Applied Linguistics (ENG 503), Technology & Language Teaching (ENG 520), and Language Acquisition (ENG 524). Then, the students start to take more advanced and focused courses in the third level including: Discourse Analysis (ENG 504), Language Policy & Planning (ENG 505), Lexicography (ENG 506), and Seminar in Applied Linguistics (ENG 597). In the fourth level, students start to do their research/project. With their research/project, they are doing another specific and more focused course called Learner Language (ENG 532). They ultimately produce substantial research in the field.

The MA in Applied Linguistics includes practical work components in the courses. For example, research topics chosen by the students in Research Project (ENG 533) and Thesis (ENG 600) require them to teach a specific material using specific methodology. This is interesting as it really bridges the gap between research and practice in each sub-topic. Yet no mention is made of a longer internship period.

Furthermore, the programme offers training in communication technologies. There is a specific technology oriented course (ENG 520), entitled Technology and language teaching. It introduces students to the new media technological aids used in language teaching and learning, including computers, interactive smart boards, the internet, smartphone apps, and different educational software programs. Students are trained to use computer programs such as concordances and database management software in dictionary making in the course (Lexicography).

Finally, students in the courses track are required to write a 6,000 to 8,000-word research project and students in the thesis track are required to write a 15,000 to 18,000-word research project. This difference of length is adapted to the goals, either research-oriented or course-oriented, even if the topics remain similar. The projects have to be related to the field of applied linguistics and to what they have been studying in the previous courses. Each student is assigned to a supervisor who will guide him/her throughout the process. The projects are showcased in many departmental and college level events and conferences.

### 4 – PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The programme is managed by the English Department. The department staff members specialized in various fields of applied linguistics are responsible for instruction, academic advising, and supervision.

Students are aware of professors teaching certain courses before registration through the KSU academic system, and they also have access to all faculties in the department and their specialties. The department website has a list of all teaching staff, with their areas of specialty, contact information, and research interests.

Staff members receive training by the university (The Deanship of Skills Development). They also have the right to attend one conference or summer school per year. The College of Arts also cooperates with the Deanship of E-Learning and Distant Education to organize a number of workshops about Technology in Teaching, Smart

Classrooms and Blackboards, which distinguish the College of Arts from other university colleges, through two faculty members.

The Graduate Studies Unit holds regular meetings with students (e.g. an orientation meeting at the beginning of every academic year). The unit is also in charge of handling students' queries, suggestions, complaints, and requests. The alumni committee in the department is working currently on building a database with information about graduates, their professions and their employment rates.

In the evaluation and assessment of students learning outcomes, the College of Arts of KSU has put management as a priority agenda. For quality purposes, the Department of English Language and Literature demands that the admitted students should not be more than 30 (15 females & 15 males). The regular internal evaluation by the Graduate Committee resulted in the programme being thoroughly updated during the fall of 2016. The program's modified plan offers now both a non-thesis track and a thesis track. The number of students remains low, especially on the male campus and the difference of goal between these two tracks could be made clearer to be more attractive. As a matter of fact, this low number of students' enrolments could be due the high level of selection, combined with a lack of potential candidates. Not so many students seem to be interested in the thesis track, yet the ongoing evolution of the societal needs may turn this track more attractive in the future.

## V.CONCLUSION

The Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics of King Saud University, delivered by the Department of English Language and Literature of the College of Arts is a long running programme, which was revised in 2017 for improvement after going through a process of evaluation and benchmarking against other well-established international programs in applied linguistics. Female students are much more numerous than the male students. This disequilibrium is also noted in the quality of the equipment provided on the campuses and needs to be minimized in the future for more equity.

The self-evaluation report was fruitfully completed by the on-site visit, which permitted to meet staff, students and alumni and visit the premises which are equipped with the latest technological equipment. The visit of the premises, especially on the female campus which is more recent, has shown that KSU offers excellent infrastructure to the students, with the use of technologies really adapted to the requirements of the Master's programme which needs to put in practice the precepts taught in the course syllabus. Therefore computer-aided teaching and learning does not remain theoretical but is truly experienced by the students.

The programme covers a wide variety of subjects and aims at training students specialized in academic instruction and research in applied linguistics, who know how languages work and who can use these concepts and information to resolve real-life language problems.

Generally speaking, the goals of the MA in Applied Linguistics are clearly stated and the programme is attractive and adapted. The programme offers a combination of courses that provide students with both the theoretical foundations and the practical training to develop their research abilities. It is not focused on training future English teachers as such but rather provides both depth and breadth topics related to the areas of specialty.

This general goal provides an interesting and valid variety of choices to students but on the other hand, it does not permit to offer specialized and identified tracks within the MA. The focus on language learning and technology is very up to date and one of the strong elements of the MA, which could be made more visible.

The double track (thesis track and non-thesis track) is adapted to this field of study but could be made more visible and more specific as well, with researchers on one hand, and specialized teacher trainers or curriculum designers on the other hand for example.

The quality of the research track is excellent. Many professors are leading Saudi researchers in their field and the teaching is research oriented. Furthermore, the department is closely affiliated with the Saudi Society of Linguistics (SSL) which is a newly launched society with board members from the English department faculty, thus reinforcing the link between teaching and research. The society offers support to the MA and PhD linguistics programs. The meeting with the staff has shown the quality of the staff, both professors and administrative support. The meeting with the students has shown a great dynamism, on the female campus particularly with a variety of students' associations, and the alumni were satisfied with their previous training. Yet, the jobs occupied seemed to be provisional and still not "the job" (quoting one of them) they could be entitled to. An enquiry about the alumni is necessary in order to have a better understanding of the future of the students.

The figures relating to students registration can become problematic. Yet some evolutions have already taken place, whose effects need to be observed in the long term.

## STRENGTHS

- Strong and diversified team of Professors
- Strong link between teaching and research
- Quality context of teaching with high level equipment
- Relevant and diversified topics offered in the curriculum
- Students' needs are really taken into account as the on-site visit and meetings with alumni and students have shown.

## WEAKNESSES

- Very low and irregular number of students enrolled
- The added-value of having a thesis track and a non-thesis track is not clearly presented
- The outcomes and jobs occupied after the course need to be better followed up or at least informed. It may help attract a larger amount of students
- The role of the internship is not clearly stated
- Not enough information provided about international agreements (mentioned but not clearly related to this specific MA).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The programme offers a variety of topics which are very relevant for an MA in Applied Linguistics. It benefits from excellent infrastructure, particularly on the female campus which is characterized by its remarkable dynamism (e.g. students' associations). The goal should be to provide equity to both categories of students.

Furthermore, a reflexion on the specific goals of each track could be launched, to make the MA even more competitive or identified among the offer of other MA from other local universities, or even from other countries. This stronger identity might have interesting effects on the enrolment of students that would benefit from a specialized diploma, instead of a rather general one.

This specialization could be done in two different ways:

- Making the difference between the thesis and the non-thesis track more obvious and announcing a focus on research on one hand and on professional outcome and employability on the other hand. The second track, more field-related, would permit to raise the question of internship, which seems to be slightly undervalued, and to offer a regular field of observation of classroom management to both pedagogy-related jobs, and why not, researchers.
- Another possibility would be to create specializations, within the MA, with for example 3 specialties that are already part of the global programme at the moment and that can be identified: (1) lexicography; (2) curriculum development and language policy; (3) language learning and technology. These courses already exist but their added-value could be reinforced, if offered in different identified tracks. Starting a deep reflection on the job opportunities offered and providing more information about the outcomes of the MA would contribute to make it more attractive. Other elements need to be made clearer, such as the development of international partnerships as intercultural matters are at the core of language. The length and period of the internship could evolve, as even though the goal is not to become a teacher, the conception of pedagogical material or reflexion on the use of technology needs to be confronted to the field on a nearly daily basis.

As a consequence, it can be assumed that the MA in Applied Linguistics, which already demonstrates a high level of expertise and quality, relying on a very qualified staff and excellent material premises, could become more attractive and have a higher rate of enrolments.



## VI.COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION

جامعة الملك سعود (034)  
هاتف +966 11 467 53 89  
فاكس +966 11 467 85 28

المملكة العربية السعودية  
ص.ب. الرياض 2456 11451  
www.ksu.edu.sa



كلية الآداب  
مكتب العميد

January 1, 2020

Dear Ms. Nelly Dupin,

We appreciate your efforts in the evaluation of the College of Arts' five academic programmes (1- *BA in English Language*, 2- *MA in English Literature*, 3- *MA in Applied Linguistics*, 4- *BA in Mass Communication*, and 5- *MA in Mass Communication*). We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Expert Committee that visited and provided insight into the stance of our evaluated programmes. In response to the committee's evaluation reports, we believe that most of the highlights and recommendations provided will contribute to improving the programmes' quality, and thus improve the overall quality and efficiency of our graduates. The programmes will consider the content of the reports for future improvements.

Nevertheless, there are other points mentioned in the reports that we may have different views about or require clarification. These are as follows:

### 1- *BA in English Language*

Although the programme does not currently offer a Western culture focused course, Western critical thought and ideologies are studied in the ENG 362 Criticism course. This course is designed to introduce students to major schools of thought from Classical Greek criticism to the Modern and Postmodern. In the course, students are introduced to these schools chronologically, and are required to apply the frameworks to literary texts to cement their understanding of the differences and changes that occurred through history. The programme also offers an elective course about the history of the English language, ENG 421, which provides an overview of how historical events in England led to changes in the language throughout different periods. It brings focus to the political, social and intellectual factors that determine these changes.

## 2- MA in English Literature

The report points out concerns over the small number of students joining the programme. It is true that the number of students is low, however, the number has gradually increased over time. The programme also has both male and female students, even though the majority on the programme are female. It is believed that this reality reflects the fact that humanities in general is less attractive to students and that the number of male literature students is less than females in most universities.

The report suggests to include history courses in the study plan. Indeed, history is important for literature students. Although the programme does not have any dedicated history courses, students are given enough historical context to each literature course throughout the programme.

As for job opportunities and partnerships, the Saudi 2030 Vision is anticipating more opportunities for the graduates in different national and cultural domains. Our graduates are well-rounded in cultural issues and qualified to work in areas outside of teaching and translation. Under the umbrella of King Abdullah Institute for Research and Consulting, our staff and students have the opportunity to partner with various business entities in the country (<https://kai.ksu.edu.sa/en>).

Another point in the report is the job market and competition with the College of Translation. We believe our graduates maintain special characteristics to make them different than graduates from the College of Translation. Translation is one skill our students can perform besides their strong background in Western literature and cultures and humanities. Therefore, we do not see ourselves in direct competition with the College of Translation, whose curriculum focuses on the techniques, theory and practice of translation. Our graduates gain employment with foreign organisations working inside the country and with international organisations in a number of different fields (as highlighted in the report).

## 3- MA in Applied Linguistics

The report discusses the nature of the study plan as being too general and that graduates may not become "specialized enough". In response, it can be said that applied linguistics is by nature an interdisciplinary field focused on a range of topics, all of which serve the purpose of investigating real-life language issues. Courses offered in the programme seek to provide students with an abundance of information about the field of applied linguistics, but this is not





to the detriment of choosing an area of specialty. Students on both tracks can thus focus on a specific area of applied linguistics in courses like ENG 579 (Seminar), ENG 501 (Trends in Applied Linguistics), ENG 599 (Research Project), and ENG 600 (Thesis). In addition, the programme aims to prepare students to join Ph.D. programmes nationally and internationally. Therefore, having studied a wide range of areas in more depth will help to facilitate any decision making on what Ph.D. programme they will join. That said, the experts' argument is worth considering during the next programme modification.

Furthermore, the report argues that the name of the programme does not refer to English studies since it is taught in English and under the umbrella of the Department of English Language and Literature. Here, the name does not refer to English studies because English is only the medium of instruction, which is apparent in the title of the courses offered that do not refer to any language. The issues discussed in the courses refer to linguistic phenomena, which apply to all languages. For example, in the Language Policy and Planning course students are introduced to theories and frameworks governing language policy creation, interpretation and appropriation. These theories apply to all language policies worldwide. Another example is the Lexicography course that teaches and trains students into building mono- as well as *bilingual* corpora and dictionaries. Therefore, one of the gained learning outcomes is the ability to build dictionaries in Arabic, English, French or in any other language spoken (or learned in the future). In addition, it is common practice to offer Applied Linguistics programmes with similar titles without reference to any language while studying the linguistic phenomena of various languages.

It is further mentioned that "the thesis track attracts only a few students". It should be noted that students are admitted to the non-thesis track and only distinguished students are allowed to switch to the thesis track. This is due to the nature of this track, which requires proficiency in academic writing and strong determination.

#### 4- BA in Mass Communication

The "lack" of a "scientific laboratory" has been stated as a concern by the experts. In response, the Aljazeera Research Chair for International Journalism is associated with the department and serve in offering opportunities for conducting research individually and collaboratively. In addition, the university encourages and funds research groups in Mass Communication as well as in other fields. These research groups promote the participation of student researchers with the aim to encourage knowledge and research expertise from professors to be passed on



to students. These groups, along with the research chair and the quality facilities offered by the department, college and university, can offer the advantage of scientific experience at both the student and staff levels. Therefore, all of this may compensate for the "lack" of a scientific laboratory at the department.

**5- MA in Mass Communication**

The report similarly highlights "the lack" of a scientific laboratory that can benefit the department. The response provided above (section 4) applies here and should suffice.

Finally, based on the five evaluation reports pertaining to the five academic programmes mentioned at the beginning of this letter, the College of Arts respectfully requests that the French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) proceeds with the accreditation process and informs us of their decisions.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Naif bin Thunaian Al Saud**

*Professor of Mass Communication*

*Dean of the College of Arts, KSU*

**Dr. Suliman Mohammed Alnasser**

*Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics*

*College of Arts Vice Dean for Development & Quality*

## ACCREDITATION DECISION

### **Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics**

College of Arts  
King Saud University  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**APRIL 2020**

## SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCERES

HCERES has built its evaluation process based on a set of objectives that higher education institution study programmes must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into four fields among which are the accreditation criteria.

As for the “External Evaluation Standards”, the accreditation criteria have been specifically designed for foreign programmes. The accreditation criteria were adopted by the Board on June 2016 and are available on the HCERES website ([hceres.fr](http://hceres.fr)).

The accreditation committee, meeting his accreditation decision, has wholly taken into account the final evaluation report of the study programme. This accreditation decision is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The accreditation decision issued by HCERES shall not grant any rights whatsoever, whether in France or abroad. The decision on training programme accreditation confers an accreditation label and does not infer recognition of the accredited qualifications. The HCERES accreditation process therefore has no impact on the qualifications recognition process in France.

# FULFILLMENT OF ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

## FIELD 1: AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

### Accreditation criterion

The objectives of the study programme with regard to knowledge and skills to be acquired are clearly defined and communicated. Students and other stakeholders are aware of outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies.

### Assessment of criterion

The academic goals of the MA in Applied Linguistics are well stated and correspond to what one can expect from this type of programme. Its main objective is to train students specialized in academic instruction and research in applied linguistics, with the aim of preparing students to understand how languages work and so that they can use these concepts and information produce various types of language teaching materials and specialized dictionaries, carry out investigations on language policy and planning, and improve language instruction programs and language assessment in the country. Not much is said, in the reports, about the outcomes of the programme in terms of jobs for the graduates but opportunities are mentioned as available in fields as diverse as psychology, computer science, sociology, education, communications, or governmental agencies. This lack of concrete information about the precise professional goals of the programme is problematic, especially because it is both thesis and non-thesis track and one can expect a strong correlation between a MA with a non-thesis track and the socio-economic world.

- ***The academic objectives of the programme are well designed and coherent with the nature of the programme***
- ***The link between the academic thread of the programme and the outcomes in terms of job opportunities is not manifest enough and is far too vague***

## FIELD 2: POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

### Accreditation criterion

The study programme has set a comprehensive positioning suited to its objectives and including a clear link with research, scholarly partnerships and/or with the economic and social world, national and/or international partnerships.

### Assessment of criterion

The MA in Applied Linguistics is a long running programme, which was revised in 2015 after going through a process of benchmarking against other well-established international programs in applied linguistics in the United States and Canada. In Saudi Arabia, there are five other MA programmes in linguistics, whose courses, number of credit hours, and the requirement of a thesis or a project, all differ (although we do not know precisely to what extent). The link between the study programme and research is strong and this is a positive point. This link is materialized, in particular, by the fact that in the final semester of the program students are required to write a research project – even for the non-thesis track that has existed since 2015). The department through the Academic Improvement Committee and the Joint Supervision Program sometimes hosts international academics to deliver research papers in a conference where the graduates participate. In addition, the college organizes annual forum for graduate students' research projects. There also are opportunities for post-graduate students to become involved in joint research projects. The fact that the department is closely affiliated with the Saudi Society of Linguistics (SSL) which is a newly launched society with board members from the English department faculty is another positive point, and it reinforces the link between teaching and research. The programme mentions some international partnerships, with a list of international agreements held by KSU (e.g. Bologna University, British Council, Groningen University, Indiana University, etc.). Yet information is not provided about the type of agreements strictly related to the programme and it was understood, after discussing this point with the teaching team, that there is none. Local agreements are mentioned with actions in associations with the Ministry of Health, General Administration of Education in Riyadh, General Au-

thority for Statistics or Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, which is a positive point, but not much is mentioned about their exact nature.

- ***The programme is well established in the national and regional academic landscape***
- ***The articulation between the different programme and the research field is strong, and definitely an asset of this MA***
- ***No specific international partnership exists, for none of the programmes, and that is a problem***

## FIELD 3: STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE

### Accreditation criterion

The study programme includes a set of teaching units that are coherent, gradual and adapted to all kind of students. The study programme allows students to acquire additional skills that are useful for employment or further study.

Internships and projects are included in the study programme curriculum. So are Information and Communication Technologies in Education (ICTE) and education innovations. The study programme prepares students for the international environment.

### Assessment of criterion

The MA in Applied Linguistic has both a course track and (since 2015) a thesis track. Both tracks are well organized and balanced in terms of courses and projects, and the progression throughout the semesters is coherent and clearly explained. There is a gradual process in which the students move from theoretical grounding to learning and implementing research skills and producing papers in preparation for the final project (for the non-thesis track, it consists in the production of a 6,000 to 8,000-word research paper) or thesis (for the thesis track; it consists in the production a 15,000 to 18,000-word research thesis). However, there is no further specialization other than applied linguistics, the main and only focus of the programme. This may seem, at first glance, positive (as we may assume that students become specialists of the field and are identified as such by the academic and socio-economic partners), but should be considered as a weakness as additional specializations would make students better-equipped for their future professional life (especially for the non-thesis track students) and will open their perspectives. The courses include both in depth research elements and practical work components, which is a positive point. The MA also offers training in communication technologies and students are trained to use computer programs such as concordances and database management software in dictionary making in the course (Lexicography), and this is another positive aspect of the programme. However, and this is a negative point, no mention is made neither of a long internship period (which is problematic for non-thesis track students) nor of elements of international partnerships specific to the programme.

- ***The structure of the programmes is progressive and well-thought***
- ***The programme is entirely “applied linguistics-centered”, which, although it presents some interests for the students, could be considered a weakness***
- ***The programmes lacks an international dynamic and the fact that internship is not compulsory (even for the non-thesis track) is problematic***



## FIELD 4: STUDY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

### Accreditation criterion

The study programme is implemented by a formally identified and operational teaching team including stakeholder and student participation. It is carried out by an educational team which benefits from clear and up-to-date data. Methods for checking knowledge are explicitly stated and communicated to students. Teaching and practical professional units are expressed in terms of skills. Anti-fraud measures have been implemented.

### Assessment of criterion

The MA in Applied Linguistics is managed by the English Department. The department staff members specialized in various fields of applied linguistics are responsible for instruction, academic advising, and supervision, but it is not really clear how they organize to supervise the programme and how often they meet. Students are aware of professors teaching certain courses before registration through the KSU academic system, and the department website has a list of all teaching staff, with their areas of specialty, contact information, and research interests. Another positive point relates to the Graduate Studies Unit and the fact that it holds regular meetings with students (e.g. an orientation meeting at the beginning of every academic year). The unit is also in charge of handling students' queries, suggestions, complaints, and requests. Students evaluate the courses they attended every semester, in an anonymous way. The alumni committee in the department seems quite dynamic and is working currently on building a database with information about graduates, their professions and their employment rates. The Department of English Language and Literature demands that the admitted students should not be more than thirty (fifteen females and fifteen males). As a matter of fact, the enrollment figures are quite below that number, due to the high level of selection, which may be combined with a lack of potential candidates. In addition to this, not so many students are interested in the thesis track.

- ***The teaching team is strong and diversified, and the programme is well managed***
- ***Students are well aware of the contents and rules of the programme and well represented***
- ***Enrollment and success tolls are low, which is partially due to the high level of selection, but which can question the existence of the programme on the long run, if the tolls do not evolve positively***

## FINAL DECISION

Considering the accreditation criteria analysis detailed above, the accreditation committee issues the following decision:

### “Five-year unreserved accreditation decision”

and draws attention to the following points:

- Making the difference between the thesis and the non-thesis track more obvious and announcing a focus on research on one hand and on professional outcome and employability on the other hand. The second track, more field-related, would permit to raise the question of internship, which seems to be slightly undervalued, and to offer a regular field of observation of classroom management to both pedagogy-related jobs, and why not, researchers.
- Another possibility would be to create specializations, within the MA, with for example 3 specialties that are already part of the global programme at the moment and that can be identified: (1) lexicography; (2) curriculum development and language policy; (3) language learning and technology. These courses already exist but their added-value could be reinforced, if offered in different identified tracks. Starting a deep reflection on the job opportunities offered and providing more information about the outcomes of the MA would contribute to make it more attractive. Other elements need to be made clearer, such as the development of international partnerships as intercultural matters are at the core of language. The length and period of the internship could evolve, as even though the goal is not to become a teacher, the conception of pedagogical material or reflexion on the use of technology needs to be confronted to the field on a nearly daily basis.

## SIGNATURE

For HCERES and on behalf of



**Nelly DUPIN**  
Secrétaire générale  
[nelly.dupin@hceres.fr](mailto:nelly.dupin@hceres.fr)  
T. 33 (0)1 55 55 62 55  
2 rue Albert Einstein - 75013 Paris

Nelly DUPIN,

Acting President

Date: Paris, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020



The evaluation reports of Hceres are available online : [www.hceres.com](http://www.hceres.com)

**Evaluation of clusters of higher education and research institutions**

**Evaluation of higher education and research institutions**

**Evaluation of research**

**Evaluation of doctoral schools**

**Evaluation of programmes**

**International evaluation and accreditation**



2 rue Albert Einstein  
75013 Paris, France  
T. 33 (0)1 55 55 60 10

[hceres.com](http://hceres.com)

[@Hceres\\_](https://twitter.com/Hceres_)

[Hcéres](https://www.youtube.com/Hceres)