ATESL Best Practices Checklist for The Program

The program structure is effective, inclusive, professional, and ethical, ensuring the best interests of learners in terms of administration, planning, marketing, delivery, and evaluation.

Use the ATESL Best Practices Checklists:

For Individuals

- To learn about an unfamiliar area or new responsibility
- To reflect on your own practice
    - What am I doing well?
    - What am I doing that could be improved?
    - What am I not doing that I could or should be doing?

For Professional development and teacher training

- To identify goals to aspire to and specific steps to take to meet those goals
- To focus discussion after class observations
- To focus team meeting discussions
- To develop workshops/presentations

For Programs

- To identify strengths that distinguish your program (e.g., to justify the worth/value of the program to the broader institution, to funders, to learners, to community stakeholders)
- To identify gaps in a program or practice (e.g., to identify constraints to address, to identify initial and ongoing actions, to determine a focus for professional development, to justify requests for funding)

1. The program has a clearly articulated statement of its mission, philosophy, values, and goals, which has been developed with input from stakeholders and is available to everyone involved.[1]

☐ Documents exist that clarify the following:

— The mandate of the program

— The role of the program in a larger institution and/or the community (local, national and/or international)

— Program goals/strategic plans

— Assumptions (regarding language learning, language teaching, adult education, etc.)

— Unique aspects of the program (in terms of mission, goals, values, learner population, practices, etc.)

— Programs and policies that protect the rights, freedoms, and safety of all staff and students, with specific mention of ability/disability, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

— Other

☐ A variety of stakeholders have provided input into these documents, including, for example:

— Administrative, instructional, and support staff

— Learners

— Advisory bodies (e.g., board)

— Funders

— Community/business stakeholders, partners, and leaders

— Other agencies involved with learners and/or graduates of the program (e.g., employers, professional associations, educational institutions)

— Other

☐ The mission, philosophy, values, and goals of the program are clearly communicated to the following:

— Administrative, instructional, and support staff

— Learners

— Advisory bodies (e.g., board)

— Funders

— Community/business leaders

— Other agencies involved with learners and/or graduates of the program (e.g., employers, professional associations, educational institutions, marketing agents or agencies)

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[1] See TESOL (2003), Standards 1A and 1E.

2. The program follows ethical, transparent, and financially sound procedures for the management of funds, meeting legal, funding, and regulatory requirements and maintaining procedures to facilitate the financial stability of the program.

- ☐ The program has an annual budget, annual plans, and strategic plans.
- ☐ The budget is developed with input from relevant stakeholders.
- ☐ The program has systems in place for the following:
  - — Collecting funds
  - — Tracking expenditures within the budget
  - — Reporting financial information to stakeholders, the broader institution, funders, and other relevant external bodies
  - — Auditing and balancing of accounts
- ☐ Policies and procedures related to student fees, refunds, and cancellations are clearly communicated to learners.
- ☐ Adequate budgeting is in place to ensure the following:
  - — Sufficient and fairly remunerated staff
  - — Onboarding and ongoing professional development
  - — Adequate facilities and equipment
  - — Support services
  - — Ongoing curriculum development
  - — Up-to-date materials/resources
  - — Other

3. The program complies with legal requirements regarding confidentiality, privacy, freedom of information, and copyright legislation.

- ☐ Public institutions comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP).
- ☐ Private or non-profit organizations comply with Alberta's *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA).
- ☐ Staff are familiar with those requirements of the acts (FOIP or PIPA) that are relevant to their jobs.
- ☐ Access to learner records is controlled and secure.
- ☐ Learners sign waivers to release personal information.
- ☐ Personal information and student work is displayed or published only with the written permission of the individuals concerned.
- ☐ Student work that is collected for use as a teaching tool in future classes is anonymous and used only with prior consent.
- ☐ Without written consent, personal information is only disclosed in circumstances delineated in the Personal Information Protection Act (e.g., for legal authority, protection against fraud, emergency notification of nearest kin, audit, etc.).
- ☐ Staff are familiar with the requirements of copyright legislation and are asked to abide by copyright laws.
- ☐ The intellectual property of staff is respected and protected.
- ☐ Recording of online workshops, sessions, or classes is done only with the prior verbal or written consent of participants (i.e., students, facilitators, and/or staff).
- ☐ Staff may sometimes be required to sign confidentiality agreements.

4. The program structure is effective and clearly delineated, with policies and personnel to support instruction and ensure the smooth running of the program.

- ☐ An organizational chart delineating the reporting structure of the program (and broader institutional structure if relevant) is available to staff and stakeholders.
- ☐ Policies and/or procedures for the following are up-to-date, in place, and followed, and are communicated to instructional and other staff, including the following:
  — Allocation of teaching assignments
  — Accessing supply/substitute teachers
  — Waiting/intake lists
  — Record keeping
  — Registration
  — Program scheduling
  — Other

5. The needs of the learners, along with input from a variety of stakeholders (community, educational, workplace, and other), are considered in initial and ongoing program planning.

☐ Input from learners and instructors is used for program planning and review/evaluation, including consideration of the following:

— Learners' needs and goals (as individuals, members of families, communities, and workplaces)

— Proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, writing (as determined by in-house assessments and/or standardized assessments)

— Special needs (literacy, learning disabilities)

— Learner success rates in terms of pre- and post-instruction assessments; skills, knowledge, and confidence gained; and transfer into and/or success in other programs or employment

☐ Input that may affect student enrollment and program plans (e.g., community demographics, retention patterns, learner needs, community needs, labour market expectations and trends, and political and other world events[2]) is gathered from a selection of the following sources:

— Federal, provincial, and local government sources

— Funders

— Relevant community and business leaders

— Co-workers, employers, and professional associations if relevant

— Educational service providers (e.g., a university department that accepts graduates of the program)

— National/international language marketing agencies and representatives

— Other

☐ Program plans include the following:

— Long-range goals

— Strategies

— Resources

— Timelines

— Key indicators and outcomes for success

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[2] See TESOL (2003), Standard 1O.

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6. There are processes in place for regular and ongoing program evaluation.

☐ Program evaluation is regularly scheduled and ongoing as needs arise.

☐ The program is evaluated on its ability to meet the needs of the learners who participate in it.

☐ Program evaluation takes into account a selection of the following:

— Feedback from learner evaluations

— Records of learner progress (e.g., success on internal and external tests; employment rates upon exit)

— Feedback from alumni (e.g., contacting a selection of learners 6 months after a course has ended to gather and document information about progress towards goals)

— Input from instructors

— Input from administrators

— Input from funders

— Input from external consultants

— Input from stakeholders or company partners (for workplace-focused programs)

— Other (e.g., Languages Canada annual review of observation of standards; Languages Canada triennial site visits; monitoring visits from funders)

☐ Evaluation methods may include questionnaires/surveys, interviews, phone calls, focus groups, and reviews of records/documentation (e.g., attendance reports, withdrawal reports, internal and external test results).

☐ Results of program evaluations are recorded, documented, and used to do the following:

— Improve the quality of program delivery and administration

— Update funders, partners, and other stakeholders

7. Strategies for learner recruitment are effective, efficient, varied, and ethical.

☐ The program identifies learners who would be best served by the program through some of the following:

— Reviewing census data, literacy surveys, demographic reports, immigration reports, etc.

— Reviewing changes in enrollment trends and attendance patterns over time

— Networking with local cultural, religious, settlement, community, or educational organizations

— Networking with international educational and other organizations

— Working with Learner Intake Language Assessment centres

— Other

☐ The program solicits input from learners and representatives of learner communities regarding effective recruitment strategies.

☐ The program employs a variety of strategies for raising awareness of the program and recruiting learners, for example:

— Advertising in community and cultural media

— Establishing an online presence on social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

— Establishing a presence at public events through the following:

    — Community outreach

    — Fund-raising activities and cause-oriented initiatives

    — Attendance at festivals

    — Participation in symposia

    — Participation in events promoting inclusion

— Developing a referral network of agencies serving potential students

— Ensuring that current and sufficient promotional materials are provided to referral agencies

— Encouraging potential students to come to the facility through open house or student shadowing events

— Engaging students, former students, and graduates as ambassadors and volunteers in their community

— Encouraging staff, stakeholders, and learners to promote the program events through word of mouth, social media (e.g., LinkedIn), etc.

— Using educational agents, approved by an agent association, to recruit learners

— Other

☐ Strategies for recruiting learners are regularly evaluated for effectiveness (e.g., by tracking how learners hear about a program), and adjusted accordingly.

8. Promotional materials and recruitment activities present a clear, accurate, current,[3] inclusive, and comprehensive picture of program offerings, services, and related costs, enabling prospective students to make an informed choice/decision.

- ☐ Promotional materials and recruitment activities reflect current courses, services, facilities, schedules, locations, and staff qualifications.
- ☐ Promotional materials are readily available in print-based, web-based, and social-media–based formats.
- ☐ The claims in promotional material are accurate, detailed, and available in the languages spoken by the learners, in the same level of detail.
- ☐ Promotional materials are inclusive:
    - There are explicit statements indicating that learners of all races, abilities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, etc., are welcome.
    - Racialized learners, learners with disabilities, and learners of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations see themselves reflected in promotional materials.
- ☐ Promotional materials include clear descriptions of program offerings, including the following:

    - Dates
    - Hours
    - Language/CLB levels
    - Prerequisites and eligibility requirements

    - Registration processes
    - Content/focus of the program(s)
    - Outcomes

- ☐ A clear statement of all fees and costs related to the program is available to potential students, including any costs related to the following:

    - Tuition
    - Application fees and registration
    - Placement tests
    - Letters of reference
    - Letters of invitation

    - Cancellations
    - Late registrations
    - Airport meeting services
    - Books/materials
    - Other

- ☐ A clear statement of policies and procedures related to refunds, deadlines, and penalties (e.g., for cancellations or late registrations) is available to potential students.
- ☐ A clear statement of what is covered in funded (or partially funded) programs is available, including, for instance:

    - Duration of training/funding
    - Childcare and transportation options

    - Training supports and materials
    - Lending laptops for online/hybrid programs

- ☐ There is a process in place that ensures the regular updating of promotional materials (print, website, social media postings) to reflect changes in the program.

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[3] See Languages Canada (2009), Section G: Marketing and Recruiting.

9. The program supports collaboration with other educational organizations, EAL providers, and community stakeholders, thereby raising awareness of the program, avoiding duplication of services, and identifying potential gaps to be filled.

☐ Connections are maintained with a selection of the following stakeholders:
— Other EAL providers
— Other education service providers
— Employers
— Libraries
— Community/cultural agencies
— Settlement, integration, and counselling agencies
— Language assessment agencies
— Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
— Other services, such as childcare services; organizations providing support to 2SLGBTQ+ refugees, and Black and Racialized learners; organizations providing mental health support; organizations providing disability services

☐ The program encourages participation of relevant educational, community, professional, business, trade, and professional bodies through any of the following:
— Encouraging joint activities with other educational programs or organizations
— Encouraging program staff to participate in committees alongside representatives of those bodies
— Inviting representatives of those bodies to provide input into program planning
— Inviting representatives of those bodies to participate in networking opportunities, job/career fairs or job shadow programs
— Inviting representatives of those bodies to present and participate in class (e.g., as guest speakers, interviewees, potential mentors)
— Participating in and establishing research initiatives

10. Scheduling, location, length, and delivery of classes take into account the needs of learners.

☐ The program offers courses at different times and in different modalities in response to learner needs.

☐ There are processes in place to periodically review learner needs related to timing, location, and modality of classes.[4]

☐ Alternate modes of course delivery are considered, for example:

— The use of technology for delivering instruction

— Part-time versus full-time courses

— Daytime versus evening/weekend courses

— Blended delivery of courses (varying combinations of face-to-face, synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, and HyFlex options)

11. A learner-instructor ratio that takes into account the best interests of the learner is maintained.[5]

☐ The program has and follows a clearly stated policy regarding maximum class size.[6]

☐ The program takes the following into consideration when determining class sizes:

— Literacy level of learners (maximum of 10 students per literacy class ideal)[7]

— Proficiency level of learners

— Class focus (e.g., content classes could be bigger)

— Size of classroom

— Modality

— Length of the program

— Multi-level versus single-level classes

— Other

☐ Instructional aides and volunteers are used to ensure a lower learner/instructor ratio, especially in classes with literacy and lower-proficiency learners.

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[4] See TESOL (2003), Standard 1I2.

[5] See TESOL (2003), Standard 1J.

[6] A maximum class size of 18 is recommended (see NEAS Australia, 2008).

[7] Best Practices with LINC Literacy Learners (retrieved from atwork.settlement.org) recommends a maximum of 10 students in a literacy class.