



AAQEP Annual Report for 2023

Provider/Program Name:	Abilene Christian University
End Date of Current AAQEP Accreditation Term:	June 30, 2026

PART I: Publicly Available Program Performance and Candidate Achievement Data

1. Overview and Context

This overview describes the mission and context of the educator preparation provider and the programs included in its AAQEP review.

Abilene Christian University (ACU), a private comprehensive university, was founded in 1906. It is affiliated with the Churches of Christ and is one of the largest private universities in the Southwest. The mission of the university is *to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.*

Abilene Christian University earned Doctoral/Professional university status, as determined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in December of 2021. Also known as R3, this classification includes institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees each year.

The university comprises seven schools and colleges and offers 79 baccalaureate majors, 35 master's degree programs, and four doctoral programs. ACU includes the Abilene residential campus and ACU Dallas, an online campus, which was established in 2015. All teacher certification programs are housed on the Abilene residential campus. Our students come from 52

states and territories and 46 countries. ACU is designated as an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution by the Department of Education. Current recognitions and rankings can be found at the following link: <https://acu.edu/about/rankings/>.

The Department of Teacher Education resides in the College of Education and Human Services, which includes Teacher Education, Social Work, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Occupational Therapy, and Kinesiology and Nutrition. The mission of the Department of Teacher of Education is *to prepare exemplary, committed educators for service in diverse and multicultural communities for the glory of God*. The program is administered by the Department of Teacher Education and includes all students seeking initial teacher certification, which includes students from three colleges and 13 academic departments. We do not currently offer any advanced certifications but do offer a 5th year Masters in Education in Teaching and Learning that includes initial teacher certification.

2. Enrollment and Completion Data

Table 1 shows current enrollment and recent completion data for each program included in the AAQEP review.

Table 1. Program Specification: Enrollment and Completers for Academic Year 2022-2023

Degree or Certificate granted by the institution or organization	State Certificate, License, Endorsement, or Other Credential	Number of Candidates enrolled in most recently completed academic year, not including completers (12 months ending 07/31/23)	Number of Completers in most recently completed academic year (12 months ending 07/31/23)
<i>Programs that lead to initial teaching credentials</i>			
Bachelor of Science	Initial Certification: EC-6 Core Subjects with STR	63	10
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Science	1	0
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Life Science	2	0
	Initial Certification: 6-12 Physical Science	0	1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Physics/Math	0	1
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Social Studies	2	0
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Social Studies	4	2

	Initial Certification: 7-12 History	1	0
	Initial Certification: 4-8 Mathematics	3	2
	Initial Certification: EC-12 SPED	3	2
Bachelor of Arts	Initial Certification: 4-8 ELAR with STR	4	2
	Initial Certification: 7-12 ELAR	4	0
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Languages other than English - Spanish	2	0
Bachelor of Music	Initial Certification: EC-12 Music	17	7
Bachelor of Fine Art	Initial Certification: EC-12 Theater	6	0
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Art	4	0
Masters of Teaching and Learning	Initial Certification: EC-6 Core Subjects with STR	7	6
	Initial Certification: 4-8 ELAR with STR	0	1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Science	0	1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Mathematics	0	1
	Initial Certification: 7-12 Social Studies	0	1
	Initial Certification: EC-12 Music	1	1
	Initial Certification: EC-12 SPED	1	0
Special Education Supplemental Certificate		8	0
TOTALS:		133	38

Added or Discontinued Programs

Any programs within the AAQEP review that have been added or discontinued within the past year are listed below. (This list is required only from providers with accredited programs.)

NA

3. Program Performance Indicators

The program performance information in Table 2 applies to the academic year indicated in Table 1.

Table 2. Program Performance Indicators

<p>A. Total enrollment, not including completers, in the educator preparation programs shown in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals earning more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.</p>
<p>113</p>
<p>B. Total number of unique completers (across all programs) included in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals who earned more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.</p>
<p>36</p>
<p>C. Number of recommendations for certificate, license, or endorsement included in Table 1.</p>
<p>35</p>
<p>D. Cohort completion rates for candidates who completed the various programs within their respective program’s expected timeframe and in 1.5 times the expected timeframe.</p>
<p>100</p>
<p>E. Summary of state license examination results, including teacher performance assessments, and specification of any examinations on which the pass rate (cumulative at time of reporting) was below 80%.</p>
<p>Candidates in our EC-6, Grades 4-8, Secondary, and All-Levels programs are largely successful on state license examinations. 100% of candidates taking the Core Subjects (EC-6; n = 17), grades 4-8 (n = 4), grades 7-12 (n = 8), and all-levels theatre (n = 2) passed their content examinations by their second attempt. Additionally, students taking the English as a Second Language (ESL; n = 24) and EC-12 Special Education (SPED; n = 4) exams had a 100% passing rate on their first attempt.</p> <p>The only examination in which our passing rate by the second examination was not 100% was the EC-12 Music exam. Candidates from our program who took the EC-12 Music exam (n = 10) had an 80% passing rate by the second attempt. We are working closely with our colleagues in the Music department to align curriculum and strengthen our preparation strategies for students taking this particular exam.</p>

F. Narrative explanation of **evidence available from program completers**, with a characterization of findings.

In the week before graduation, Clinical Teachers complete a series of program feedback processes, including an end of program survey in which they are asked to evaluate their experiences in the classroom, field placements, and clinical teaching experiences. Data from program completers in the 2022-2023 school year (N = 26) suggests that students felt most prepared in lesson planning (92%), teacher presence (89%), and assessment (77%). Completers felt least prepared in the areas of behavior management (53%) and working with families (58%).

Additional data on program completers is available through Texas's survey of first year teachers. This survey asks questions on a three-point scale, three being exceptionally prepared, two being average, and one being below average. In previous years data from this survey were reported in spreadsheet format, this year data is available in visual format without any individual-level indicators (<https://tea4avcastro.tea.state.tx.us/ELQ/educatorprepdashboard/indicator5.html>). Data from this survey suggests that our completers are largely pleased with their preparation as our program met standard on 88% of the surveys.

Looking more closely at question- and section-level data, program completers were most pleased with their preparation in the areas of learning environment (2.88), instructional planning (2.83), and professional practices and responsibilities (2.79). Areas that received the lowest ratings were working with students with disabilities (2.15) and emergent bilinguals (1.90). While these numbers are similar to those reported across the state, in these lowest areas, 15% of our completers reported being "*not sufficiently prepared*" to work with students with disabilities and 50% of respondents reported being "*not at all prepared*" for working with emergent bilinguals.

Overall, this data suggests that students are largely pleased with their preparation upon completing our program. Moving forward, we will need to focus our attention and energy on strengthening our curriculum and experiences related SPED and EL populations.

G. Narrative explanation of **evidence available from employers of program completers**, with a characterization of findings.

The state of Texas sends an annual survey to principals asking for feedback on their first year teachers. Similarly to the Teacher Survey referenced above, principals are asked to rate first year teachers on a three-point scale, three being exceptionally prepared, two being average, and one being below average. In previous years data from this survey were reported in spreadsheet format, this year data is available in visual format without individual-level indicators (<https://tea4avcastro.tea.state.tx.us/ELQ/educatorprepdashboard/indicator2.html>). Data from this survey suggests that principals are pleased for the most part with the preparation of our completers with 79% meeting the expected standard. Four completers did not meet the expectations set by the state, these included individuals with the following certifications - one EC-6 Core Subjects, one EC-6 Core Subjects/STR, one music, and one 4-8 ELAR.

Looking more closely at question- and section-level data, principals were most pleased with program completer’s preparation in the areas of professional practices and responsibilities (PPR; 2.38), planning (2.36) and learning environment (2.36). Areas that received the lowest ratings were working with students with disabilities (2.15) and emerging bilingual students (2.14). While these numbers are similar to those reported across the state, in these lowest areas, principals reported that 16% (n = 3) of our completers were “*not sufficiently prepared*” to work with students with disabilities and 42% (n = 8) reported completers being “*not at all prepared*” for working with emergent bilinguals.

This data adds to our knowledge of both strengths and weaknesses of our program. Specifically, our students are able to meet professional responsibilities/requirements and are strong in instructional practices. The data also contributes to the case for strengthening our students’s learning and experience in the area of students with learning and language exceptionalities.

H. Narrative explanation of how the program investigates **employment rates for program completers**, with a characterization of findings. This section may also indicate rates of completers’ ongoing education, e.g., graduate study.

Of our 36 completers from the 2022-2023 school year, 32 are employed as teachers. Of the 32 completers in the classroom, all are employed in Texas public schools. Two completers will be pursuing graduate degrees and two others will be employed outside of the field of education.

Overall, our students are able to quickly find jobs in the districts/areas they are most interested in teaching.

4. Candidate Academic Performance Indicators

Tables 3 and 4 report on select measures of candidate/completer performance related to AAQEP Standards 1 and 2, including the program’s expectations for successful performance and indicators of the degree to which those expectations are met.

Table 3. Expectations and Performance on Standard 1: Candidate and Completer Performance

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation
Dispositions	Students are assessed formatively and given feedback using the Dispositions rubric multiple times throughout the program at the sophomore (EDUC 211), junior (READ 322/363), senior (Block), and Clinical Teaching levels.	All rubrics are kept in students’ permanent files. All teacher candidates met standard at for each benchmarking period. Formal data is summarized below for all Clinical Teaching Dispositions completed during the 2022-2023 school year:

	By the Clinical Teaching semester, students are expected to score a 70 on the Dispositions Review with no ratings of a 1.	<p style="text-align: center;">Clinical Teaching Dispositions (N = 36)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <th>Met Standard</th> <th>Mean Score*</th> <th>Standard Deviation</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">100%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">97</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.86</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">* Out of a possible 100</p>			Met Standard	Mean Score*	Standard Deviation	100%	97	3.86
Met Standard	Mean Score*	Standard Deviation								
100%	97	3.86								
TEExES Certification Exams	The state of Texas has set the passing score of all certification tests at a scale score of 240.	Data from TEExES exams taken during the 2022-2023 school year are below.								
<p><i>NOTE: 'N' represents the number of individual students who took individual certification exams, exams may have been taken multiple times to meet mastery. For reporting purposes, passing rates were calculated based on individuals passing by their second attempt. Where multiple attempts were reported, both scores are calculated into the means and standard deviations.</i></p>										
TEExES Certification Exams										
	Exam	Met Standard	Mean Scale Score	Standard Deviation						
	PPR (N = 39)	98%	262	14.35						
	ESL (N = 24)	100%*	265	11.45						
	Science of Teaching Reading (N = 23)	96%	256	15.27						
EC-6 Certification (N = 17)	ELAR	100%*	275	11.66						
	Math	100%*	267	14.28						
	Science	100%*	265	15.27						
	SS	100%	251	23.04						
	FAHPE	100%**	265	12.91						
4-8 Certifications (N = 4)	ELAR (n = 2)	100%*	257	16.26						
	Math (n = 2)	100%*	276	17.68						

7-12 Certifications (N = 8)	ELAR (n = 1)	100%*	253	-						
	Life Science (n = 1)	100%*	277	-						
	Physics/Math (n = 1)	100%*	258	-						
	Social Studies (n = 5)	100%**	240	7.62						
All Levels Certifications (N = 16)	Music (n = 10)	80%	249	13.31						
	Theatre (n = 2)	100%*	262	6.36						
	Special Education (n = 4)	100%*	259	6.75						
<p>* Passing percentage on first attempt ** One student who did not pass the first time self-selected out of program and did not test a second time. Scores for this student are included in the means and standard deviations reported, but not in the passing rate data.</p>										
Teacher Work Sample	Clinical Teachers complete a Teacher Work Sample documenting a unit of study from pre assessment through planning, delivery, and post-assessment. Students are graded using a department-created rubric. Revisions were made to the rubric for the Fall of 2022, the revised rubric can be found here .	<p>Data from Teacher Work Samples collected during the 2022-2023 academic year are as follows:</p> <p>Teacher Work Sample (N = 36)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Met Standard</th> <th>Mean Rating</th> <th>Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>94%*</td> <td>87%</td> <td>7.88</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Mastery standard set at 75% *Two students scored below a 75%, both were all-levels music candidates, both completed revisions to meet mastery</p>			Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	94%*	87%	7.88
Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation								
94%*	87%	7.88								

Table 4. Expectations and Performance on Standard 2: Completer Professional Competence and Growth

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation						
PPR - Domain 2	Domain 2 of the PPR standards is <i>Creating a Positive Productive Classroom Environment</i> . Our goal is for Teacher Education candidates to score a 65 or better on the Domain 2 competency of their TExES PPR exam.	<p>Data from Domain 2 of TExES PPR exams taken by completers from the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PPR: Domain 2 (N = 39)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Met 65% Standard</th> <th>Mean Score</th> <th>Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">97%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">82%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10.94</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Met 65% Standard	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	97%	82%	10.94
Met 65% Standard	Mean Score	Standard Deviation						
97%	82%	10.94						
Teacher Work Sample - Contextual Factors	The Instructional Decision Making section of the Teacher Work Sample requires clinical teachers to collect and analyze data at the community, district, campus, classroom, and student levels in order to identify instructional implications that will impact their teaching. Candidates must score an eight (8) or higher (ten point maximum) on the Instructional Decision Making section to meet department expectations for that section.	<p>Data from the Contextual Factor indicator of the Teacher Work Samples collected during the 2022-2023 school year are as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TWS Contextual Factors (N = 36)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Met Standard</th> <th>Mean Rating</th> <th>Standard Deviation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">92%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8.75</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0.55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>*Three students averaged below an 8 on the Instructional Decision Making section, for each student, it was the Guiding Data and Synthesis indicator that they struggled with.</small></p>	Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	92%	8.75	0.55
Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation						
92%	8.75	0.55						
Environmental Criteria from Observation Rubric	<p>The Environmental Criteria from the ACU Observation Rubric include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respect and Rapport ● Materials and Supplies ● Transitions, Routines, and Procedures ● Expectations ● Effective Behavior Supports <p>In order to demonstrate mastery in these areas, candidates are expected to earn a score point three (3) out of four (4) possible points.</p>	Data from the Environmental Criteria areas of the final Clinical Teaching Observations collected during the 2022-2023 school year can be found below.						

Observation Environmental Factors (N=36)

	Met Standard	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation
Respect & Rapport	100%	3.75	0.44
Materials & Supplies	100%	3.81	0.40
Transitions, Routines & Procedures	97%*	3.50	0.56
Expectations	94%*	3.50	0.61
Effective Behavior Supports	94%*	3.50	0.61

*Each student who did not earn a 3 or above scored a 2, "Needs Improvement." There were no 1, "Unsatisfactory," ratings in the data set.

5. Notes on Progress, Accomplishment, and Innovation

This section describes program accomplishments, efforts, and innovations (strengths and outcomes) to address challenges and priorities over the past year.

The 2022/2023 school year was one of new beginnings. Under new leadership, the year was spent exploring and defining how we want to move forward as a department and better serve our students. In the fall of 2023, we added a new faculty hire in special education. Cassie Kuntson came to us from a local school district where she served as a special education teacher. She is also a certified deaf educator. Cassie is a perfect fit for teaching our introduction to special education course entitled "*Teaching Exceptional Children*." All students in our program take this course. Cassie's recent experiences in schools serve this class well. Additionally, Cassie is teaching American Sign Language (ASL) courses for students campuswide. The course serves future educators and university students in other fields including but not limited to social work, ministry, and communication disorders. The hire of Cassie Knutson also provides the opportunity for us to explore the option to offer a deaf education certification program. This is a high needs area in the state of Texas. Currently, only one institution in Texas offers this program at the undergraduate level. Working with the provost's office, the Department of Communication Disorders and the Texas Education Agency, we will explore the possibility of opening a Deaf Education Certification program at the undergraduate level at Abilene Christian University in the future. This will require the addition of another special education faculty member which has been and will continue to be a goal. This hire would allow Cassie to offer more American Sign Language courses in her full time load.

Additionally, as she was teaching for the first time at the university level, Cassie worked with Dr. Jill Scott, professor emerita. With over 45 years of experience in special education at both the campus and university level, Dr. Scott was a valuable source of information and mentoring for Mrs. Knutson. Working together, they revised and aligned the assignments and materials for two of the special education courses, *Teaching Exceptional Children* (SPED 331) and *Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (SPED 477). Her mentoring and experience were invaluable to Cassie during her first semester as a university instructor.

As a faculty, we realized that in order to do the meaningful curricular revision desired, we need to start at the beginning and examine our core beliefs and our conceptual framework. To this end, in the spring of 2022, we spent our time during faculty meetings wrestling with the question of “What does a successful graduate of the Teacher Education Program at Abilene Christian University look like?” After the answers to this question were articulated, we moved into the questions of “What does this mean they will be able to do? How do our courses support this vision? How do we operationalize this vision?” The result of these conversations was the identification of four core beliefs/characteristics. After operationalizing and defining our core beliefs/characteristics, one faculty member was asked to write a paragraph that would define the core belief to our faculty and our stakeholders (parents, future students, administrators, etc.). Assignments were made based on the faculty members’ area of expertise and research. These will be used moving forward to guide the curriculum revision process.

These conversations also allowed us to redefine and revise our Teacher Work Sample (TWS) assignment and our Clinical Teaching Observation Rubric. As we engaged in conversations surrounding our core beliefs, keeping the clinical teaching experience in mind was crucial as this is the capstone experience of teacher education programs. In doing this, we were able to clarify language and expectations for both faculty and clinical teachers on the Teacher Work Sample and the Clinical Teaching Observation Rubric. While these revisions to the TWS and observation rubrics ultimately resulted in slightly lower mastery level data, this data is likely a better reflection of our students’ current ability and allows for more targeted feedback and discussion between faculty and students.

Additionally, having a new certification officer allowed us to examine Texas Administrative Code, Texas Education Agency certification processes and departmental processes and procedures. This allowed for streamlining of processes and procedures across the department and more accurate record keeping. Moreover, all clinical supervisors have moved to using an iPad for all documentation and observations in clinical teaching. While paper files are still kept in the Certification Office, particularly those containing sensitive information, we have now established a Teacher Education Course in Canvas where all programmatic and TEA documents can be stored and retrieved easily.

Two faculty members in the department were also awarded a SEED Grant. This highly competitive grant, which is awarded by the university, is designed to fund a research project for two years. The grant awards funds in the amount of \$20,000 and also provides a proposal developer so that external grants can be pursued. Dr. Andrew Huddleston and Dr. Stephanie Talley were the authors of the SEED Grant. The purpose of their research project is to implement a two-year professional learning community for elementary teachers in the Abilene area designed to develop their instructional adaptiveness in literacy instruction. The goals of the research include: to develop literacy teachers' expertise for instructional decision making; to develop potential partners for field based courses and clinical experiences; to generate pilot study findings in order to secure an external grant and expand the professional learning community to successive and larger cohorts of teachers; and to generate new knowledge pertaining to the development of teacher adaptiveness that contributes to the field of teacher education in meaningful ways.

Finally, Abilene Christian University hired a new Executive Director for International Education and Study Abroad. Working with his office, we have identified a potential offering in Montevideo, Uruguay for our Teaching English Language Learners course (EDUC 476) in the summer study abroad programs. Candidates would teach English to students in the local area while also working on their ESL coursework. This would be done in the midst of a Spanish speaking country. Students will be both language learners and teachers in this context. This experience will be invaluable to them as they will begin to understand in small ways how difficult it is to navigate your environment as a second language learner. If this program is successfully piloted, it would be an offering in the summer of every other year.