

## **HONORARY FELLOWSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY**

### **AVISHAI TAL and DANI SHENKER**

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Vice Chancellor,

The Senate of Anglia Polytechnic University is pleased to confer the award of Honorary Fellow of the University on Avishai Tal and Dani Shenker in recognition of services to the University, in the field of international higher education and especially for the development of the so-called Israeli/International Ph.D. Programme at APU.

APU has traditionally a strong commitment to international education and a strong presence in specific world regions to doctoral study especially for the mature student; and to applied research which addresses contemporary issues relating to professional practice, societal development and policy formulation. It is in the fusion of these various strands that the contribution to APU of Avishai Tal and Dani Shenker become apparent.

The consultancy company, A D ATID LEKIDUM LTD. was founded under their joint directorship in 1994 to act as an agent/intermediary between UK higher education (as providers) and Israeli educationalists (as clients). Their original connection was with Loughborough University where during the period 1994 – 1997, they provided 125 students for their MA Education. However, and happily for all concerned except Loughborough, their allegiance switched to APU as a result of initial discussions with the then APU Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Brian Underwood and the Director of the International Office, Mairi Brown. In statistical terms, the results are impressive : 520 successful students for APU's BA/MA in Education; and 240 Ph.D. students over eight cohorts, not only in education, but in a range of other disciplines, including health, business and environmental sciences.

However, there are other quite remarkable features about the so-called APU Israeli/International Ph.D. which our two honorary graduands have nourished, for example : this is a cohort support programme of c. 25 students per annum rather than one for solitary, potentially lonely Ph.D. candidates.

This Ph.D. programme is supported by a series of highly innovative workshops delivered in the Levant and also the UK. The cohorts comprise students with high ranking positions especially in Israeli education, and the research themes are invariably ones of huge social and educational relevance, where the findings are normally absorbed into new policy initiatives and institutional change. 25 candidates per annum are selected from over 200 applicants, such is the esteem in which the programme is perceived by educationalists and national leaders, in comparison with more traditional provision in Israel and other western universities. The success rates, both in completion times and completion percentages are amongst the highest in British universities. One final feature of this innovative programme is that the tutorial team, under the direction of Dr. Gill Robinson, comprises three APU staff including Professor Vernon Trafford and Professor Gina Wisker and three Israeli graduands from the programme – Dr. Yehuda Ben Simon, Dr. Shosh Leshem and Dr. Miri Shacham who are here with us today. This is another of the initiatives that Avishai and Dani advocated at the outset and is now a permanent feature of the programme.

So-called “overseas educational agents” sometimes have a questionable reputation in terms of dubious standards of operation; cutting ethical and professional concerns and so forth. But APU has indeed been fortunate in securing “agents” in Avishai Tal and Dani Shenker

who are now really part of the APU family in terms of their high levels of ethical behaviour; their academic understanding; their pastoral support for students; their entrepreneurial zeal in student recruitment; and their willingness to invest heavily in sustaining the APU relationships : In fact they are a model of good practice in this difficult domain.

We know that the doctoral programme has a developed culture of 'familiness' which is a quite unique feature of any educational process – let alone a doctoral programme! Members of the tutorial team, the doctoral candidates themselves and even the Dean of Education all use the term Family when referring to this programme! This phenomenon is the direct consequence of how Dani Shenker and Avishai Tal conduct their business. We also know that existing members and the graduates from the programmes contribute to Avishai and Dani's annual marketing drive by recommending 'THEIR PROGRAMME' to others. This is further evidence of a most successful recruitment policy and practice from which the University benefits.

Prior to the APU connection, their career paths have been remarkably similar before they joined forces in 1994. Academically, both possess PE teaching certificates, initial degrees in Israeli Studies/Jewish History, and Masters in Education from Loughborough. Both served with great distinction with the Israeli Paratroop Forces.

Their commitment to APU has not dimmed over the years, and indeed, they see a great future in the relationship in terms of a much broader international student catchment for the programme; a growing emphasis on multi-culturalism; a broader diversification of the disciplines covered by the programme; and a movement therefore into professional doctorates as well as the Ph.D.

Time will tell whether their aspirations are fulfilled, but for the present, May I therefore invite you, Vice Chancellor, to confer the honorary award of Fellow of the University, upon Avishai Tal and Dani Shenker for their contribution to APU's international and research profile.

But in the words of the prophet : Shalom and Khaverim Metzuyan; which being interpreted means Peace to you, and Congratulations friends.

Professor John L. Davies  
Dean of the Graduate School  
and Public Orator