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Title of Report: Online TESOL Programs at Shenandoah University
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1. Identify and describe the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO).

The Shenandoah University Program in TESOL is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia, United States. The program offers the following graduate-level degrees and certificate programs of study online:

- Master of Science in Education with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MS Ed TESOL);
- Advanced Professional Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (APC TESOL);
- Professional Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (PC TESOL): and
- Professional Studies Certificate in English as a Second Language (PSC-ESL), approved by the Virginia Department of Education (for VA licensure compliance).

The program started in 1998. Currently, three full-time, contract-level faculty members and two adjunct faculty members teach in the TESOL program. A TESOL faculty member and the Director of the School of Education and Human Development, who answer to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, share administration of the program in TESOL.

The program niche characteristics are its approach: small classes and individualized advising serving students located worldwide, with about half in the United States and the others in many countries worldwide with many in Africa, Asia (Korea, Japan and China), Europe, the Middle East, and South America.

2. Describe the target audience for the PDO.

The program focuses on native or near-native English speakers seeking career enhancement or change. It provides general TESOL preparation with no emphasis on specified learner groups (except for the PSC-ESL). Most students are teaching ESL part-time or full-time. Many intend to travel. Students range in age from mid-20s through early-70s. Most students are US citizens. Students choose our online PDO because of its flexibility, standards of excellence, and reputation. Current enrollment is 120 students (full- and part-time).

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3. Describe how you recruit students for your PDO.

The TESOL Chair does marketing with minimal support from the Admissions Office and the Office of Marketing and Communications. The focus of marketing is to achieve the widest possible exposure of our advertising to the largest number of possible applicants. The reason for this approach is due to the strong push by administration to increase enrollment.

4. Describe the curriculum choices made.

Online delivery was chosen because the University is located in a remote area. Few students live near enough to study on-campus. Drs. Ashley Hastings and Brenda Murphy started the program in 1999. Needs assessments were conducted using a variety of tools, including Dr. Hastings' network of professional colleagues and students, internet sites, and support from the Shenandoah University Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

5. Explain the PDO's over-arching goals and specific objectives.

The over-arching goal of this program is to prepare graduates to with the knowledge, skills, and habits required to work effectively with English language learners in any instructional environment. To achieve this goal, the program is based on the following knowledge base:

- the structure and use of language;
- first and second language acquisition;
- intercultural communication; and
- language teaching pedagogy.

The specific objectives are that graduates will be able to:

(1) put theoretical knowledge into instructional practice;
(2) identify student problems and create solutions;
(3) evaluate and use technology appropriate to the instructional need; and
(4) encourage and support students as they acquire the English language.

6. Describe the teaching and learning activities used in the PDO and what online applications are used to support these activities.

Learning activities include:

(1) electronic communications;
(2) online video lectures and discussions;
(3) analysis of video and audio recordings, use of the Shenandoah University online library, and reading and use of paperback and electronic textbooks;

(4) review of model materials, peer feedback, instructor evaluation, and self-assessment tools;
(5) examinations, quizzes, and papers;
(6) a capstone course project (both written and oral presentations);
(7) live interactive discussions;
(8) reports on professional networking assignments; and
(9) use of an electronic portfolio system for students to use when they leave the program (and seek employment or continue to doctoral level or other educational programs).

Many of these activities are facilitated by online tools. Blackboard, a learning management system (LMS), is used for video lectures, discussions, feedback, examinations, reports, and delivery of model materials. Synchronous interactive discussions are conducted using Skype. The course LMS is linked to the University online library and resources.

While both synchronous and asynchronous interactions are used, synchronous interactions are very few, mostly phone calls and Skype calls for instructional purposes as well as for advising. Students post both free and guided writing on Blackboard. Some postings are optional, with the instructor grading required assignments. Most postings receive a response from the instructor and usually from several classmates. There is a strong emphasis on building skills and habits in reading what one's colleagues write and responding to those in ways that are useful, accurate, and appropriate.

The reasons for these choices are based on a commitment to students learning both what to say to a colleague about something they write on their work, knowledge or opinion, as well as how to say it. With participants spanning a wide variety of backgrounds, ages, and experiences (both in and outside of TESOL) and seeking both pre- and in-service educational experiences, it is critical that communications are clear and promote positive learning opportunities for students. Some courses require students to create videotaped materials that are uploaded in order to meet course requirements. Videos are available to all classmates, contributing to the community-building efforts of the Shenandoah University TESOL program. Research shows that community building is essential to effective online language teacher education. In the Shenandoah TESOL program, we strive to build community.

7. Describe how the PDO helps students understand the local context in which they are studying so that they can work together with other students in the global context of your online PDO. "Local context" refers to the social, material, and cultural dimensions of students' daily lives.

Students learn content in their courses, and then are provided with guided practice in applying their knowledge and skills in their various teaching contexts. Faculty efforts to build community provide students with guidance in engaging with one another in their online class assignments. Carefully designed assignments (completed face-to-face and in their various settings) allow students to practice their skills and use their knowledge in ways that are appropriate and suited to local language use, pedagogical traditions, and professional settings. When students encounter difficulties (miscommunicate, do not know what to do or say, or have

other concerns and question), those issues are raised in class (or privately on e-mail with an instructor) and then discussed, sorted out, and evaluated. Sometimes, these issues are revisited later on in the course as an instructor may see fit. In other words, communication skills and managing in various professional contexts of English language teaching/learning are viewed as strengths of the program – opportunities to address challenges within a safe haven of a graduate course where students and instructors help one another to improve and deal with difficulties.

Students learn the content of the TESOL canon together in our program. They share their understandings of the canon and they then apply that knowledge to their local context. Students share their applications with one another in the context of their postings on Blackboard (both guided and free) and they learn from one another about their contexts in those postings. All students in the program seem eager to know more about the contexts of their classmates located elsewhere.

Students are selected for admission on the basis of their ability to have regular access to the Internet, among other requirements for technology as described below:

TESOL PROGRAM TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) All students must have a reasonably up-to-date computer, a reliable broadband Internet connection, and an up-to-date web browser. Mozilla Firefox is recommended. (Microsoft Explorer does NOT work well with the Blackboard course delivery system, and Apple Safari has some problems with the current version of Blackboard.) Firefox is a free download.
(2) All students must be able to submit files in Microsoft Word format.
(3) Students must be able to view Adobe Acrobat files, using either Acrobat Reader (a free download) or a similar program.
(4) In order to view videos and the Video Lectures, students need to have two applications:
 • the latest version of QuickTime Player. This program is a free download.
 • the latest version of iTunes. This program is also a free download.
(5) For assignments in some courses students will need to have access to and use a video camera.
(6) Basic computer competence is required of all students. Students must be familiar with the Internet and World Wide Web, and be able to navigate a website to find information and perform web searches. All students must be able to make full use of the Blackboard course delivery system in order to participate in courses.

At the time of writing, Shenandoah University requires that students have this technology and no effort is currently underway to change this requirement. Therefore, all participants have equal access to all the resources and requirements in the PDO.

Developing/developed world biases come up in a variety of courses and are addressed in terms of the research on a variety of subjects (native- and non-native-English-speaking teachers, limitations of resources, teaching large classes, etc.). Students willingly engage in discussions on

the topic of "the have's" and the "have-not's" both in their teaching contexts, as well as in terms of how resource constraints affect teaching and learning of English to speakers of other languages in countries where policies in education in English holds high priority and those where it is a lower priority.

Issues of cultural bias in English language teaching and teacher education are easily identified in the reading of most all of the foundational books in our field, as well as in written research that identifies specific aspects of cultural bias. Of course, like many things in TESOL, more is needed. In the Shenandoah TESOL program, we seek to engage students in discussions about culture and about the teaching of English without cultural bias as much as possible. It is essential that cultural bias be minimized among those who hold graduate-level educational credentials in TESOL. Shenandoah University TESOL strives to address this important part of our instructional mission.

Participants learn the value of effective communication in English in intercultural contexts. They also address the interesting and complex world of trying to make sure what I say is what you hear (or more likely in online communications, "what I write is what you read!").

8. Describe how the PDO helps prepare students for the local contexts in which they will work.

In some cases, students in our program plan to move after they complete their degrees. In other cases, students seek promotion and/or job security in their current jobs. The majority of students often stay in the position that they had when they started the program, are promoted to a higher position in their program, or move to a new position in the same country in which they lived when they started the program. Few leave the country in which they were living when they started starting the program.

In all cases, we strive to help prepare students for the real world of English language teaching, wherever they are. In some cases, this commitment means that faculty members work with students beyond the time when they complete their degrees, if they move overseas from the US, for example.

Preparing students for a variety of future contexts is partly achieved through the classroom observation requirements. Students seek out and observe in institutional settings, such as schools for children and youth, institutes, universities, community colleges, adult education programs, and corporate settings. In the context of local observations, students expand their knowledge beyond their own ESL/EFL teaching context, if they have one.

While the emphasis in these observations is on English language teaching, issues of the developing/developed world, cultural differences, contexts with minimal resources (textbooks, equipment, etc.), attitudes toward English and attitudes toward language learning are addressed. In most cases, these issues are addressed in the required guided writings in which students engage and provide peer feedback. The discussions are very rich and varied and students learn a great deal about both the concepts and principles that guide best practices in TESOL, as well as

about the conditions and issues faced in the various contexts worldwide where our students live and work.

9. Explain the characteristics of the teacher educator(s) working in the PDO.

Professional qualifications of faculty (tenure-track and adjunct faculty) include the degree of PhD in TESOL or a very closely related field (except for one faculty member). All faculty hired in the past six years have that degree and will in the future. They are expected to have some experience with online course delivery (hybrid or fully online experience), and to participate in an ongoing effort to improve knowledge and skills for teaching online through a professional development plan. Neither teaching assistants nor tutors are used in Shenandoah University TESOL courses. However, in consultation with their instructors (and sometimes academic advisors), some students seek and use the services of the online tools in the Shenandoah University Writing Center as well as in the Shenandoah University Online Library (graduate librarian).

10. Describe the non-teaching support staff in the PDO.

A variety of university systems support the students and instructors. They have access to the Institutional Computing Help Desk, the Shenandoah University Writing Center, and the Shenandoah University Online Library. On occasion, students, who may be doing research, are sent hard copies of texts (not available online) via mail from the Shenandoah University library staff. The secretaries in the School of Education and Human Development provide occasional administrative support when time permits. The University web site manager provides minimal support for TESOL website design, development, and management.

11. Explain the learning assessments used in the PDO.

MS Ed TESOL students are required to complete a capstone course project. At the time of writing, an electronic portfolio requirement is being developed. Most courses have a final exam; all courses have a final project or other cumulative assessment tools. Students take a one-credit course in which they do an intensive observation of one classroom, engage in assisting the teacher and finally, are responsible for planning and delivering several lessons. The Practicum is the final of three one-credit courses in which students are taught what and how to observe in an ESL or EFL classroom. Students seek out and identify willing cooperating teachers for these assignments. Instructors for these three courses approve student selections. There are classroom observation requirements in some of the other Shenandoah University TESOL courses as well, such as the courses that focus on observation skills. Individual course instructors guide students in completion of observation requirements.

Ongoing in-course assessments include regular postings of responses to instructor-led discussions; quizzes on readings and individual topics; examinations on the content of the course (midterm, final, and sometimes more frequent examinations); and videotapes of their teaching practicum.

12. Explain the mechanisms used to evaluate the PDO.

Evaluation of the program is done in several ways. Students submit course evaluations at the end of each semester and these are evaluated by the chair and incorporated into the annual performance plan. Instructors work with the Chair and some with one another to develop, change, and improve their courses. Textbook review is done annually by the chair and textbook selections are carried out by individual faculty often in collaboration with the chair. At the request of a faculty member, peer feedback is provided and incorporated.

Because of the institutional culture as well as the fact that there are three faculty members in Winchester, Virginia (where the University is located) and two strong adjunct faculty members elsewhere, communications, feedback, evaluation, and discussions among faculty are done at the discretion of the faculty member. Shenandoah has a system in place for faculty evaluation, including primarily student evaluations and very limited peer assessment or feedback. There is a general sense at Shenandoah TESOL of effective course improvement and instructional quality based on this informal system of faculty discretion in seeking peer feedback.

Shenandoah University is accredited under the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools, a regional accrediting body known as SACS. Two courses in the TESOL program at Shenandoah University have undergone and been acknowledged by Quality Matters, a proprietary accrediting body. This assessment yielded the following recognition of one course, which reads as follows: "Certificate of Course Recognition: Liz England, for successfully meeting the Quality Matters rubric standards in a peer review for TSL 501 Profession of TESOL." Student evaluations are consistently strong, with most faculty achieving a score of "four" on a five-point scale in most areas.

13. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this PDO online.

Technology challenges abound. From the point-of-view of learners, there are few troubles because faculty jump on problems fast, try to solve them, seek out support from Institutional Computing or from me if they cannot solve them, and move on. Students rarely struggle with instructional technology issues because they work closely with advisors prior to the start date for their courses to make sure that they are ready to go when the classes begin. In the rare instances of natural disaster, political turmoil, or other unexpected emergencies, Shenandoah University is relatively flexible and we are able to address student needs as those arise

For the instructor, there are ongoing challenges with technology: New glitches with Blackboard in their never-ending series of upgrades and changes in the way the Business Office takes payment, registers students, grades are reported and stored, and management of student withdrawals, failures, or drop/add. These issues are familiar to any academic faculty member; but with online students, these changes are more complex and less easy to solve. Technology is an ongoing challenge for online programs worldwide.

Shenandoah TESOL schedules no required synchronous activities across time zones. On occasion, we arrange phone chats with video or without video. Those are always difficult to

schedule but fruitful for students and faculty. We have students who willingly get up in the middle of the night in China (for example) to address confusion about "the critical period," "i+1," or "the strong Whorfian hypothesis," or to talk to us about managing small groups, English language use in the hotels there. I am always overwhelmed by the extraordinary enthusiasm, eagerness to connect, and willingness to learn on the part of the Shenandoah University online distance students.

The Shenandoah University Library has leapt in its digital holdings over the past six years. Non-digital resources are mailed to students when there is no alternative and when students and faculty confirm the need for this service. Time is often short in these rare instances where we do this; but it has been done many times in my capstone course when students needed sources that were only available in non-digital format.

14. Describe the successes of the PDO and explain how they are documented.

Students express their gratitude and satisfaction, and pay compliments to us about our work and for the experiences they have had in our program. Although we have done no alumni surveys, our students have gone on to successful TESOL careers. Our students hold positions in TESOL International's affiliate leadership; they are selected for the Georgetown University/State Department English Language Fellows Program; they go on to do doctoral work at universities worldwide. Upon completion of the MS Ed TESOL many students are offered raises and/or promotions in jobs they held when they started our program. Others seek and are offered positions in new institutions. Several alumni have let us know that they are now doing more administration than they had in the past.

Over the past six years, three faculty members have been promoted to associate professor; contract faculty receive travel grants; and students have in the past received awards in the form of TESOL Convention expenses (partial). TESOL faculty, alumni, and students hold leadership positions in professional associations and are frequent presenters at the TESOL International Convention and other conferences. Faculty members publish books and articles. Some students also publish articles.