



Title of Report: The TESOL Certificate Program of the University of Cincinnati

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1. Identify and describe the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO).

The PDO described in this report is an online Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Certificate/Endorsement Program at the University of Cincinnati (UC), Cincinnati, Ohio, US. Housed within the School of Education within the College of Education, Human Services, and Criminal Justice, it is designed to integrate research into practice to improve English language learners' (ELLs) academic achievement. This teacher preparation program is a graduate non-degree program, which offers the graduate professional certificate in TESOL so that participants are able to teach in K-12 classroom settings. It not only meets the Ohio Department of Education standards and the TESOL International Association's standards, but also it delivers the same high quality coursework as the on-campus programs accredited by the [Council on the Accreditation of Educator Preparation](#) (CAEP, formerly National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE]). Full-time and adjunct faculty members teach the courses. Because participants take all the courses for the certificate/endorsement as professional development students, they do not need to be admitted to a graduate degree program; however, they are able to complete the coursework for graduate credit. Teachers within the state of Ohio pursue the Endorsement, while those outside of the state pursue certification. Regardless of the terminology, all participants take the same coursework, but only those within the state of Ohio who possess a teaching license may apply for endorsement.

In the summer of 2004, the faculty at UC created this online course of study as a separate strand of its face-to-face (ftf) Literacy and Second Language Studies graduate program so as to serve in-service teachers within the State of Ohio who wished to add the TESOL Endorsement licensure to their existing teaching credential. In-service teachers who enrolled in the TESOL program were participants who already had the initial teaching license and quite often either had a master's degree or did not wish to pursue a graduate degree, preferring to concentrate on the Endorsement alone. In 2011, the TESOL program expanded to create the certificate for use at national and international levels. This expansion was in response to the need for teacher candidates working on their initial licensure at the graduate or post-baccalaureate levels to be able to add the credential if they were interested in becoming TESOL-certified teachers in PreK-12 international settings.

At successful completion of the program, the TESOL Graduate Certificate is awarded. Prospective participants seeking TESOL Certificate/Endorsement in a state other than Ohio or in

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a country other than the U.S. are advised to contact the licensing bureau in their given state or country to determine the applicability of the UC TESOL certificate. Because it is a professional development program, the TESOL Certificate/Endorsement program does not award degrees upon the completion of the program.

2. Describe the target audience for the PDO.

The target audience of the UC TESOL Certificate/Endorsement Program includes in-service teachers or pre-service participants who are interested in becoming specialized in English as a second or foreign language for students PreK through Grade Twelve. Participants' ages range from 22 to nearing retirement. Currently, we have participants from across the world, including France, Mexico, Pakistan, and South Korea, as well as US citizens currently teaching in foreign countries who wish to return to U.S. public schools with a TESOL certificate. Participants choose our program because online delivery of and asynchronous access to the courses mean that they can work within a flexible and convenient schedule. Typically, there are approximately 60 students enrolled in our program at any given time.

3. Describe how you recruit students for your PDO.

Our TESOL program recruits prospective participants at the [Ohio TESOL](#) conference and via word-of-mouth advertising. In 2011, we began partnering with Embanet-Compass Knowledge Group for recruitment, sustainability, and support. Our Literacy and Second Language Studies master's students have the option to get the TESOL Certificate by taking additional credit-bearing courses in addition to the master's degree. Although this is not a direct recruitment means, our master's students contribute to the enrollment of the PDO via faculty's recommendation. The Program also uses other recruitment and marketing systems, such as flyers distributed at the Ohio TESOL conference and the International TESOL Convention, the School of Education website, Facebook, and ftf recruiting via the College of Education, Human Services, and Criminal Justice recruitment staff.

4. Describe the curriculum choices made.

The TESOL curriculum is governed by the Ohio and TESOL International Associations' PreK-12 Standards; hence, each of the courses is aligned with the specific standard. UC converted the academic term from quarters to semesters beginning in fall of 2012. Under the quarter system, the coursework consisted of eight courses, 24 quarter-credit hours, which were designed to be completed in four consecutive quarters within a year. Under the semester system, which began in August of 2012, the coursework includes six courses, eighteen semester credit hours. Participants typically finish the program within a year, which includes summer coursework. Completion of the courses, however, does not automatically yield the issuance of a license. Participants are also required to pass the [Praxis II-ESOL Exam](#) (paper test code: 0361; computer delivered test code: 5361, available February, 2013). Passing the exam is prescribed by the State of Ohio in order to earn the Ohio TESOL Endorsement, and most states also require passing the exam for participants to earn the certificate. Praxis II tests are administered every two months, September through June. All the courses cover the content of the Praxis-II exam.



Participants are also asked to contact the licensing bureau in the licensing state or country that determines the application process and requirements.

As indicated earlier, the TESOL program was initially created as a branch of the first Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) graduate program so as to serve in-service teachers across the State of Ohio. Online delivery was the best option to target prospective participants across the State, and it remains so today. TESL faculty members who specialized in TESL developed the TESOL curriculum in 2004 within the framework of the Ohio and TESOL International Associations' PreK-12 Standards. Before launching the program, faculty members conducted a needs assessment to discover how best to respond to a sweeping shift in the public school landscape with its growing number of ELLs. Because the TESOL program was established on the basis of the TESL graduate degree program, the coursework shares commonalities between the two programs to a certain degree, but the number of courses required for the program completion is lower than that of the TESL Master's program.

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

The PDO's over-arching goal reflects our commitment to promoting academic excellence, delivering student-centered teaching, and building relationships and partnerships with local, regional, national, and international communities. It creates professional and scholarly opportunities for participants to become theoretically informed and practically equipped, caring, committed, and competent educators who focus on positive transformation of individuals, schools, and communities. The PDO also promotes individuality and creativity where faculty members, students, and non-teaching staff contribute to the common good of the program through expressions of their views and work. The program aligns its mission with UC/21, Ohio TESOL, and TESOL International Association's missions. This information is also provided in the syllabus and the program handbook.

The PDO's specific objectives include participants' comprehensive understanding of:

- (1) language as a system;
- (2) English linguistic structures and usage;
- (3) the process of language learning;
- (4) socio-cultural contexts of second language acquisition;
- (5) diverse cultural and language backgrounds of ELLs;
- (6) evidence-based teaching and strategies;
- (7) formative and summative assessment, including alternative assessment, dynamic assessment, and e-portfolio; and
- (8) professionalism and networking with TESOL practitioners.

These specific objectives are covered in the coursework.

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



The learning activities used in the course comprise a wide range of possibilities, such as online discussion board participation, reflection on assigned readings, question-answer sessions, classroom applications, designing lesson plans, exams/quizzes, and term papers. Each assignment has its own rationale and purpose, learning outcomes, and assessment plans specified in the syllabus.

The PDO uses Blackboard as a delivery tool for a multimedia interactive learning environment because it is the Learning Management System (LMS) that UC has officially adopted. Whenever the need arises for a virtual synchronous meeting, Elluminate or Adobe Connect is utilized. At times, wikis are used for collaborative group work, along with Blackboard, because it provides the unique flexibility of adding, modifying, or deleting the content on a workspace page. In essence, the Program faculty members continuously learn about and implement new learning objects and software when appropriate. At present, all coursework is slated to undergo the Quality Matters (QM) process to ensure outstanding course delivery. QM is a nationally renowned faculty peer-review avenue that is designed to assure the quality of online courses. It provides a QM rubric, peer review process, and professional development.

7. Describe how the PDO helps students understand the local contexts in which they are studying so that they can work together with others in the global context of your online PDO.

In the first week of a course, participants are invited to post a self-introduction on Blackboard. Participants describe where they live and where they teach or where they plan to teach, which are typically followed up by fellow participants requesting elaborated descriptions of the localities and the schools at which they work. These interactions lead to further understanding of other localities and self-awareness by the student who posted the parent thread on Blackboard. At times, international students bring in unique, country-specific information that sparks local peer participants' interests. These international students' input is a contributing factor to participants' global awareness.

The textbooks used in the courses are excellent resources for understanding national and international contexts. For example, national demographics and trends of the ELL population as well as intercultural communication are covered in many of the textbooks. However, the global context of our PDO is an area of focus that the faculty is dedicated to strengthening in our program.

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

Until 2011, the PDO had served licensed in-service teachers in Ohio so that they could have an add-on TESOL endorsement, which means that students enrolled in the PDO were already aware of the local contexts and the school system in which they were working. However, after the PDO's expansion in 2011, it is possible that participants move with the TESOL certificate from one place to another to teach, including overseas.



In order to help teachers be resilient in a new place, the online seminar component of the practicum course covers current governmental regulations related to the national TESOL field. Specifically covered in Practicum are the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that affects the reporting of ELLs' scores on standardized tests, a Home Language Survey that is sent to parents to find out whether the home language is a language other than English, and other federal and state regulations influencing programs for ELLs and the implementation of programs in schools. Similarly, through student and instructor posts on the discussion board, students learn about the differing student needs in both EFL and ESL contexts.

As a result of these activities, participants are equipped with the knowledge and skills that help them work effectively in a new place or in multiple contexts.

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

Five TESOL full-time faculty members in the PDO have doctorate degrees in TESL, applied linguistics, or related areas, and are productive researchers. The minimum requirement for adjunct faculty is a master's degree in the TESOL area.

Faculty training in technology is available in the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning as well as the College Tech Support System. We have adopted a lead-instructor model in which the lead instructors work closely with facilitators in courses. Facilitators work as teaching assistants, but they are also involved in online discussion boards to promote lively and in-depth discussions.

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

Because a number of non-teaching staff members are involved in the TESOL Program in addition to the five full-time faculty members, the ratio of support group members to students falls within the range of typical UC academic programs. There is also a support system in place for the Program through the College and University. The faculty and students enrolled in the PDO are encouraged to utilize the support group of technology (UC Help Desk; 24 hours, seven days a week) as well as Embanet-Compass staff members. Staff members of Embanet-Compass provide support for base-camp training, including login, Blackboard navigation, and other technical issues. Participants can also make use of the service of the Career Development Center at UC.

11. Explain the learning assessments used in the PDO.

Each course has its own learning outcomes, grading scales, and assessment systems. Successful completion of the PDO requires that participants receive at least a B- in each of the required courses. As a culminating experience, participants complete a practicum as one of the required courses. The Practicum course has two components: (1) an online seminar and (2) a 56-hour field experience (40-hour field experience under the quarter system). The Practicum requires that a TESOL-certified mentor teacher oversees, monitors, and assesses the candidate's performance on the field experience. Participants have the freedom to choose their own mentor teacher, site in which to work, and an ELL with whom they will work. If participants have difficulty finding any of the above, a staff member helps them locate an appropriate entity. The



Practicum activity is evaluated both by the instructor and the CAEP (NCATE) Site Director in the College at UC.

12. Explain the mechanisms used to evaluate the PDO.

There are multiple avenues for program evaluation for quality assurance. First, students evaluate each course on a scale of one to five, with one the lowest and five the highest, on twelve questions about the course value and instructor value. Each course evaluation goes to the instructor for the purpose of improvement. Next, the program is evaluated yearly by the CAEP (NCATE) site director using a questionnaire for program completers. Lastly, there is a component of the evaluation mechanism that involves the candidate's overall performance on an external national exam – the Praxis II-ESOL – as indicated by the pass rate of this exam. Because the content of the exam and the courses are aligned, the pass rate of the PDO completers is nearly 100%. Because past students were in-service teachers, their employment after program completion was not used as a performance indicator. After the PDO's expansion to pre-service teachers in the US and foreign countries, the employment rate of graduates can be included in the program evaluation in the future.

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

Challenges involved in distance learning can be addressed from two perspectives: (1) the service provider and (2) the service receiver. From the faculty members' viewpoint, online teaching is challenging because individual faculty member's own training in technology is necessary and because the amount of time spent in an online course is often much higher than in ftf delivery. At times the instructor needs to walk students through the technology prior to content exploration because some students have not acquired the basic skills required to take online courses. From the students' perspective, online courses can be challenging because of the restricted access to fellow students or the instructor. This lack of access may create a lack of communities and collegial experiences with peers.

To have a successful online PDO, comprehensive support for instructional design and IT is a prerequisite. In order to avoid repetitive directions for students, the Program has adopted a handbook-like syllabus for use in the PDO. This handbook addresses many of the common concerns experienced by past students.

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

The PDO has received positive feedback from alumni and school districts. Program completers' surveys show that our TESOL Program offers quality teacher education. Our alumni hold key professional positions in school districts in Ohio and actively participate in Ohio TESOL workshops, conferences, and collegial meetings. The same level of professionalism is anticipated at national and international levels. In addition, faculty members in the PDO are productive scholars. They publish their research articles in a range of areas: sociolinguistics, content-based language learning, bilingualism, diversity of learners, psycholinguistics, and assessment.