



Title of Report: Master of Arts in TESOL at the University of Southern California

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

The PDO described in this case report is a field-based, online Master of Arts in Teaching – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MAT-TESOL) degree. The MAT-TESOL degree (both online and on-campus) was designed to prepare candidates in TESOL and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and is offered by the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. The MAT-TESOL consists of four terms of coursework requiring approximately 14 to 15 months for participants to complete. The online degree and the on-campus degree utilize the same curriculum, faculty, and requirements, including weekly class times, student study groups, and office hours using live synchronous video-conferencing technology. The MAT-TESOL degree was first offered in September 2010 and the online version is now offered three times a year, while the on-campus version has one intake each fall.

2. Describe the target audience for the PDO.

The target audience for the online MAT-TESOL degree includes students who wish to enter or advance in the field of TESOL. About half of the students in the program are situated domestically in the US and about half complete the degree while residing in another country. The majority of participants who complete the online MAT-TESOL are US citizens. Roughly a third of program participants are pre-service or novice teachers, while the remaining students reflect a range of teaching experiences, such as teaching young learners or -12 students, university students, or adults.

Ideal candidates possess the following: previous GPA(s) of at least 3.0 and an undergraduate major in a discipline related to TESOL, English, applied linguistics, etc.; at least two years of working experience; strong writing ability; clearly defined and compelling professional goals; strong recommendations; and, for candidates whose first language is other than English, a minimum TOEFL iBT score of 100.

3. Describe how you recruit students for your PDO.

Students are recruited through program websites, sponsored links, banner ads on selected websites, and via in-person and online information sessions. Information about

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the program is also provided through annual recruitment activities at selected events conducted by the Rossier School of Education admission department.

4. Describe the curriculum choices made.

The design of the online MAT-TESOL resulted from several developments over a three-year period. In 2007, Rob Filback was appointed TESOL Faculty Lead and tasked with reviewing the TESOL program. At that time the TESOL program consisted of two masters degrees – the MS-TESOL and the ME-TEFL – and student recruitment was recognized as a key challenge. Also, the Rossier School of Education was in the midst of strategic realignment involving the consolidation of programs and an increased focus on equipping educators to work effectively in urban environments both nationally and internationally. An external review was therefore carried out in the spring of 2008. The external review team, which included Maureen Andrade, Donna Brinton, and Lia Kamhi-Stein, produced a set of recommendations including elimination of the two degrees and creation of one degree with flexibility to serve multiple audiences; expanding the role of clinical field experiences during coursework; restructuring the final capstone and practicum experiences to increase their professional relevance; and integrating and optimizing the use of technology. Subsequently, 2009 marked a year of development that focused on the creation of one new degree that incorporated the external review recommendations and that more directly addressed prevailing challenges or ”problems of practice” being faced by TESOL educators in classrooms around the world.

This TESOL redesign process also coincided with the Rossier School of Education’s introduction of the online “MAT@USC” degree in fall 2009. The successful launch of this online MAT provided the opportunity and technical support to offer the redesigned TESOL degree in an online format as well. An online option for TESOL aligned well with several of the TESOL redesign goals, including the aim to make the TESOL degree more field-based, more contextually relevant, and to attract a broader range of candidates. Consequently, in September of 2010 the new MAT-TESOL degree began with two inaugural groups of students – a traditional on-campus cohort and an online cohort. The MAT-TESOL degree is now situated under the umbrella of the MAT program. Oversight is provided by a faculty Coordination Committee, currently chaired by Christian Chun, and by the Executive Director of the MAT and MAT-TESOL, Erika Klein.

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

The MAT-TESOL degree is part of the Rossier School of Education’s MAT program. Undergirding the MAT program are goals related to seven Domains of Practice, which are depicted in the

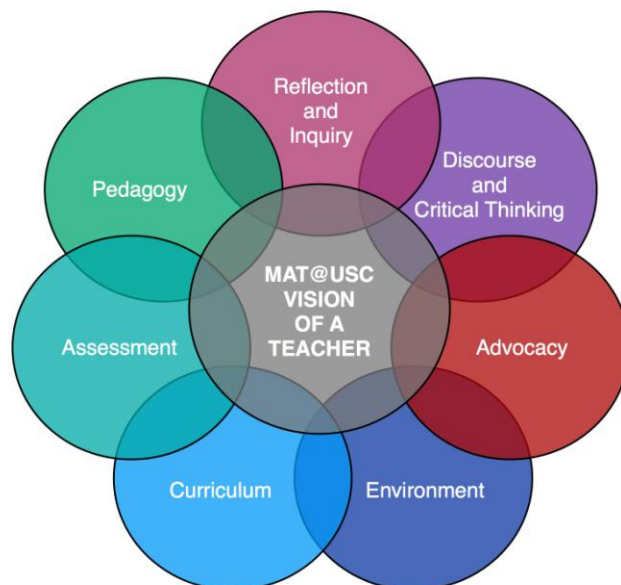




figure at right. The overarching aim is to produce graduates who exhibit ongoing reflection and research-based teaching practices in order to achieve increased learning outcomes in diverse linguistic and cultural environments. Some sample goals for the MAT-TESOL candidates associated with these domains include the following:

(1) Advocacy

- Seek to understand how historical, cultural, linguistic, economic, and other forces shape patterns of educational opportunity and achievement.
- Challenge practices that marginalize certain students.
- Construct instructional experiences that ensure equitable participation and maximum achievement for every student.

(2) Assessment

- Demonstrate knowledge of different forms of language education assessment – formal/informal, formative/summative, dynamic/authentic, etc.
- Articulate the relationship between planning, instruction, and assessment through sample lessons, classroom observations and practice teaching.
- Provide specific, timely, and meaningful oral and written feedback to students to promote effective language learning, engagement, and motivation.

(3) Reflection

- Use reflective cycle to collect data on relationship between their language teaching practices and student learning outcomes.
- Distinguish between description and interpretation to avoid relying on unexamined assumptions about their students or their own language teaching practices.
- Establish short term and long term teaching goals and critically monitor progress towards those goals.

(4) Critical Thinking and Discourse

- Model active intellectual participation characterized by supporting points and substantiating claims with evidence.
- Enable discourse that crosses linguistic, cultural, class, and other divides to provide all students with access to language education and academic achievement.
- Facilitate instructional conversations that reflect active participation, relevant topics, and extended talk in which ideas are meaningfully explored.

(5) Curriculum

- Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of curriculum including cultural references, content and skills, and pertinent language.
- Ensure use of authentic processes and products that enable “real world” language application.
- Recognize that curriculum can never be neutral or comprehensive and that all curricular products reflect and privilege particular perspectives.



(6) Environment

- Display a positive, student-centered teaching and learning approach that promotes respect, care, and collaboration.
- Model and provide concrete guidelines about behavior conducive to high expectations and culturally appropriate norms.

(7) Pedagogy

- Exhibit versatility with a wide-range of theoretically grounded language instruction approaches and strategies.
- Employ instructional approaches that draw on students' prior knowledge and capacities.

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

The MAT-TESOL program features a proprietary Moodle-based LMS (Learning Management System) called “2SC” that was developed collaboratively by the Rossier School of Education and its technology partner, 2tor, Inc. This platform provides the main portal for all learning activities and interaction between faculty and students during the program. A variety of instructional activities are used in the program, including live/synchronous activities, asynchronous interaction, and field-based activities as described below.

- **Live/Synchronous Activities**
Adobe Connect web conferencing software allows faculty members to hold live class meetings each week. These generally range from two to two-and-a-half hours. Faculty members also hold regular live office hours with students. Students also organize live study groups, both required and self-initiated. All Adobe Connect sessions can be recorded, which is useful for record keeping, assessment, and accountability.
- **Asynchronous Activities**
In addition to activities involving live/synchronous contact, example asynchronous activities used include:
 - Readings. Weekly readings anchor the courses. Readings are provided through the USC electronic reserves system, or in some cases in other formats depending on student preference, including links, PDF files, or mailed hard copy.
 - Flipbooks. Faculty or invited experts are recorded giving mini-lectures or talks to guide students through activities which all students are required to view. These are generally combined with other media or activities in a flipbook format that students can complete over time.



- Commercial or produced videos. Courses integrate commercially available films or documentaries that are relevant and advance instructional goals or in some cases videos are produced by Rossier.
- Recorded interview with an expert. This is a variation on video-lecture, where faculty members conduct and record interviews with experts. This is sometimes done in-person or remotely using Skype recorder technology.
- Online discussion forums. Students are asked to respond to prompts, comment on the postings of others, etc. Fora are faculty mediated and may be assigned individually or in groups. Video-postings are sometimes required. Also, other available technologies such as Voicethread are utilized to add variation to this type of activity.
- Regular communication with faculty. Outside of class times, regular communication between faculty members and students using email, chat, and sometimes voice is conducted. Often there are requirements to email a proposal or assignment to the instructor for feedback.
- **Field-based Activities**
Required field-based activities occur in every term. These activities include classroom observations, practice teaching experiences, material and curriculum reviews, expert interviews, and case studies. These field-based activities are designed to anchor learning in a local teaching context for the students and they provide concrete data and experiences that are then used in course discussions and writing assignments.

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.

The MAT-TESOL program features several classes to help participants understand their local contexts in order for them to be able to work across locales.

One course, EDUC 563 Teaching from a Comparative and Educational Perspective, focuses on understanding localized contexts and how these interconnect with global issues around educational access and inequities based on social class, gender, geographical constraints, and so on. Students, after finishing this course, will be able to understand how the various contexts are mutually constitutive, with important implications for language education policies and practices.

Another course, EDUC 501 Teaching English as a New Language, requires students to conduct a case study of an English language learner in a local ESL type setting, or of an EFL learner for those based internationally. In their ethnographic observations, i.e., interviewing, observing the classroom, taking field-notes, and connecting theory to practice, students engage in a deeper understanding of the learners' experience in a local educational setting and how these are impacted by practices and policies at multiple levels.



In addition, students carry out field-based assignments in every course starting from their first term, which culminate in either their final Capstone course (for experienced teachers) or Practicum course (for pre-service or novice teachers). This field-based component adds to their understandings of how concepts and methods apply to their local contexts and promotes a closer examination of English language classroom practices around the world. Course discussions are conducted with a student body that is based in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America. This allows for concrete comparisons to be made with other classmates located in other societies, resulting in a broadening of knowledge and practices.

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

Participants in the course may be physically situated in the local context where they either plan to teach or are already teaching. Others may know what their future classroom context will be, but have not yet started or arrived in that locale. Still others may not yet know where they will work. The various students work (or will work) in a wide range of developed or developing nations including but not limited to Canada, China, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, the US, and Venezuela.

As the students complete their coursework and field-based experiences, they work to understand the culture in which the program will take place (particularly if they are not from that culture). As the students report on their field-based activities to their classmates, they explain the sociocultural contexts and the constraints that will influence the English language teaching programs they have planned.

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

The faculty members teaching the courses in the MAT-TESOL program hold doctorates (PhD or EdD) in the various sub-fields of language education, such as Applied Linguistics and Second Language Education. Two courses in the program, the Capstone and the Practicum, also utilize non-doctoral level faculty members who hold at least a masters degree in TESOL or related fields. All faculty members across the program possess extensive practical experience teaching either ESL/EFL and/or conducting teacher training.

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

The MAT program, of which the MAT-TESOL is a part, aligns each cohort of candidates with an Academic Advisor and a Student Support Advisor who tracks with them throughout each student's time in the program. The Advisors work with candidates on multiple levels, beginning with advising them on time management and course planning in their first term, registration information, etc. Academic Advisors also work with participants who are experiencing difficulty in the program (both academic and personal) and serve as mediators should personality conflicts arise.



In addition to the advisors, there also is a team of Placement Coordinators who work to provide fieldwork placements for candidates with qualified schools and mentors. The Placement Coordinators systematically check in with candidates to ensure that the placement is a correct fit and that they are able to successfully complete their coursework. In addition, the Assistant Director, Director of Student Services, and the Executive Director provide support to staff and candidates if issues are escalated.

The Writing Advisor works with faculty members to provide assistance to students who demonstrate a variety of needs, including English Language Learners, students with documented learning disabilities, and meeting/understanding the standards of graduate level academic writing. The Writing Advisor meets with students both individually and on a group basis, developing and presenting workshops on a variety of topics. In addition, students who need additional support are directed to USC Disability Services and the [USC Kortschak Center](#), which is designed to assist students who have documented learning differences.

The Placement Coordinators serve as the initial liaisons between the Teacher Candidates and potential fieldwork/practicum sites, and also conduct periodic check-ins to assess mentor teachers and schools for continued alignment with MAT-TESOL goals and outcomes. They also serve as points of contact if there are any conflicts between the teacher candidates or mentor teachers and work with the Academic Advisors and relevant faculty to ensure timely and correct resolutions.

11. Explain the learning assessments used in the PDO.

Examples of learning assessments used in the MAT-TESOL include the following:

- **Participation**
One assessment used is observation of students’ level of participation in activities in a course, such as class sessions, discussion groups, and forums. Students must be present during live sessions via both video and voice using a stable and sufficiently strong internet connection. The following rubric is used to evaluate and award participation points.

	Active Participation	Moderate Participation	Low Participation
Preparation	Exhibits evidence of having completed all assignments and activities according to guidelines that were	Appears ready to participate and has completed most assignments and activities	Exhibits lack of preparation and non-completion of required assignments



	assigned		
Integration of Readings	Initiates discussion of readings and supports points using page-specific references or specific reference points in film/videos	Supports points during discussion but uses general references to readings and other materials	Rarely initiates discussion and is not able to reference required readings or other materials
Collaboration	Furthers the discussion and builds on the ideas of others; comments and questions reflect having thought deeply about the material and ideas of others	Furthers the discussion and builds on the ideas of others; general or limited references to course materials or to ideas of others	Comments do not further the discussion and do not exhibit careful reflection on the material or ideas of classmates

- **Written Assignments**

A common learning assessment used in many courses is the evaluation of students' written work. Written assignments include a wide range of products including brief forum postings, teaching reflection pieces, expert interview reports, classroom observation reports, lesson plans, literature reviews, and more extended papers such as case studies and research reports.

- **Video-Reflection**

Many courses in the MAT-TESOL program utilize the use of self-captured video to provide formative and summative feedback on aspects of participants' teaching. Participants are trained on best practices for capturing themselves teaching on film, doing basic editing, and uploading segments to the LMS. Segments are then viewed by faculty members and/or peers depending on the nature of the assignment, often discussed asynchronously or synchronously, and feedback is provided. Video assignments of this nature range from brief two-three minute micro-teaching events to more extended teaching segments such as multiple 20-minute Teaching and Learning Event assignments that are part of the Practicum.

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

There have been several challenges involved in delivering the MAT-TESOL program online. First, we have had to increase our capacity to ensure that all professors are prepared to effectively use the 2SC LMS and other technologies in their interactions with the students. Second, professors have had to become adept at assisting students in



their use of the technology as well. Third, the introduction of asynchronous instructional activities has required a shift in the thinking of all faculty members about the role of lecture and other traditional classroom activities. The ability to place lectures and guided discussions online for students to complete prior to class time has resulted in a "flipped" classroom experience with much more interactive and meaningful discussions during class meetings. This shift has been positive but has required some adjustment. Finally, it is incumbent on program faculty and staff to find new and creative ways to work to build a sense of community and cohesion among students who are online and who may be dispersed across many time zones.

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

The quality and outcomes of the MAT-TESOL program are evaluated in several ways. First, each course and course instructor in the program is evaluated by students at the end of each course using an online evaluation survey. These course level evaluation results are made available to respective instructors after the final grades have been filed. Second, all students in the program have ongoing access to a feedback tool to voice concerns, questions, or ideas regarding the technology aspect of the program. In addition, the technology support staff administers its own technology related survey to each cohort once during their program. Feedback gathered through these mechanisms is evaluated, categorized, and disseminated to appropriate parties. Third, each cohort of students in the MAT-TESOL completes an exit survey upon completion of the program. This data is made available to the faculty for ongoing course and program development purposes. For example, exit survey data collected in December 2011 from the first graduating cohort was reviewed during a two-day curriculum summit in April 2012, resulting in several recommendations and planned modifications to the program's curriculum. Finally, the Rossier School of Education recently secured an independent research group to evaluate its teacher education program through a five-year longitudinal study. The MAT-TESOL will be evaluated as part of this larger external evaluation effort.