

TESOL Program Response to the 2024-25 PPR Review Team's Report

May 2, 2025

Introduction

The external Review Team provided an enlightening and welcome review of the MS in TESOL program. Their views of the program from a different perspective than that of the existing faculty illuminated several areas where the TESOL program is strong as well as a few areas that can be adjusted/modified to strengthen the program in providing an excellent academic experience for students.

Five areas that were that were presented in detail were Faculty and Mentoring, Student Academic Achievement and Assessment of Student Learning, Recruitment, Curriculum, and Other. The response will address how the current faculty will work to address the given recommendations.

Faculty and Mentoring

We find quite accurate the Review Team's characterization of the burden placed on current tenure-track faculty as being "overwhelming and unsustainable."

We strongly believe that TESOL needs a third tenure-track position. Part of the reason for our decline in enrollment has been the College's refusal for the past decade to replace retiring faculty. The Review Team refers to our failed search a few years ago; the reason for the failure was that when our first choice declined our offer, rather than let us return to the pool to bring in a couple more candidates, the College (in the person of the previous Dean) cancelled the search without any prior consultation.

The Dean's Office and the Review Team have proposed a few alternatives for dealing with the staffing situation:

- Since the PPR, the Dean's Office has proposed a split position between TESOL and Spanish Linguistics, but while TESOL sees such an opportunity as a mixed blessing, the Spanish and Portuguese Program is strongly against the idea. A split position between TESOL and Linguistics would be even more challenging, given the different sets of personnel standards, and even more competing demands upon the new hire's time for service duties.
- The Review Team has proposed, and the Dean has agreed, that we be allowed to hire a full-time lecturer with service duties. We would welcome this as an interim measure, until we have had time to grow enough that the College will recognize that we need another T/TT position.
- Unexpected developments with HR seem to have made FT lecturer hires impossible now, at least temporarily. We have therefore been offered verbally by the Dean the chance to hire a part-time lecturer for six units of service per

semester. We appreciate this offer, and wish to move forward with it, but still need specifics on how to go about actually implementing it.

- We want to reiterate this is a temporary patch to alleviate some need but does not fix the issue in a way that will enable the investment of time needed for the program to progress. A full-time tenure track faculty hire is still needed for the long-term success of this program.

Student Academic Achievement and Assessment of Student Learning

We would have enjoyed discussing with the Review Team the issue of assessment of student learning, and how we chose our SLOs and the ways in which we assess them. However, there was no way to compress every possible topic into just one day. We appreciate the suggestion that we expand our assessment efforts by looking at other programs, but this is simply beyond our available bandwidth at this point.

Further, we find that we are already getting valuable information about student learning gaps from the comprehensive exam; if we were to alter the assessment plan, it would likely be to include sources of information from the Practicum, as is done with assessment for the Postbaccalaureate Certificate.

The main critique from the campus of our assessment work has been to suggest that we include indirect measures of student performance, which seem less useful than direct measures in our context.

Recruitment

Unfortunately, we currently lack the staffing to recruit more students, but we need more students to obtain additional tenure-track positions. This chicken-and-egg dilemma will be a recurring theme in this response.

The Review Team refers to opportunities for outreach and marketing (e.g., among majors from the Sociology, Anthropology, and English Departments) that have not been harnessed. We agree that these are areas in which we would like to recruit, but with current staffing, we have no real opportunity to pursue these potential sources of additional students.

We have recently filmed some professionally recorded interviews with CICE (the Center for Internships and Community Engagement) about our service-learning courses and how they fit in with our guided observation assignments in our introductory course (TESL 500) and the observation and teaching requirements in the Practicum (TESL 596). We hope that the additional attention and publicity for this distinctive feature of our program will help with recruiting, and we will post the finished video(s) to our TESOL website.

We seem to be getting more students moving from the Undergraduate Certificate to the MS in TESOL now that most of the undergraduate classes are moving to in-person or hybrid format. This change in modality is recent, but the initial impact in creating a more fruitful pathway to the MS program is promising.

Regarding the recommendation to better leverage the SMPP to recruit students into the MS TESOL:

- We should clarify that students who complete the MS do not need the SMPP, although they do need five prerequisite courses (EDSC 304, 310, 320, 330, and 350, and a COE-approved ethnic studies course) for admission to the World Language: ELD Credential at CSUF.
- Currently, we estimate that we are only getting one or two undergraduate students completing the SMPP per year.
- We believe the SMPP would better serve as a tool for recruiting more undergraduate students; however, we agree that we could use the WL: ELD Credential as a way to help recruit MS students.
- Marketing the MS in TESOL to fulfill the subject matter preparation would be the more appealing option in recruitment. We need to establish this option more clearly on our website and promotional materials.

As for regarding the Undergraduate TESOL Certificate as a key pipeline into the MS TESOL, we completely agree. We have been trying to do this since the certificate's inception, but we are starting to see an increase in the flow through the pipeline now. We believe part of this is due to the return to in-person and hybrid classes for most of the certificate program, and we are now considering switching the two remaining classes (TESL 315 and 445) to hybrid or in-person as well. Recruiting to increase numbers of students in the undergraduate certificate may be the most fruitful approach.

We are open to and interested in developing a 4+1 BA/MS program, most likely in conjunction with the BA in Linguistics, but thus far we lack the time to pursue it even in a desultory fashion.

We would love to promote the program more widely to both CSUF undergraduates and to undergraduates at neighboring universities (note that many of the CSUs have MA in TESOL programs themselves, and that they may be reluctant to promote our program to their undergraduates), but again, the problem is one of time and advertising budget.

Find ways to engage with and involve undergraduate students with students in the MS TESOL Program outside of classes: This has been happening to some extent with the TESOL Club, and we will continue explicitly promoting that. We will also remain open to other opportunities for doing this, such as recommending that undergraduate students—not just graduate students—deliver class presentations at the annual MLL Student Conference.

Regarding the suggestions about the website:

- The MLL website was just revamped in late April, after being completely redesigned. The TESOL content still has some glitches from things that were not

ported successfully from the old site, but revamping the TESOL section is a major priority for Drs. Rueckert and Carr. We are particularly encouraged that it appears likely we will be able to use tables to help clarify differences between the MS and Graduate Certificate, something we were forced to stop doing previously because of accessibility requirements.

- We welcome the Review Team’s suggestion to make it crystal clear that we do at times accept students who do not meet the admission standards. In particular, besides clarifying that we will consider students with lower GPAs if they have letters of recommendation, we also need to make it clearer that many students need to be admitted conditionally, with prerequisites that must be satisfied after admission.
- We will create a section about subject matter preparation and how the MS in TESOL degree will fulfill that requirement for those seeking an ELD credential.

In terms of program prerequisites, we appreciate the Review Team’s suggestions. We believe that some of the prerequisites need to be retained and should not be incorporated into the MS curriculum (e.g., an introductory 100-level linguistics course should not be part of a graduate curriculum, but it does make a good prerequisite, one that can be taken on campus fall or spring, or during the summer at select community colleges).

- We plan to drop the upper-division literature or culture prerequisite, “ENGL 300 or the equivalent,” which has historically been “the equivalent” for at least 99% of our students.
- We will drop the upper-division writing requirement. The CSU has dropped the Graduate Writing Requirement (GWAR), and we will assume that students come to us able to write. We may recommend TESL 301, MLNG 301, or ENGL 301 to select students who appear to have difficulty with academic writing, though.
- We will maintain the second language proficiency requirement, but will highlight (especially on the website; perhaps in the Catalog as well) that it can be satisfied **or the equivalent**, with some explanation (e.g., completing a higher level foreign language course is the equivalent, including heritage language courses; or, completing a particular level of education in a foreign country where English was not the medium of instruction).
- We will maintain the linguistics prerequisite, but will attempt to change it to simply LING 106, not listing 206 or 406 as options anymore. We suspect that the choices may be confusing. We will also clarify the language in the Catalog and on the website to read something *like* “LING 106 or equivalent introductory survey of linguistics.”
- We will maintain the grammar prerequisite, TESL 315 or ENGL 303, but will clarify the language in the Catalog and on the website to indicate something *like* “or equivalent upper-division course in English grammar.”
- We believe that these three prerequisites are important:
 - The language prerequisite requires our students to have some experience reaching a certain level of proficiency in a language, or a lower level in two languages, so they have a better idea of the struggles that English learners face.

- The linguistics course is important because students otherwise lack general knowledge about language and its structure, particularly phonetics and phonology, and morphology.
- The grammar course is crucial because most American students enter the program with very little if any understanding of English grammatical rules (e.g., the verb tenses of English, parts of speech, the difference between gerunds and infinitives, or past vs. present participles).
- We will clearly explain that prerequisites can be taken concurrently while working on the coursework for the TESOL program.

On the suggestion to work with overseas graduate recruitment services, the campus has reportedly started working with recruiters again, and we welcome this development. We desire strongly to work with International Programs to recruit more students to come here, and we will continue trying to do this as time permits.

As for working with the Office of Admissions, we are and have been trying. We have seen some improvement in the relationship with them in the last year or two, but for a number of years they have often served as more of a hindrance than a help to us (and to other graduate programs as well).

In terms of targeting California and out-of-state undergraduate students, we think this is a wonderful idea, and as staffing (and an advertising budget) become available, we will pursue it.

Curriculum

The Review Team mentioned that “Elective courses reflected the expertise of former faculty (e.g., Vocabulary) and if not offered also affects students’ experience of the program.”

- The former courses TESL 540 and 545 are no longer offered or even in the Catalog; 525 (Vocabulary) remains, and while it was indeed conceived by a now-retired faculty member, we believe it is a valuable option as an elective. While Drs. Rueckert and Carr have not taught this class themselves, they could if needed, but so far we have been able to find well-qualified part-time faculty to teach 525.
- We are not aware of any other electives remaining that were based solely (or even mainly) on a former faculty member’s expertise. We currently try to offer an elective every spring alongside TESL 520 (a pedagogy course which can be taken as an elective), an elective in the summer (enrollment permitting), and then students can also take TESL 407, 408, 445, or 470 as electives too. Thus, at present the biggest issue is being able to offer electives, not the question of expertise to teach them.

We believe that a course on ESP and Materials Development would be an excellent idea. However, we are convinced it would be a mistake to take away the curriculum development focus from TESL 595.

- TESL 595 is a key part of the program in terms of tying things together, and it gives our students an opportunity to be an active member of a curriculum development team before they enter the workplace.
- This then positions them well the first time they have to work on a curriculum project as teachers, and gives them an advantage in competing for full-time positions.
- Along with TESL 560 (Second Language Assessment), TESL 595 is one of the two main distinguishing features between the Graduate Certificate and the MS in TESOL.
- Most of our students will not be teaching ESP, although we agree that an ESP elective and/or a bit more coverage of ESP spread throughout the curriculum would be beneficial to our students.
- We are open to and do currently address ESP in the curriculum class. We will continue to look at ESP options that students can use to work on their curriculum projects. This keeps ESP as an optional focus that students can pursue in addition to traditional ESL instruction. This does not require a formal change to the course curriculum.

Regarding the suggestion that teaching students how to incorporate AI into lesson design should not simply be “added,” we are not certain what is meant here.

- We certainly believe that our students need such instruction, and since it has not previously been a part of any of our classes, it needs to be added. Both practicum courses (TESL 596 and TESL 450) piloted an introduction of AI into the classroom this spring.
- The undergraduate elective (available for graduate credit as well) TESL 470 will, as of this year, include coverage of how to use AI in developing reading and listening passages and communicative language tasks.
- We plan to continue making the appropriate use of AI a natural part of a number of classes, including 509, 510, 560, and 595, and possibly 515, 520, and 525. We will look for ways to integrate it into existing coursework to facilitate a more holistic approach towards training students.

On the suggestion to prescribe more strictly some of the program requirements, and offer fewer electives, we believe there is some merit to this, particularly in this period of diminished enrollments. We must clarify first, though, that students must currently take either 515 *or* 520 *or* 525 to fulfill the pedagogy requirement, and then they *can* take one or both of the others as electives. With the current situation spelled out, we are tentatively planning to:

- Make both TESL 515 (Pedagogical Grammar) and 520 (Pronunciation Methods) required courses.
- Make TESL 525 an elective, not a pedagogy course.
- Note: We have not discussed whether to leave TESL 525 as an option on the comprehensive examination or not.

The Review Team noted that TESL 500 is not offered in the spring, and suggested that we schedule three classes in the spring semester that incoming students could take

without having had 500. Assuming that a new student is not taking any prerequisites, and needs three TESOL courses, we already follow their plan to the extent possible.

- We moved TESL 509 to the spring, when it had traditionally been a fall course, because it seemed like a more suitable alternate entry point to the program than 510. (TESL 509 includes several readings early in the course reviewing or introducing some of the fundamentals of communicative language teaching.) TESL 500 is a prerequisite or co-requisite, but students can get by without it.
- TESL 520 is offered in the spring subject to enrollment and assuming the Coordinator and Chair do not miss the fact that if it was canceled in one spring, the scheduling system does not automatically roll it over to the draft schedule the following spring. That is the only reason it was not offered in Spring 2025; it is scheduled for Spring 2026, though. Many students over the years have taken this course without having had 500 first.
- We offer TESL 407 and, enrollment permitting, TESL 408 every spring. These can both be taken as electives by MS in TESOL Students.
- We try to offer a 500-level elective every spring as well, enrollment permitting.

As for leveraging courses in other departments as elective options:

- We have a great number of such courses available as electives already, but we encourage students to take as many electives as possible within the program so as to keep our enrollment numbers up and prevent class cancellations.
- We believe that our own courses *tend* to be a better fit for the needs of *most* of our students, anyway.
- Students still retain the flexibility to take something in another program if they think it will be beneficial to them. These courses are pre-approved and do not require advisor consent.

TESL 520 has been addressed above, and if it is not essential, we believe that it is at least very important.

- However, we are not convinced it would do well as an asynchronous online course.
- We do not want to create many (or any) online graduate courses, not only for F-1 student visa reasons, but also because we believe our students learn to teach face-to-face best by learning in a face-to-face environment. This also seems to promote engagement, or at least reduces student disengagement. Online learning does indeed present certain benefits, but we do not find it a good fit in our graduate program, and we find it a decreasingly good fit in our undergraduate program.
- Offering TESL 520 during the summer would not be possible every year, and putting it into the summer elective rotation would mean it would be offered every several years at best.
- Note that a summer class must enroll at least 13 students, normally a few weeks before the start of the session, or it faces cancellation by Extended Education. Note as well that at 13 students, the instructor's pay is reduced by 35%; full pay requires at least 20 students enrolled. In contrast, an academic year graduate course needs 8 students to remain open.

Regarding the recommendation to expand our network of community partners beyond NOCE (our original service-learning partner):

- We are working on this, but it requires negotiating an MOU with each institution, and getting it approved by both schools. This is a tortuous process, and CICE is currently doing their best.
- We often have a student in TESL 510 or 515 doing service-learning in TESL 100, the freshman ESL composition class.
- We want to include Irvine Valley College, Saddleback College, Mt. SAC, and Fullerton College, if we can. Many of our alumni teach at these schools as well. We are open to considering LSI.
- It is worth noting that in the service-learning program, most of our students are assisting in a classroom, and we think this is a good focus to keep, while still allowing for tutoring (e.g., in connection with CSUF Athletics, which has needed help in the past, or with CSUF International Programs, which may be experiencing a need for this).
- As each school has their own requirements for students to be permitted on campus to assist in classrooms, additional coordination is needed so students can begin their service-learning in a timely manner. An additional faculty member would be needed to coordinate with these schools prior to the beginning of each semester to ensure that they can be successfully used.

The idea to have some classes in rooms other than H325 (the Modern Languages and Literatures computer lab) is well taken.

- Certain classes truly do benefit from access to the TESOL Library, which was once kept in a closet, but then expanded, and has occupied much of the space in the H325 conference room for roughly a decade. Such classes that seriously benefit from access to the books include TESL 509, 510, 595, and possibly 500.
- TESL 527 does *not* need to use it; TESL 560 is a “wobbler.”
- Most electives could probably be conducted just fine in other rooms, especially with movable furniture.
- We will encourage the TESOL Club Librarian to work with John Hickok to get advice about organizing the program’s books, and we appreciate his offer of assistance.

We love the idea of promoting the pathway for an Adult Education credential with LAOCE Explore. However, we need time to figure out who to contact and how to work things out, and time is in somewhat of a short supply at present.

Other

Regarding the establishment of an IEP on campus, we do not seem likely to have the resources to start one, even if conditions were more favorable at present. We do believe it is worth looking at the development of ESL service courses for existing matriculated students, as well as an eventual bridge program or programs for international students.

- ESL service courses would meet needs of current international students; however, if they are not required, enrollment will probably remain low unless international enrollment grows significantly.
- The only such course currently on the books is TESL 100, which students with low iBT or IELTS writing scores must take before starting the English composition series (ENGL 101P and ENGL 101).
- Nathan Carr plans to introduce a 1-unit elective, a workshop tentatively labeled TESL 100W. The third unit will make TESL 100 more attractive and more useful to current international freshmen and study abroad students, who need to be enrolled full-time and thus often find themselves having to take 14 units if they want to take TESL 100. A TESL 100W would allow them to take just 12 units.
- ESL service courses might prove a way to grow into a bridge program.

Conclusion

We thank the Review Team for their kind words of praise for the TESOL Program, and for their recommendations.

We hope that these recommendations, along with some form of additional faculty staffing, will help our program not only to remain strong, but to regain lost numbers, and to adjust to the changing needs of the TESOL workplace in the years to come.