

Cal State Fullerton

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

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To: Su Swarat, Senior Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning,
Accreditation Liaison Officer

From: Jessica Stern, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Associate Dean for Student
Relations, Gabriela E. Nuñez
Subject: Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the MS in Education with a concentration in Teaching
English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or the Graduate TESOL Certificate

Date: October 10, 2025

Program Overview

The Master of Science (MS) in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Graduate TESOL Certificate are offered by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. The MS program is the largest public university TESOL master's program in Orange County, California. The graduate program trains ESL/EFL teachers for adult second-language learners of English who are at adult schools, private and public colleges and universities, and intensive English programs.

The Graduate TESOL Certificate consists of 24 graduate units and is primarily intended for students who already have or are in the process of earning a master's degree in a related field such as linguistics, English, foreign languages, composition and rhetoric, or some other area of education.

Students completing the MS in TESOL automatically receive the Graduate TESOL Certificate as well. Both are multi-disciplinary programs involving study in the fields of English, linguistics, education, anthropology, American studies, human communication studies, and psychology.

Mission

This MS in TESOL program seeks to be a general TESOL program in that it trains students to teach both domestically and abroad. As such, it attempts to cover all the basics of the TESOL field to prepare future teachers.

Program Goals

- Create a culture on campus where international students are desired and infrastructure is developed to support them during their studies
- Increase enrollment, including international

Faculty

The MS TESOL currently has 2.3 faculty to cover the curriculum and to mentor/advise students

Student Graduation Rates

Since the 2017-18 academic year, the program has awarded an average of 16 Master's Degrees.

PPR Committee and Meetings

The external review of the MS in TESOL was conducted on March 11, 2025 by two external reviewers, Dr. Anna Dina Joaquín, Professor and Department Chair, Department of Linguistics/TESOL, California State University, Northridge; Dr. Thomas Upton, Professor of English/TESOL, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, School of Liberal Arts, Director of the Program for Intensive English (PIE), Indiana University Indianapolis;

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and one internal reviewer, John Hickok, MA-TESOL, MLIS Library Faculty, TESOL Librarian and MA-TESOL, Alumnus (CSULA).

The Review Team held a full day of interviews, conversations, and meals with stakeholders including two tenure-line faculty who teach in the program: Nathan Carr, who also serves as the Department Chair, and Daniel Rueckert, who serves as the MS TESOL Program Coordinator. The committee also met with the H&SS Dean and Associate Dean, one part-time instructor, several students, representing both first- and second-year cohorts, one undergraduate TESOL certificate student, and four alumni from the program.

Summary of Strengths

Reviewers note that the program's strengths include:

- Strong faculty advising and mentoring at all stages of the program (from both Drs. Carr and Rueckert), and strong instruction by part-time professors
- Strong core curriculum in both foundational skills, and for preparing teachers for secondary credentials, for example, the CSUF TESOL program is the only SMPP (Subject Matter Preparation Program) for World Languages Development in California, and the inclusion of an undergraduate certificate program
- Excellent service-learning opportunities with local internships
- A strong sense of community in the student cohorts
- Proven student job placement and careers in TESOL after graduation with a local demand for teachers with the MS in TESOL
- Program location is desirable for international students

Summary of Challenges

- The current 1.3 faculty tenure-line structure:
 - is unsustainable and overwhelming for current faculty
 - means that the Department Chair, Nathan Carr, regularly teaches an overload to meet course needs
 - results in all recruitment and advising work falling on one faculty member, Daniel Rueckert
 - makes difficult a diversity of teachers who represent the student population demographic
 - results in fewer faculty breadth of expertise from which to learn (e.g., a TESOL instructor with AI experience)
 - causes an overload on faculty, who regularly make available TESL 598- Independent Studies to help students meet graduation requirements
 - creates compounded strain on faculty when a faculty member goes on sabbatical or other leave
- Curricular challenges include:
 - Regular cancellation of courses due to low enrollment which cause student bottlenecks for program completion
 - Elective courses reflect the expertise of former faculty and are not currently offered
- Additional challenges include:
 - Decrease in the US job market for English language training and education
 - Global political and economic challenges that impact international student interest
 - Loss of the American Language Program, removing a valuable on-campus observational/internship site for TESOL students
 - International student enrollment down since Covid
 - Group of faculty retirements paired with a failed search for a tenure-line faculty results in overburden on current faculty

- Program strengths are not visible to both the CSUF undergrad community
- Untapped marketing and outreach for recruitment
- Confusing information on the website about the program, application and admission process
- Unnecessary barriers at CSUF that affect timely admission for international students

Review Team Recommendations for Development/Growth

The PPR committee identified the following opportunities for growth:

- Consider benchmarking the type of assessment that other comparable/peer programs do to evaluate student learning to confirm that their approach is meeting program learning outcomes
- Focus recruitment for the MS TESOL from the Subject Matter Requirement Program (SMPP), and recruitment for the undergrad TESOL certificate with majors in Linguistics, English, Anthropology, Sociology, International Business
- Use the TESOL certificate as a key pipeline into the MS TESOL
- Engage with and involve undergrads with students in the MS TESOL program (outside of class)
- Consider a 4+1 BA/MS program/blended program, perhaps with the linguistics BA
- Consider other ways to better promote the program to both the CSUF undergraduate community and broader undergraduate communities (CSUs, UCs, private, out of state)
- Rework the website to make the application requirements and process much more transparent and easier to understand
- Consider eliminating possible prerequisites in the program and from admission to increase enrollments and to strengthen and stabilize the program and increase the pool of applicants
- Benchmark program admission prerequisites against peer MA/MS TESOL programs, including CSU-LA, CSU-SB, CSU-N, Pepperdine, Northern Arizona University, U of Northern Iowa, and Michigan State University
- Consider making clearer on the website the practice of accepting students that do not meet the department's admission standards with supplementary materials
- To assist with recruitment, consider:
 - Focus on targeting California undergrads and out-of-state undergrads, based on CSUF's reputation and SoCal desirable location
 - Working with the International education & Engagement (IEE) Office to identify potential partners to help with recruitment in key international markets
 - Working with the Admissions Office to address roadblocks on the timely processing of submitted application materials plus communication with prospective international students
- Curriculum
 - Reconsider required classes, including current required courses and adding courses that reflect current needs, such as AI in lesson design and adding preparation for teaching English for Specific Purposes in workplace and professional contexts
 - Consider prescribing more strictly the program requirements with fewer electives to ease the context of lower enrollments and fewer faculty to cover required courses, for example, develop degree maps that articulate specific courses in specific semesters for each cohort (the Review Team offer various specific examples)
 - Make TESL 520 into an asynchronous online course, perhaps marketed specifically to international students for recruitment and to assist in faster degree completion
 - Consider identifying other sites to place students for teaching/tutoring experience, such as private language centers, K-12 ESL programs, or free ESL courses in public libraries or other nonprofit centers

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- Consider promoting the pathway for an Adult Ed credential offered by the LAOCE
- Consider scheduling classes in classrooms with different instructional space, such as the CSUF Pollak library
- Consider adding a “bridging” program for international students

Additional Review Team Recommendations:

- Three-Step Approach to address the immediate need for faculty support for current program maintenance:
 1. Grow the program to 30 students and hire a full-time lecturer
 2. With 30 students, approve a joint/split tenure line appointment with another program or department that has some personnel need, such as Linguistics or Spanish
 3. Hire another tenure-line full time faculty

TESOL’s Response to the PPR Review Team

- TESOL will prioritize the following recommendations:
 - Clarify program options on its website and articulates that the SMPP would better serve as a recruitment tool for more undergraduates, and that that WL: ELD Credential would be a preferred recruitment tool for MS students.
 - Engage the TESOL Club for recruitment for promotion and recruitment opportunities.
 - Revamp the TESOL section of their website to make clearer student application and admission processes
 - Continue to use the Undergraduate TESOL Certificate as a key pipeline into the MS TESOL as a strong recruitment strategy that providing results since the shift back to in-person courses
 - Will continue to work with community partners beyond NOCE
 - Will make efforts to holding certain classes in the TESOL library and in other rooms
 - Look into the development of ESL service courses for existing matriculated students, as well as an eventual bridge program(s) for international students.
 - Nathan Carr will introduce a 1-unit elective workshop (TESL 100W) to facilitate desired units for current international freshmen and study abroad students
- TESOL agrees with the following recommendations and will implement once additional staffing becomes available
 - Develop a 4+1 MA/MS program in conjunction with the BA in Linguistics
 - Include sources of information from the Practicum as a direct measure when they have the bandwidth to develop assessment.
 - TESOL notes the Review Team’s recruitment suggestions. TESOL does not currently have the bandwidth to implement these suggestions but underscores new recorded interviews they created with the Center for Internships and Community Engagement (CICE) as a new recruitment tool to add to the TESOL website.
 - Continue working with the Office of Admissions despite lukewarm results
 - Pursue targeting California and out-of-state undergraduate students
 - Promote a pathway for an Adult Education credential with LAOCE Explore

TESOL articulates the following responses related to curricular recommendations:

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- TESOL will drop various prereqs such as ENGL 300, the Graduate Writing Requirement, will add the “equivalent” option for the second language proficiency requirement, change the linguistics prereq to LING 106 without options, emphasize the “like or equivalent upper-division course in English grammar” for the grammar prereq TESL 315 or ENGL 303
- TESOL will restructure the number of electives, once students take either 515 or 525
- TESOL clarifies that the program is no longer offering courses that reflect expertise of former faculty.
- TESOL underscores that 595 is a key part of the program and will keep its curriculum development focus
- TESOL will continue to address ESP in the curriculum class and look at ESP options for student curricular projects
- TESOL expresses that AI has been integrated intentionally into courses, such as TESL 596, 450, 470 and is slated to be integrated into various other courses
- TESOL has moved TESL 509 from the fall to the spring
- TESL is offered in the spring in general and is next offered in Spring 2026 and students can take this course without having had 500 first
- TESL 407 and 408 are offered every spring as electives by MS in TESOL students
- A 500-level course will be available as an elective every spring
- Students can take electives in other departments, but TESOL emphasizes their own to maintain enrollment
- TESOL does not believe 520 will be successful as an asynchronous online course, and it is not possible to offer it every summer

Needs

Clarity from the Dean’s office on how to hire a part-time lecturer for six units of service per semester as temporary alleviation of faculty work overload. TESOL agrees with the Review Team that a tenure-track full-time faculty member is needed, and TESOL urges the Dean’s office to support this need.

Dean’s Response

The Dean thanks the program and the review teams for their thoughtful suggestions to meeting the goals of the program, in particular how to grow enrollment and revise the curriculum to mitigate against low-enrolled courses. We are happy that Dr. Sarah Hill will be serving as an HSS graduate program coordinator and can assist in the development of a 4+1 program and other promotional strategies for the program.

The Dean acknowledges the need to meet the service needs of the program and the service burden that has fallen on the current program coordinator. We are disappointed that a joint hire between TESOL and Spanish was not a feasible option. In lieu of this, until TESOL is able to increase their enrollment numbers to allow us to hire a full-time tenure-track faculty member, the Dean’s office is supporting the hiring of a part-time faculty to support service work for the department.