TESOL MA Project Guidelines

Updated Fall 2017

TESOL MA students in the General track have two options for their graduation project: (i) a regular literature review, which is more research oriented and (ii) a teacher development literature review. The first option is more theory-oriented while the second one is geared towards an integration of theory and practice.

TESOL K-12 MA students must write a Teacher Development Literature Review following the guidelines below.

This paper is usually due on the last Friday of September (for December graduation) and the first day after Spring Holidays (for May graduation). For example, the deadline for May 2018 graduation is March 19th, 2018.

Starting in January 2017, all students submitting their graduation projects must also attach a Turn-it-in (plagiarism software) report of their paper, which can be obtained via a Canvas course entitled “Applied Linguistics/TESOL MA Projects”. If you don’t have access to this Canvas course, write to Dr. Payman Vafaee (pv2203@tc.columbia.edu), and he will add you to the course.

Regular Literature Review Requirements (TESOL General track)

- a research topic on which a decent amount of empirical research has been produced. A topic should not be too broad (e.g. corrective feedback in language teaching) or unrealistic (e.g. the best method of teaching second languages). The topic of your graduation project must be approved by an advisor among the standing faculty in the AL/TESOL program, not necessarily your academic advisor. You need to discuss the topic with this advisor, who will sign off your Program Sheet in the semester prior to the one when you submit the project.

- Construct a research question, or several research questions (2-3), that can be addressed in 20-25 pages. In answering your question, you should give
  - an overview of the past and current state of your topic
  - the relevant research that is associated with your topic
  - a solid critique of this research
  - suggestions for further areas of study

- 3 main criteria:
  - Content (weighted by 3)
  - Organization (weighted by 2)
  - Language/Mechanics/Referencing (weighted by 1)

- The paper should be from 20 to 25 pages with 15-20 sources, including an appropriate number of empirical research studies

- The paper should have three parts:
Introduction: clearly state your rationale, research question(s) and how your paper will be organized

Body: critical review of relevant research

- First, think of the major themes within your topic, and create main headings (and possibly also subheadings) for the body of your paper.
- They are there to help you organize the relevant research you are presenting.
- The number of (sub)headings you have will be determined based on how broad your topic is.
- You should aim to have between 3 and 5 main headings (and any number of associated subheadings).
- You should aim to have between 3 and 5 studies (approximately) presented under each (sub)heading.
- For each empirical study, you should introduce it, describe relevant methodologies (participants, data collection, data analysis), findings and critique***. A critique is where you outline potential shortcomings of the research design (methodology) or the researcher’s interpretation of the results, or where more information on the topic would be useful. Your critique must be based on a thorough understanding of the methodology and theories underlying the paper, and is an essential criterion for your paper to pass.
- Provide readers with transitions between sections of your paper
- You can choose to have a separate Discussion section after the body of the paper, or have smaller discussion within each heading section.

Conclusion: summarize the main points and provide suggestions for future research


Teacher Development Literature Review (TESOL General Track)

- Topic: Derive the topic from your own teaching/learning experience. Think about a certain teaching/learning issue with a certain group of students (or one student in particular). Use theories to identify and define the issue, review the literature to see what scholars say about it, and think about how you can address it in a specific teaching/learning context.
- The paper should be from 20 to 25 pages with 15-20 sources, including an appropriate number of empirical research studies
- Organization:
  - Part 1: Context (3-5 pages) – Provide a description of a teaching/learning issue you have experienced
  - Part 2: Literature Review (10-12 pages) What does the theoretical and/or empirical literature say about this issue? Guidelines for this section are similar to the main body of the literature review for the regular MA Project option bearing in mind the purpose of Part 3
Part 3: Practical Application (5-8 pages) – Synthesize and translate the evidence into recommendations for practice bearing in mind what you know personally about the context. Do the research findings make sense in light of your context? Do the theoretical, methodological, and or pedagogical implications apply in your context? How might you implement changes into the classroom based on the research recommendations or findings? How successful do you think it would be? Why? Etc.

- Students will be scored using an analytic rubric:
  - Part I: CONTEXT—Quality of introduction; level of detail of the context description; clarity of the teaching/learning issue description (background detail, clarity of issue)
  - Part II: LITERATURE—quality of the literature review and discussion (content, organization)
  - Part III: PRACTICAL APPLICATION—relevance and practicality of recommendations (relevance, practicality)
  - Academic language/referencing/mechanics

- Students are required to submit a one-page (double-spaced, typed) proposal for their TESOL MA Project to their advisor (not necessarily their academic advisor). The proposal should include:
  - Outline of teaching/learning issue
  - Guiding question or thesis
  - Description of potential sources or bodies of literature
  - Due in the semester before the paper is to be submitted.


Teacher Development Literature Review (TESOL K-12 Track)

- Guidelines for this literature review paper is similar to the TESOL General track except for the following requirements:
  - The paper should be from 10 to 15 pages with 8-12 sources, including a reasonable number of empirical research studies as discussed with your advisor
  - Organization:
    - Context: 2-3 pages
    - Literature Review: 5-7 pages
    - Practical Applications: 3-5 pages

Outstanding, APPLE award-winning MA papers from previous years have been published in Issue 2 each year in our program’s TESOL/AL Webjournal http://journals.tc-library.org/index.php/tesol

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Payman Vafaee: pv2203@tc.columbia.edu