

# Online Certificate in TESL

English is a global language, a symbol of Western culture, ideals, creativity, and prosperity. It is a commodity in such high demand worldwide that nearly any speaker of English can sell this commodity with the right credential, the most common of which is the Certificate in TESL.<sup>1</sup>

The following information describes the Certificate in TESL offered by the oldest TESL MA program in the United States and presented by TESL specialists of international stature. This fully-online Certificate in TESL for graduate students provides a solid foundation for teaching English as a second or foreign language in the U.S. or abroad.

If your questions are not adequately addressed here, the following Frequently Asked Questions may help. If questions still remain, please contact Professor Randall Sadler, Program Director, at [TESLCertificate@illinois.edu](mailto:TESLCertificate@illinois.edu).

## [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

## Program Requirements

The Certificate consists of six courses, three of which are required, and three of which are elective, chosen from a set of options. Except for the introduction to linguistics, only the courses listed below satisfy program requirements; no equivalence with other courses will be considered. Students must maintain a B average or better (3.00 on a 4.00 scale) for all UIUC courses in order to receive the Certificate.

Required (3)	Elective (3)
Introduction to Linguistics (EIL 486 Linguistics for Language Teachers - Summer 2)	EIL 422 English Grammar for ESL Teachers
LING 489 Theoretical Foundations of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) (Summer 2)	EIL 460 Principles of Language Testing
EIL 411 Introduction to TESL Methodology (Summer 2)	EIL 487 Technology for Language Teaching
	EIL 488 English Phonology & Morphology for TESL (Pronunciation)

Online courses are either eight weeks long or sixteen weeks long. During the summer, online courses are eight weeks long, beginning in mid-June. In the fall and spring, online courses are

---

<sup>1</sup>The content, length, and instructors for a certificate are not regulated in the field of Teaching English as a second or foreign language. For this reason, certificates are distinguished by the institution awarding them and by the number of contact hours involved in earning the certificate. The Certificate in TESL from the Department of Linguistics at UIUC is a 300 contact-hour credential. See Frequently Asked Questions for more detail. Those wishing to teach ESL in a U.S. public school setting should see [ESL Endorsement](#), a regulated credential (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/certificate/OnlineCoursesforESLEndorsement.html>).

sixteen weeks long—in the fall, beginning in August, and in the spring, beginning in January. For information about when each course is offered, please see [this listing](http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/onlinecourses/) (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/onlinecourses/>).

The Certificate requires 20-24 hours of credit; each course provides 4 hours of graduate credit. Students are encouraged to complete an introduction to linguistics course before entering the Certificate program to satisfy the first requirement above. A transcript showing the course (completed within five years of starting the Certificate) and a syllabus of the course must be submitted at the time of application. If the course is accepted, then five courses (20 credit hours) remain to be completed. If an introduction to linguistics course has not been completed before beginning the Certificate, then the candidate may use EIL 486 - Linguistics for Language Teachers, to satisfy this requirement.

Depending on the availability of courses, course requirements for the Certificate in TESL can be completed in as little as a year or as long as five years.

A graduate student accepted into the MATESL degree program in the Department of Linguistics at UIUC may apply courses completed as part of the Certificate (and not used for another degree) to meet course requirements for the MATESL degree. Contact the Program Director for details.

## Admission Requirements

Application documents should be uploaded to the online application form for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of Linguistics' Online Certificate in TESL Non-Degree Program, <http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/admissions/apply/>. There is a \$15 application fee which can be paid with a charge card.

Application documents should include:

1. Statement of Purpose
2. Resume
3. Three letters of recommendation
4. Baccalaureate degree – please upload transcript and diploma with English translations where applicable
5. For non-native speakers of English, a TOEFL iBT score report released to institution code #1836, dept. #00, with a total score of 100 or higher

An applicant who is a non-native speaker of English will be contacted in order to arrange a Skype interview with the Admissions Committee as the last step in the admissions process.

For fall courses, the deadline for full consideration is July 1. For spring courses, the deadline for full consideration is November 1. For Summer 2 courses, the deadline for full consideration is April 15. We will continue to accept applications until courses are filled.

## Registration

The projected availability of online Certificate in TESL courses can be found on [this page](http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/onlinecourses/) (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/onlinecourses/>)

Students accepted into the Certificate in TESL program must register through the Enterprise system as UIUC graduate students and sign up for the 10KS0299NDU section of each course. Detailed registration information is provided upon acceptance.

Financial aid from the Department of Linguistics is not available.

## Applying for the Certificate

Certificate candidates are awarded a Certificate from the Department of Linguistics, signed by the Department Head and the Program Director.

To receive the Certificate, the candidate must submit the following to the Program Director (contact information below):

- a. An official UIUC transcript showing completion of all requirements for the Certificate in TESL
- b. E-mail address
- c. Phone number
- d. Name as the candidate wishes it to appear on the Certificate
- e. Address to which the Certificate and letter of completion will be mailed

## Program Contact

Randall Sadler, Ph.D.  
Program Director  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
4080 Foreign Language Building  
707 South Mathews Avenue  
Urbana, IL 61801  
Phone: (217) 333-3563  
E-mail: [TESLcertificate@illinois.edu](mailto:TESLcertificate@illinois.edu)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: What does TESL stand for?

A: In the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages, several acronyms are common.

- **ESL** stands for **English as a second language**. It usually refers to the subject matter. Students studying English as a second language are often referred to as 'ESL students'. Courses for this population are often called 'ESL courses'. Narrowly, the acronym can refer to English taught to learners of English in an English-speaking environment. The acronym is also used generically to mean English taught to learners of English regardless of where they are.
- **EFL** stands for **English as a foreign language**. It refers to English taught in a non-English speaking environment, e.g., English taught in Mexico. However, **ESL** is also used broadly to encompass English taught in English *and* non-English environments. To catch all meanings, we also see **ESL/EFL** used.
- **TESL/TEFL**. The 'T' stands for **Teaching**.
- **TESOL** means **Teaching English to speakers of other languages**. It is an acronym for the professional organization of teachers of English as a second or foreign language. It is used synonymously with TESL, as in a 'Masters in TESL' or a 'Masters in TESOL'.

**Q: What are the requirements for a Certificate in TESL at UIUC?**

**A:** Six courses are in the Certificate in TESL curriculum. Three are required, namely, an introduction to linguistics, EIL 411 - *Introduction to TESL Methodology*, and LING 489 - *Theoretical Foundations of Second Language Acquisition* (SLA). Three are electives, chosen from a pool of EIL electives.

**Q: What's the value of a Certificate in TESL?**

**A:** It is more and more difficult to get a good job teaching ESL in the States and abroad without some evidence that you know how to teach this subject matter. A Certificate in TESL from the Department of Linguistics at UIUC is the kind of document that many employers will ask to see before offering you a job as an ESL teacher.

Particularly overseas, the Certificate in TESL is a credential that you should display wherever you teach. It is not considered arrogant to do so; it is expected of well-qualified teachers and will garner respect in the eyes of students, peers, and administrators.

**Q: Certificates in TESL are offered by many different organizations, and some can be earned after taking only one course, or by completing only a few hours of instruction. How can I distinguish the better certificates from the others?**

**A:** A Certificate in TESL is not a standardized credential in the field of English as a second or foreign language. Four criteria are useful for sorting out certificates in TESL. (a) The institution offering the certificate will tell you something about its likely quality. Universities often offer higher-quality instruction than other organizations. (b) The instructors should have earned at least a MATESL/MATESOL degree from a university and have significant experience preparing teachers. (c) The program should offer more than instruction; it should also provide opportunities for practice teaching so that participants can gain practice using what they are learning. (d) A certificate is rated by the number of contact hours involved in earning it. Good certificates provide at least 100 hours of instruction and practice teaching. Better certificates will offer 200 contact hours.

**Q: How does the Certificate in TESL from the Department of Linguistics at UIUC stack up on these four criteria?**

**A:** The University of Illinois is one of the premier institutions of higher education in the United States. All of the instructors in the Certificate in TESL program have Ph.D. degrees in second language acquisition and have had years of experience teaching ESL to learners here and abroad and preparing ESL teachers. Our Certificate in TESL involves more than 300 contact hours of instruction and practice teaching. The exact amount of practice teaching involved depends on the courses that a candidate chooses as electives, but it generally runs between 20 and 30 hours.

In addition to the Certificate itself, signed by the head of the department and the program directors and bearing the 'I' seal of the University of Illinois, those who complete the Certificate also receive a letter identifying the meaning of the credential and describing the curriculum. Whenever submitting a copy of your certificate for employment, be sure to include a copy of the accompanying letter. It was written to be read by an employer.

**Q: What is the difference between a Certificate in TESL and a Masters in TESL?**

**A:** Both are professional credentials, recognized worldwide. At UIUC a Certificate in TESL requires nearly one-half the number of courses and credit hours required for the MATESL degree. In

addition, a candidate for the MATESL degree must pass a comprehensive examination or write a Masters thesis.

**Q: Can a Certificate in TESL from UIUC be used as a stepping-stone to a Masters in TESL (MATESL) from UIUC?**

**A:** Yes, it can. However, only twelve hours of coursework are transferable. Contact the Program Director for details.

**Q: What is the difference between a Certificate in TESL and an ESL Endorsement?**

**A:** The Certificate in TESL is an institution-awarded credential. It provides the fundamentals for teaching ESL/EFL in contexts other than U.S. public schools.

An ESL Endorsement is a State-issued credential for public school teachers who hold a regular teaching certificate (Type 03, 04, 09, 10). The term 'certificate' is also used for public school teachers who have not yet completed an endorsement, e.g., provisional certificate, temporary certificate, or transitional certificate. Besides coursework, an Illinois ESL Endorsement also requires practical experience (either 100 clock-hours or 3 months of teaching) in a public school ESL or bilingual education program. For details about required endorsement coursework and the practical experience, see:

<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/certificate/OnlineCoursesforESLEndorsement.html>.

**Q: Is the Certificate in TESL of any value to a public school teacher?**

**A:** Yes. According the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, a teacher of a core subject (of which ESL is one) must have the status of Highly Qualified in that subject order to be the primary teacher of that subject. There are several ways to earn this status, one of which is to complete a graduate (advanced) certificate in the subject matter area in addition to an ESL Endorsement. Our graduate Certificate in TESL is one way a public school ESL teacher can secure the designation Highly Qualified in ESL.

Furthermore, if you might sometime teach ESL in a non-public school setting, the Certificate in TESL is a credential that an employer would understand and appreciate more than an ESL or ENL Endorsement which are recognized only in public-school settings.

**Q: Why should I complete a Certificate in TESL at UIUC and not somewhere else?**

**A:** Basically, the quality of our program and the competence and experience of our faculty should recommend our program to you.

> In the United States and Canada there are approximately 250 MATESL programs. An independent panel of evaluators, half of whom were from the international TESOL organization, had this to say about our MATESL program after a week-long on-site visit: 'The MATESL program is highly regarded nationally, and produces graduates who seem to be well satisfied with their education experiences and are able to find employment easily in the field for which they have been trained... In recent survey work as well as the way it is generally perceived by others, it is judged to be one of the top 4 to 5 programs in the United States and one of the top 6 to 8 in the world.'

> This department is the oldest continuing MATESL program in the United States, beginning in 1966.

> Our faculty has prepared more than 1300 MATESL candidates, many of whom have gone on

to become leaders in our profession.

> Our faculty consists of TESL specialist who have earned worldwide recognition for work in their respective areas of expertise.

> Our MATESL program offers a robust curriculum that is current and relevant to the demands of our profession, covering the full range of subject matter deemed to be crucial for the success of professionals in our field, including courses in teaching grammar, reading and composition, culture, pronunciation, in designing effective assessment instruments, and in using best practices in face-to-face and online instruction. All of this content is informed by current research into second language acquisition.

> Nowhere else can you earn a 300-contact-hour certificate.

**Q: Can I take some Certificate in TESL courses online and some on campus?**

**A:** Yes. The entire set of required and elective courses are offered online and on campus at UIUC. On-campus graduate students will pay campus tuition and fees which are different from the cost of online courses taken by off-campus graduate students.

**Q: Can I take some courses at another university?**

**A:** Introduction to linguistics courses are highly standardized. You can take such a course from any institution and have it count toward the Certificate in TESL as long as you completed the course within the last 5 years. The other required courses and all of the elective courses must be those offered by the TESL faculty in the Department of Linguistics. In this way, the uniquely TESL content in your Certificate in TESL represents the quality of our program which its faculty are proud to stand behind.

**Q: Should I take certificate courses in a particular order?**

**A:** A recommended first course is an introduction to linguistics because the field of TESL is a branch of applied linguistics. It is also ideal to take the other required courses early, too, because they lay a good foundation for other courses. However, none of the required courses is an official prerequisite for elective courses. So you can begin your course work with any course.

**Q: What qualifications do the online Certificate in TESL instructors in the Department of Linguistics at UIUC have?**

**A:** All of our online instructors hold a Ph.D. degree and are specialists in TESL. They have had years of experience teaching ESL/EFL all over the world and in preparing ESL/EFL teachers. In addition, they have all had professional preparation as online instructors. All are either certified Master Online Teachers or are working toward this certification.

**Q: What is an online Certificate in TESL course like at UIUC?**

**A:** > An eight-week course compresses a semester of work into half the time. So you should allot adequate time—usually about 4 hours a day—to keep up with requirements.

> To help you feel comfortable from the start, each course provides an orientation to the online environment (called Moodle) where most of the instruction and activities take place.

> Your work will be largely ‘asynchronous’, meaning that you do not have to be online at the same time as your instructor or peers, but will be able to complete assignments and activities

when it's convenient for you. Even so, you will be expected to meet deadlines in order to move through the course with your peers and finish on time. The courses are not self-paced.

> You will receive instructor feedback on assignments and have on-going opportunities to raise questions if you feel you don't understand something.

> You will need a high-speed internet connection. While you will not need to buy any new software programs, you will likely need to download and install free software for some classes.

> Taking a Certificate in TESL course will be a highly engaging experience. You will likely find that you are much more involved in class activities and with your instructor and peers than in face-to-face classes.

**Q: How can I tell if I'm a good candidate for online learning?**

**A:** Research has shown that successful online learners share certain characteristics. The following self-administered questionnaires focus on these characteristics and are useful to help you assess your readiness for online learning.

1. The SORT assessment (Student Online Readiness Tool) from the University System of Georgia, <http://www.occ.edu/OnlineResources/sort/index.html>.

2. The University of Oklahoma Online Course Readiness Assessment:  
<http://cas-online.ou.edu/how-do-i-get-started>

**Q: What do I do to apply for the Certificate in TESL program?**

**A:** The application form can be found at: <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply>. It can be completed entirely online. Click on 'Instructions for Non-degree Students' and on 'Application Instructions' for guidance.

> Select the correct program (Online Certificate in TESL Non-Degree-NDEU). See [this graphic](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4963467/Certificate-in-TESL-Application.png) for details (<https://dl.dropbox.com/u/4963467/Certificate-in-TESL-Application.png>).

> Ask for three letters of reference. Letter writers upload their reference letters to the online application.

> Compose your Statement of Purpose and include it with your application. Although the instructions are stated in terms of a degree program, understand that the Certificate in TESL is a non-degree program. Please answer accordingly.

> Provide for payment of the application fee.

> Have ETS send your TOEFL score report to institution code #1836, dept. #00. Transcripts and Diplomas get uploaded to the online application.

> Submit the application before the deadlines indicated above under Admission Requirements. If you cannot meet the application deadline, submit your application anyway, as we will continue to process applications until the program is full. Processing takes about eight weeks.

**Q: How much does it cost to take online courses at UIUC?**

**A:** The current schedule of tuition costs is set by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. It is published in [this document](#):



<http://oce.illinois.edu/Registration/SemesterBasedCourses/TuitionAndFinancialAid>. You can find the relevant tuition-per-hour rate in the row entitled 'OCE Graduate Base Rate'. It is the lowest graduate rate for instructor-led online courses.

The University sends an email notification to students and authorized payers that their account statement is available for review online. You can pay the bill by credit card.

Financial aid from the Department of Linguistics is not available.

Updated: 5/15/2014