M.A. TESL/TEFL GRADUATION PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

All students pursuing a Master of Arts in TESL/TEFL will be required to submit a graduation project as one part of their graduation requirements. The project will consist of a 40-page capstone paper with 5 elements to be included as appendices (outlined below). Students pursuing the MATESL will be assigned a graduation project supervisor early in their degree program for assistance in the preparation of the capstone paper.

CONTENT

The basic question the student is attempting to address in the capstone paper is: *How has my academic training prepared me to be a practicing TESL professional?* This should be discussed and documented (with citations and a reference list) in a comprehensive nature, incorporating how other professional experiences and coursework (undertaken at Northeastern or elsewhere) have prepared you as a TESL/TEFL/TESOL professional, ready to engage in informed, reflective practice.

STRUCTURE

In accordance with TESOL standards, there are 5 domains that must be addressed by degree programs in order to prepare students to become TESL/TEFL professionals. These domains are 1) language; 2) culture; 3) instruction; 4) assessment; and 5) professionalism. The performance standards are addressed in detail and are available on the program website. The focus of the capstone paper is on practice; the framing of the paper demonstrate the significance of all 5 domains to practice and provide an artifact for each in an appendix. That is, roughly equal parts of the paper should address 1) language, 2) culture, 3) instruction, 4) assessment, and 5) professionalism and how they inform practice.

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EXAMPLE

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TIMING

When to get started

After you have completed 3-4 courses, you should schedule a meeting with your graduate project supervisor.

You may start collecting artifacts from the beginning of your program, but give yourself the opportunity to get a couple classes under your belt before commencing the writing process. Don't wait until the project is due to start drafting.

Preparing to finish

By the end of the 6th course (approx. 2-3 semesters, depending on number of courses undertaken per semester), the student should be prepared to submit a preliminary draft - albeit incomplete - of the capstone paper. The draft is not expected to be comprehensive at this point, but it is part of the process of working with your graduate project supervisor to get more formative feedback and guidance.

By the end of the penultimate semester (the semester before graduation), the student will be required to submit two copies of the "final" draft of the Graduation Project.

PROCESS

Your early drafts will be shared with your graduate project supervisor in order to obtain formative feedback (e.g. regarding revising, editing, or additional coursework, if needed). The final draft will be reviewed by two TESL faculty members and feedback will be predominately summative (i.e., you have met expectations for graduation).
FORMAT

The Paper

The length of the capstone paper must be 40 to 60 pages (not including appendices), double-spaced, with a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, 12-point) and 1” margins. The essay should be expository and focus on practice (i.e., instruction); however, the framing of the paper should weave the other 5 elements (i.e., domains) into the text and provide an artifact for each in an appendix. That is, equal parts of the paper should address instruction on its own, as well as how language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism.

Appendices

Appendices are artifacts representative of one of each of the 5 elements (i.e., TESOL domains): language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism. The specifics of each artifact should be discussed with the assigned TESL graduate project supervisor and readily fit within the description of the domain as defined by TESOL. Examples can include academic papers and/or projects submitted for previous course work and grading, professional work/research conducted and submitted for public or private presentation, videotapes, computer programs, etc., as discussed with and accepted by the supervisor.

By the end of the penultimate semester (the semester before graduation), the student will be required to submit two copies of the "final" draft of the Graduation Project.

ARTIFACTS

The artifacts are intended to be "representative", not the only or the primary focus of discussion; in other words, you will need to elaborate on how the domain area has informed your practice. Moreover, the artifact does not need to be your best work, but can be something that will add to the discussion (e.g., discuss how subsequent courses and study has led you to a new understanding of your previous efforts).