

TESOL International Association's Accreditation Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions

What is involved in this particular initiative?

In January 2014, the TESOL Board of Directors authorized a new initiative that will look closely at short-term certificate programs and the feasibility of an accreditation process that can be applied internationally. The initiative comprises two components: the first involves market research to learn more about this sector of the field, and the second focuses on the creation of program standards for short-term certificate programs.

Why did the board decide to pursue this?

For several years, TESOL International Association has fielded requests to evaluate and recognize short-term certificate programs. TESOL does not have a set of standards for short-term training programs or any way to rate or approve their quality, but many individuals seeking short-term training as well as other stakeholders assume that TESOL does or should play a role.

In addition, the association continues to receive requests for recommendations from those looking to enroll in such programs as they enter the TESOL field.

What do you mean by *short-term certificate programs*?

We are referring to programs that typically run 6–10 weeks and that award participants who have completed the program a TESOL, TEFL, or TESL certificate. The programs train teachers to teach adults in all contexts, or they train teachers to teach children (“young learners”) in EFL contexts.

What is the objective with the market research? How is it being executed?

The market research is being conducted by a reputable market research firm and will assess demand and pricing tolerances to support the development and sustainability of an accreditation program. Research will identify short-term certificate programs worldwide and assess program director interest, prospective employer interest, and interest and importance to students who might seek a short-term certificate program.

How are the standards being developed? When will they be completed?

The standards will be developed by an advisory group working closely with TESOL staff and a writer to develop the standards. This Accreditation Expert Group (AEG) will comprise individuals with knowledge of and expertise in short-term TESOL certificate programs. They will help conceptualize the standards framework, including the program elements, domains, and indicators to be addressed by the standards. So that the AEG can focus its work on the

conceptual elements and the content of the standards, a project writer will be employed to transcribe the information developed by the AEG into a set of standards. The standards are scheduled to be completed by February 2015.

Doesn't TESOL International Association already evaluate programs?

There are a broad variety of TESOL, TEFL, and TESL programs in the field. Some are short-term certificate programs, others are master's degree programs, and still others are teacher preparation programs, such as those for initial licensure in the United States. Although TESOL International Association works with the Commission for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in the United States to recognize initial licensure programs for P-12 teachers, it does not evaluate or accredit any other kinds of programs, and it does not have any authority over them.

Doesn't the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) already do this?

CEA is an accreditation organization officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The CEA Standards for English Language Programs and Institutions provide the basis for all their accreditation activities. They are a broad set of standards that touch on a variety of quality control issues for institutions and programs. Institutions can also do an add-on accreditation through CEA if they have a short-term certificate program. However, short-term TESL/TEFL teacher-training programs are not CEA's primary focus.

Are there other organizations that already accredit short-term certificate programs?

A number of entities worldwide provide various types of accreditation or other credentialing services for short-term training programs, including CEA and the British Council. Currently, however, there is no one globally recognized set of standards or single arbiter of quality for short-term teacher education programs.

How will the Board of Directors decide whether to move ahead with an accreditation program?

The Board will review the market research to inform TESOL's potential development of an accreditation program for unaffiliated short-term programs.

What will be involved in the accreditation program? When will it roll out?

Details of how an accreditation program would be structured and administered have not been determined yet, pending the results of the market research. TESOL would do additional consultation before creating a legally separate accreditation commission or body, so as to create an appropriate and required fire wall between the review and accreditation program and TESOL International Association.