

San Francisco State University
M. A. TESOL Program
English Department

Master's Thesis Policy

All M. A. TESOL students have the option of completing a thesis as part of their degree work. The Master's Thesis represents an opportunity for students to carry out significant research on a topic of individual interest. Titles of recently completed theses are listed at the end of this policy document.

A thesis is a major commitment for M. A. TESOL students and faculty. Under the direction of a thesis committee, students will complete a research project that contributes to the advancement of knowledge and practice in the TESOL field. In general, successful thesis students are those (1) who are able to work independently on a project as well as in a collegial manner with a thesis committee; (2) who love the in-depth exploration of research topics from multiple angles; (3) who have good skills in the areas of literature review, theoretical analysis, data analysis, and writing; and (4) who have a strong academic record.

To assist students in identifying potential faculty thesis advisors who have interests and expertise in areas relevant to a thesis topic, a listing of the research interests of M. A. TESOL faculty is provided at the end of this policy document.

Phase 1: Submission of the M. A. TESOL Thesis Plan

Purpose of the Thesis Plan

M. A. TESOL students must demonstrate that they have the appropriate background and skills to carry out a thesis project. To this end, all students who are planning to carry out a thesis are required to submit a **Thesis Plan**.

The purpose of the Thesis Plan is to help students begin laying the groundwork for a well-conceptualized thesis project. The plan provides a good opportunity for students to practice writing about their research design and to outline a realistic timeline for completing degree coursework while conducting a thesis. This plan will serve as an important resource when students write the full proposal and the Institutional Review Board proposal (see SFSU IRB Web site: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~protocol/human/review-required.htm>).

Submission deadlines

Thesis Plans are reviewed by the M. A. TESOL faculty only once each semester. There are two submission deadlines each academic year. In the fall, Thesis Plans are due the first Monday in October. In the spring, Thesis Plans are due the first Monday of March.

Students should submit 11 copies of their Thesis Plan (including the Thesis Plan Cover Page) to the M. A. TESOL Coordinator's mailbox in HUM 125.

Please note: There is only one submission period per semester, so please be sure to check the M. A. TESOL Web site and listserv announcements for reminders about the specific due date each semester.

About the review process

The M. A. TESOL faculty reviews all Thesis Plans and votes to decide to (1) accept a Thesis Plan; (2) recommend that the student revise and re-submit; or (3) reject. The faculty also makes

recommendations about which of the faculty are best prepared – in terms of expertise as well as time commitments – to serve on a student’s thesis committee.

Students will receive notification of the faculty’s decision, including the names of recommended faculty advisors for approved plans, within three weeks after submission.

What to include in the Thesis Plan

The Thesis Plan must be an original and unique work written by the student. Thesis Plans should be **no more than 1000 words (~ 4 pages)**. Thesis Plans should be double-spaced, and typed using a standard 12-point Times font and 1-inch margins. Thesis Plans should be organized into sections with the following headings:

- I. Topic
- II. Research Question(s)
- III. Significance (why this research topic is important to the TESOL field)
- IV. Research Plans
 - a. Research context (potential research site, participants)
 - b. Research design (the overall research method or framework for the study)
 - c. Data collection (nature of data to be collected, data collection methods)
 - d. Data analysis (plans for analyzing data, including a description of how analysis will answer research questions)
- V. Outcomes (what student hope to learn from doing this research project)
- VI. Timeline for completion (sketch out a timeline for thesis completion, including when student will submit IRB documentation and complete NIH online training)
- VII. References (a list of up to 10 works that have influenced the development of this project)

The role of course work in helping to craft a Thesis Plan

English 730 *Introduction Graduate Study in TESOL* is the ideal course in our program in which students can jumpstart their thinking and planning of a thesis project, since students complete a formal research paper in this class.

Students are required to take a research methods course before or during the semester in which they submit their Thesis Plan and work on developing their formal Thesis Proposal. Suggested courses include ISED 797 (Seminar in Educational Research) (offered every semester including Summer), and English 724 (Researching Second Language Classrooms).

Consulting faculty about Thesis Plans

Students are **required** to meet with their advisor to discuss the Thesis Plan and obtain her or his signature on the Thesis Plan Cover Page (see next page).

During this meeting, which should take place well in advance of the submission of the Thesis Plan, the student and the advisor will discuss the following:

- the components of a Thesis Plan and a general timeline for thesis completion
- names of other faculty with relevant research interest and expertise
- the student's academic progress in the M. A. TESOL program
- any questions the student may have about the thesis process

Students may wish to consult other faculty about their thesis ideas. When consulting other faculty, students should arrange to meet them in person, have something written up in advance, and consult with only one or two professors at a time. This way, students can get coherent guidance from one or two voices at a time. It is not effective to send out "feeler" emails addressed to multiple faculty members.

The Thesis Plan should demonstrate the student's ability to do independent work articulating a research topic and design. While writing the Thesis Plan, students may discuss the topic with M. A. TESOL faculty, but faculty are not obligated to read drafts of the Thesis Plan.

It is appropriate to ask peers or a writing tutor for help with specific linguistic or organizational features in the Thesis Plan. However, it is not appropriate for students to give their Thesis Plan to someone else and allow them to rewrite, proofread, edit, or rephrase the content.

Thesis Plan Cover Page

* Please submit along with your Thesis Plan. *

Student name	
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SFSU ID	
Email	
Telephone	
Anticipated graduation date	

Advisor name	
Advisor email	
Advisor signature	

Tentative title of thesis project

Date submitted to M. A. TESOL faculty:	
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List 3 names of faculty members you would like to request serve on your thesis committee:

Faculty name (Department)	
1	
2	
3	

Phase 2: From Plan to Thesis Proposal and Human Subjects Protocol

Enroll in a research methods course

As noted earlier, it is required that students take a research methods course before or during the semester in which they submit their Thesis Plan and work on developing their formal Thesis Proposal. Suggested courses include ISED 797 (Seminar in Educational Research) (offered every semester including Summer), and English 724 (Researching Second Language Classrooms).

Officially form a Thesis Committee

Once the Thesis Plan is approved, students need to meet with the recommended committee members to finalize their committee. Students will expand the Thesis Plan into a formal M.A. Thesis Proposal and formally set up a Committee.

Develop a formal Thesis Proposal

The formal proposal can be an expansion and revision of the Thesis Plan, and it should be written with advice and guidance from the student's Thesis Committee. The Thesis Proposal will include the same sections as the Thesis Plan, with an expanded discussion of research plans and a revised and improved timeline based on discussions with the Thesis Committee.

Prepare and submit a Protocol to the College of Humanities Graduate Coordinator, to get approval to submit protocol to the Committee for the Protection of Research Subjects

If the research involves collecting data from human subjects, the student must prepare and submit a Research Protocol and accompanying documents to the Committee for the Protection of Research Subjects. This Protocol includes information about the study from the research proposal, as well as information about what the research participants will be required to do and how their rights and privacy will be protected. Information on how to write and submit Protocols, including the forms to complete, is available at the following Web page:

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~protocol/human.htm>

It is important to submit the Protocol early! It takes months for this document to make its way through the necessary steps before the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects is able to give its final approval. Approval of the Human Subjects Protocol (first by the Graduate Studies Coordinator, College of Humanities, and then by the Committee for the Protection of Research Subjects) involves several drafts and revisions following the initial submission.

Waiting until the deadlines means documents will move slowly and will cause delay in getting feedback, so students are strongly advised to submit documents well ahead of the deadlines.

Deadline to submit Human Subjects Protocol and other official forms

Students submit their Human Subjects Protocol along with their GAP and Proposal for Culminating Experience forms to the College Graduate Coordinator. The deadlines for the submission of the Protocol and these official forms is **March 1 in Spring Semester and by October 1 in Fall Semester**. To submit the Protocol and the forms, the student is required to do the following:

- (1) complete a GAP (Graduate Approved Program) form and a Culminating Experience form and obtain signatures from both the primary and secondary thesis advisors;
- (2) submit these completed forms to the M.A. TESOL Program Coordinator for approval;
- (3) once forms have been approved, submit the Protocol and forms to the Graduate Coordinator of the College of Humanities.

Deadline to submit the Protocol draft to the Thesis Committee

Because Protocol documents must be reviewed by the Thesis Committee and revised before they are submitted, students must turn in a full draft of the Research Protocol to their

Committee at least one month in advance of the above deadlines, **by February 1 for Spring Semester and by September 1 for Fall Semester.**

For SFSU graduate division deadlines, consult the following Web page:

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/degree-completion-deadline.htm>

Phase 3: Carrying out the research, completing the thesis and other requirements

Complete English 891 and Portfolio as well

Students completing a Thesis must also take English 891 and complete all the requirements of 891, which include creating a Professional Teaching Portfolio and a conference presentation. Many students prefer to take English 891 and complete the Portfolio, and then stay one more semester to take English 898 and complete writing the thesis.

Review plans for data collection and writing

After submitting the Protocol documents, students should continue to work with their Thesis Committees to revise and refine the documents in response to feedback from the College of Humanities and the Committee for the Protection of Research Subjects. Students should also consult with their Thesis Committees to review the methods, logistics, and time-line for data collection and analysis to try to anticipate and avoid potential problems.

Carry out research according to time line

This includes data collection and analysis. Students should consult regularly with their advisors. Student can write the literature review while analyzing data, and then once data analysis is complete, write chapters on the analysis, conclusions, and implications.

Continue to consult with Thesis Committee

As students proceed with their approved and revised research plans, they must be sure to consult with the Thesis Committee at key points, such as planning data collection, creating research instruments, analyzing data, and writing up results and implications.

If for some reason a student needs to depart from the proposed plan, he or she should be sure to get the consent of both Committee members in advance, and ascertain whether the change requires an amendment to the final Protocol that was submitted to the Committee for the Protection of Research Subjects.

Enroll in English 898 the semester the Thesis will be completed

In their final semester of the M. A. TESOL program, the semester in which students will complete their thesis, they must register for English 898, Master's Thesis, for 3 units of credit. The Thesis Committee Chair will be the official instructor for 898. This course must be listed on the GAP (for Group III) and is graded CR/NCR. Because 898 must be graded CR/NCR, students completing a Thesis may not take any other Group courses CR/NCR.

Note: Students may only enroll in English 898 **after** their GAP form, Proposal for Culminating Experience form, and their IRB Human Subjects Proposal have been approved.)

Defend the Thesis

As their theses near completion, students should set a date for a Thesis Defense with the thesis committee at a mutually negotiated time. Before this meeting, students will have submitted a final draft of the thesis to the Committee for their feedback. Students must submit this draft at least one week prior to the Defense. At the meeting, students will discuss their thesis research and respond to questions from the committee. A number of revisions may be necessary as a result of this meeting, so students must also be sure to allow ample time for such revisions after

the Defense. It is suggested that the Thesis Defense meeting take place at least two weeks prior to the deadline set by the Graduate Division for final submission of the completed thesis.

Submit the final Thesis and paperwork

Filing the Thesis:

After defending the thesis and completing of any necessary revisions, students will prepare their theses for submission to the Graduate Division. Thesis format, paper, and signature page must conform to the formatting requirements specified by the Graduate Division, and students must carefully follow the steps listed at the Graduate Division thesis page:

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~gradstdy/thesis.htm>

(All requirements for final submission of the thesis and a link to download the SFSU Thesis Guidelines are available at the above Web page.)

Submitting the Culminating Experience Form:

Upon completion of all the above steps, students must also be sure that their Committee signs the Culminating Experience form indicating completion of the thesis.

Both members of the Thesis Committee will appreciate receiving a bound copy of the thesis for their academic libraries and future reference.

Enroll in CEL course units if there is a delay filing the thesis

Students who do not file their thesis during the semester they take English 898 or during the following semester (the "grace" semester) must enroll in a zero-unit College of Extended Learning (CEL) Culminating Experience (CE) course every subsequent semester until the thesis has been filed. Enrollment in the CEL CE course provides students access to SFSU libraries, discipline-associated laboratories and facilities, and CE advisors. Students will be assumed to have withdrawn from their degree program if they fail to maintain continuous enrollment status after the grace semester. (For the purpose of this policy, only the fall and spring semesters are counted as semesters.)

Timeline and summary of deadlines

Steps toward M. A. TESOL Thesis research	Start in Spring	Start in Fall
Submit Thesis Plan to TESOL Faculty	<i>1st Monday in March</i>	<i>1st Monday in October</i>
For approved Plans, form a Thesis Committee		
Submit Thesis Proposal and Human Subjects Protocol documents to Thesis Committee for feedback	<i>September 1st</i>	<i>February 1st</i>
Revise Proposal and Human Subjects Protocol documents with feedback from Thesis Committee (may take two or more drafts)		
Submit Human Subjects Research Protocol and GAP and Culminating Experience forms (with requisite advisor signatures and approval of M.A. TESOL Coordinator) to Graduate Studies Advisor, College of Humanities.	<i>October 1st</i>	<i>March 1st</i>
Revise Protocol documents as required by Graduate Studies Advisor and Human Subjects Committee		
Begin data collection after Human Subjects Committee approves revised Protocol documents. If the courses you have taken are different from those listed on your GAP form, correct this by filing a GAP Substitution form the semester prior to the semester you plan to complete your thesis and graduate.	<i>Winter and/or Spring</i>	<i>Summer and/or Fall</i>
Enroll in English 898 the semester you plan to finish writing and file your proposal. Complete data analysis and final thesis draft.	<i>Allow one semester following completion of data collection</i>	

Recent Thesis Titles

- Validating a new ESL placement test at SFSU (Imao, 2001)
- Implementing a task-based syllabus in Korean universities (Suk, 2001)
- Does reading aloud help improve L2 learners' speaking skills? (Suzuki, 2002)
- Motivation and strategies among Japanese university students (Miyamoto, 2002)
- Teaching spatial and temporal English prepositions to Japanese students (Oda, 2002)
- Japanese high school teachers' attitudes toward CLT (Sakamoto, 2002)
- Strategies-based instruction in Japanese high schools (Kuba, 2002)
- The prepositions verbs associate with: A corpus-based investigation of collocation in prepositional verbs (Seilhamer, 2003)
- Treatment of spoken errors in Japanese high school oral communication classes (Fukuda, 2004)
- A semi-longitudinal study of the effectiveness of electronic visual feedback in teaching English rhythm to Japanese college students (Igarashi, 2004)
- Effects of study abroad on the learning of Japanese university students (Matsugu, 2004)
- Introducing task-based activities to Japanese high schools (Takeuchi, 2004)
- An investigation of Japanese college-level EFL students' perspectives on foreign language anxiety (Watanabe, 2005)
- The effects of using films in the Japanese high school English class (Kiwamoto, 2005)
- Japanese university students' and teachers' perceptions of pronunciation instruction in EFL classes (Nyui, 2006)
- A mini-corpus study of academic vocabulary use of undergraduate students (Woo, 2006)
- Using lexical and task-based approaches to improve Japanese university students' English fluency (Kanemaru, 2007)

Research Interests of SFSU M. A. TESOL Faculty

Priya Abeywickrama

Language assessment (issues of construct validity, reliability of test scores, rater judgments and tasks, evaluation of exams); reading and writing assessment (the knowledge of textual cohesion and coherence); discourse analysis; code-switching; using verbal protocol data in research

Casey Keck

Academic literacy (reading-to-write tasks, textual borrowing); corpus linguistics methodologies (development of corpus-based methods for discourse analysis; academic language, learner language); pedagogical grammar (focus on form, task-based interaction, corpus-based grammar resources for teachers and learners, use of corpora in the classroom)

James Kohn

Social variation in language; technology in TESOL; use of post-colonial literature for language teaching; inter-cultural variation in rhetoric and interaction

David Olsher

Classroom teaching and learning, including EFL classes as well as ESL in adult education, intensive institutes, and university-level academic ESL; listening, speaking, and pronunciation; socially constructed learning and pedagogical tasks; discourse analysis, pragmatics, and conversation analysis; materials and curriculum development

Maricel G. Santos

Adult ESL in community-based settings; literacy as social practice; health literacy; ESL learner leadership; L2 vocabulary development; relationships between L1 and L2 literacy development; motivation, persistence, and transition in adult ESL; quantitative and qualitative research methods; research methods for community action; action research design

Thomas Scovel

Second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, pedagogical grammar, orthographies, Chinese linguistics; Thai linguistics

May Shih

L2 reading; L2 writing; pedagogical grammar; ESL/EFL career development

Barry Taylor

Academic literacy; the teaching of composition for academic purposes to non-beginners; communicative language teaching; general language teaching methodology; ESL/EFL professional development

Gail Weinstein

"Learner-centered practice" in discourse; the efficacy of "learner-centered practice" for second language acquisition; learner-centered practices for immigrant adults, secondary, and EFL settings; functions and uses of language and literacy in immigrant learners' lives (current focus on health literacy and family literacy); the role of language in intergenerational relationships; L1 use in the ESL/EFL classroom (teacher attitudes, positive practices)

Elizabeth Whalley

Contrastive analysis; error analysis; feedback methods; teaching English in the workplace; using performance in the ESL/EFL classroom