

Online TESOL Education

By Rafael Sabio

Even though online TESOL education has been around for less than two decades, it has experienced consistent growth. Online TESOL programs are emerging from all corners of the world due to the increased demand for English language teacher training. With increased demand comes an increase in questions about online TESOL education. Questions such as "Are all online TESOL programs structured the same?" "Is online TESOL education the same as distance TESOL education?" and "How does a person decide in which program to enroll?" are often asked by prospective students. In this article, answers are offered in hopes of allaying any concerns experienced by those seeking to further their education in TESOL.

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Online TESOL programs are not all structured the same. There are several different variations of online TESOL education: fully online programs, web-facilitated programs, and hybrid programs. Web-facilitated programs utilize mediums such as Blackboard (a web-based program through which online courses are conducted) to deliver content. These programs still utilize face-to-face discussion as a means to facilitate learning. However, assignments, syllabi, and other pertinent materials are posted on the Internet for students to download. Hybrid programs have most of the program's components online; there is very little required in terms of face-to-face interaction. Fully online programs do not require any face-to-face student-teacher interaction; the entire program is conducted online. Thus, the question one must ask is "Which program will suit me the best?" Determining the type of graduate TESOL program one will enroll in is important; it is imperative that prospective students understand the differences between programs that are offered completely online and those that are offered partially online.

The final and most quintessential question is "How do I know if a program is right for me?" The answer is quite complex and depends on a number of things. Prospective students need to decide what is most important to them. Take, for example, a student who wants to go to the United States and teach English as a second language. In the U.S., accreditation is extremely

important. Therefore, the student may want to enroll in a program that is not only based in the U.S., but also at a university that is accredited by one of the seven regional accrediting bodies in the United States. Accreditation, in this particular region of the world, is considered a valid, and necessary, measurement of quality.

Additionally, there are several different types of graduate degree programs available in TESOL. Do prospective students want to enroll in a brick-and-mortar



institution or do they want to further their TESOL education through an institution that is based solely online? Do they care if they are required to attend the university at some point during the program (as found in hybrid programs) or do they want to complete the program completely online? Further, future program applicants should not rely on conjecture found on discussion boards, biasness given by strangers, or even friends' advice. Rather, those looking to complete a graduate degree program in TESOL should carry out their own research in order to find answers to their questions. In the end, it is the future applicant who will be investing time and money into their education, not an anonymous person over the Internet, or a friend or acquaintance.

The questions addressed above are just a sample of the complexities prospective applicants experience when searching for a graduate degree program in TESOL, especially when looking for a distance education program in TESOL. With hard work, diligence, and a critical analysis of the facts, prospective applicants can find answers and ultimately enroll in a program that is suited to their needs.

The Author



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