



ESL/EAL Teacher Accreditation in Canada: Orientation Manual

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Overview of CERTESL’s Professional Recognition Status

Welcome to CERTESL, and to this special information site for students and prospective students interested in ESL teaching careers in Canadian locations. Please read this manual carefully in order to make sure that you choose a program of training that meets your professional needs.

The University of Saskatchewan originally established CERTESL in order to meet the training needs of people seeking reputable distance-delivered training for a flexible range of career paths in the TESL/TEFL field. Each of the TESL professional organizations in Canada that provide teacher accreditation services – TESL Canada, TESL Ontario, SCENES (Saskatchewan) and Alberta TESL - recognize CERTESL as a training program that meets their standards, but some of these require you to follow particular paths of study within CERTESL in order to ensure that you are qualified to teach ESL in their jurisdictions.

English language teacher credentialling is a complex topic in no small part because of the variety of terms and their differing shades of meanings across this large and diverse country. Some provinces use the term “professional certification” with regard to professional teacher credentialling, and others use “professional accreditation.” In this document, the terms are used somewhat interchangeably. Terminology also differs somewhat between adult and K-12 contexts. For instance, the term “professional licensure” is used only with reference to K-12 credentialling requirements established by law or provincial government regulation in most provinces for all K-12 teachers, although “professional certification” is also used in some provinces for the same concept.

This manual starts with an overview of CERTESL in relation to the teaching of children and teens in Canada, proceeds to an overview of TESL Canada’s four levels of certification, then proceeds alphabetically by province through the accreditation/certification standards of Alberta (Alberta TESL), Ontario (TESL Ontario), and Saskatchewan (SCENES and BTEC). It ends with an overview of the international TEFL context.

Note that all of the Canada-based accreditation standards discussed below require that accreditation applicants have completed not only TESL training, but also a university degree. If you wish a paid English language instructional position in Canada but do not have a degree, then you will generally be limited to using your skills as a tutor or educational assistant. A few non-degreed people are found in adult teaching positions, but usually these people either entered the field before formal certification standards were established, or are working in rural college locations where no degreed people with appropriate skills are available.

K-12 EAL Credentialling in Canada

If you are interested in teaching EAL (English as an Additional Language) or ELD (English Skills Development or English as a Second Dialect) as the teacher in charge of classes from kindergarten to grade 12, in most cases you will be seeking positions in schools that are governed by provincial teacher licensure regulations. Throughout Canada, a permanent teaching certificate or license usually requires completion of a B.Ed. degree or a postgraduate diploma program in Education. CERTESL constitutes neither, although in Saskatchewan it can count towards a post-B.Ed. K-12 Additional Qualification Certificate (see the Saskatchewan section for details).

Because CERTESL courses can help you in your K-12 teaching of EAL or ELD, some school boards in several provinces will allow teachers educational leave or tuition funding to pursue CERTESL courses.

For tuition funding or educational leave purposes, make sure you consult your employing school board about conditions for approval of funding or educational leave before you make any program application decisions.

If you want to teach K-12 ESL in Ontario's public or Catholic schools, thank you for your interest in CERTESL, but please visit www.oct.ca for information about the ESL I, II and Specialist courses, mandated by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) as a K-12 Additional Qualification. OCT will consider recognition of degree-stream TESL curriculum courses taken outside of Ontario, but if you haven't started your training yet, you may find it more efficient to go straight into the officially mandated program. If you would prefer to start your training at a distance through the University of Saskatchewan, you will definitely need to discuss your needs first with the CERTESL Academic Coordinator to ensure that the sections in which you register will be acceptable to OCT and Ontario's elementary and secondary teachers federations.

K-12 teachers from other provinces who wish to earn Additional Qualification credit through distance-delivered TESL courses should also consult the CERTESL Academic Coordinator before enrolling in CERTESL.

For provincial, regional school board, or teachers' federation recognition purposes, you may need to take at least some of your CERTESL classes through our College of Education, which is responsible for the degree- stream sections of TESL 21, 31 and 35 (ECUR 291, 391 and 393 respectively.) The classes are identical regardless of the stream

that you select, but credit designation is a delicate and awkward subject, and many universities and teacher licensure bodies are very particular about ensuring that credit is given only for classes that are clearly in a degree credit stream.

If you do not yet have a provincial K-12 teaching license or certificate, but want to teach the English language to classes of school-aged children or teens in Canada in a province other than Ontario, we hope that you enjoy your Education degree studies and look forward to seeing you in CERTESL in a few years' time. We will also be pleased to see you if you live in Ontario, but don't forget to check out the OCT-mandated program before choosing us as an alternative. If you decide to take TESL courses during your degree or PGD studies, please make sure that they are recognized for inclusion in your degree program by your university or accepted for professional certification or accreditation by your provincial TESL accrediting body.

If you would like the option of working in a K-12 school as an educational assistant rather than as a classroom teacher, you may find CERTESL useful without a degree. In that case, you are very welcome to join us.

Adult Credentialling in Canada

No common standard for adult educators is applied across Canada. However, TESL educators in Canada are usually expected to meet some basic requirements, and it is becoming much more common for schools to look to TESL Canada (www.tesl.ca) or one of the provincial accrediting bodies for assurance of standards. In particular programs and locations, mandatory qualifications have been established. For instance, to teach in most LINC programs in Ontario, teachers must qualify for TESL Ontario certification (www.teslontario.org) or the program may lose its eligibility for federal funding. Also, in order to teach in adult institutions that have been approved by Languages Canada, the national association of public and private institutions that provide language training (for information, visit <http://www.languagescanada.ca>), teachers need to meet the expectations of TESL Canada or provincial TESL accreditation. Otherwise, the employing institution will be in danger of losing its Languages Canada recognition.

In general, **you must have some university degree in order to find nontechnical adult teaching positions in Canada**, unless you are in a rural or remote area where degreed individuals with appropriate training are not available to accept positions. Exceptions exist, but these are usually people who started working in the field long before formal training options became readily available. **In order to qualify for certification or accreditation by any TESL professional association, both a degree and TESL training from reputable institutions are required.** Non-native speakers of English will also be expected to provide proof of appropriate levels of English skill.

Nondegreed CERTESL completers are working effectively in the ESL field in Canada,

but in general they have roles as educational assistants, tutors or settlement workers rather than as teachers in charge of ESL classrooms.

Successful degree studies really do contribute to the ability to teach effectively, regardless of the degree type. On the rare occasions when CERTESL has received complaints about the skills of graduates working in Canadian locations, usually we have discovered that these graduates are non-degreeed people who have been hired for challenging classroom teaching positions by employers who chose not to treat a degree as mandatory.

CERTESL for TESL Canada Certification

TESL Canada certifies teachers who plan to teach ESL in adult programs in Canada. It is the standard most commonly applied in adult programs in B.C. and some parts of Alberta, and it is looked on favourably by employers in other provinces with the exception of Ontario. Even in Ontario, some non-LINC adult programs that belong to Languages Canada will consider applicants who qualify for TESL Canada accreditation. Complete information about the TESL Canada certification standards is online at www.tesl.ca

A TESL Canada certification candidate is eligible for Level 1 (entry level) accreditation if they have completed a program of training **at least 120 hours in length that incorporates at least 100 academic contact hours of formal training and a supervised adult teaching practicum of at least 20 hours (10 teaching, 10 observation) that TESL Canada has explicitly approved, and if they have in addition at least a three-year university degree.** Non-native speakers of English must also provide proof of English proficiency at a standard of at least Band 5 in CanTEST in all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) or the equivalent in another commonly accepted academic English proficiency test.

This fairly basic set of requirements is given force in several provinces by Canada Immigration and Citizenship, which regards this as the basic standard for staff in institutions that receive federal funding for immigrant language training programs. It is also given force because Languages Canada requires members to enforce TESL Canada Standard I as a minimum requirement for hiring.

Naturally, many of the most reputable ESL delivery sites prefer to engage teaching staff who have more extensive qualifications. CERTESL's core program provides 220 academic contact hours and 30 supervised practicum hours (20 observation, 10 teaching), a total of 250 training hours. This is substantially in excess of Professional Standard I Interim TESL Canada accreditation, provided the candidate has selected CERTESL's TESL 42 (Practicum) option and has carried it out in an adult ESL/EFL setting and has a university degree.

A CERTESL completer must take one additional course (40 academic contact hours) to qualify for TESL Canada's Professional Standard II Interim certification, often wanted by the more selective employers in provinces other than Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario which have their own standards that exceed TESL Canada Standard I. Candidates for Standard II in CERTESL may select their additional course from among TESL 32, 34, 36, and 43.

Professional Standard III status requires completion of Standard I plus a relevant Master's degree, as explained on the TESL Canada website.

Permanent TESL Canada certification status depends on hours of professional teaching and ESL program administration experience. Please document these carefully throughout your career. Each time you leave a position, ask your supervisor to prepare a formal letter stating how many hours in total you were the teacher in charge of ESL or EFL classrooms of at least five students. Also ensure that your supervisors carry out periodic performance reviews, and keep these on file.

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition

In Spring of 2006, TESL Canada entered into an agreement that enables the University of Saskatchewan – Centre for Continuing and Distance Education (CCDE) to carry out Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) of TESL credentials earned at institutions other than those on TESL Canada's approved programs list. Please contact TESL Canada if you have an unrecognized credential (or a slightly shorter credential supplemented by relevant additional coursework or documented inservice) that you believe may approximate or exceed TESL Canada's training standard and that may therefore qualify you for TESL Canada certification via PLAR. Contact information is available at www.tesl.ca

Please note that we conduct TESL Canada PLAR adjudications only for individuals who have been referred to us by TESL Canada.

If you have already applied for TESL Ontario PLAR, also carried out by CCDE, please do not apply for TESL Canada PLAR. Instead, ask us to send a letter to TESL Canada detailing those aspects of your Ontario PLAR adjudication that are relevant to the TESL Canada standards.

If you apply for TESL Canada PLAR and then decide to apply for TESL Ontario PLAR on the basis of the same credentials, we will provide the same type of letter. However, you will need to pay an additional fee because TESL Ontario PLAR adjudications are more complex than TESL Canada adjudications and we will need to draw much more detailed information out of your portfolio than is necessary for TESL Canada purposes.

CERTESL for Alberta TESL Accreditation

The following information is current as of December 2009. Alberta TESL is considering elimination of its own standard in favour of TESL Canada Standard II. Please check the ATESL website at www.atesl.ca to ensure that the information below is still up-to-date.

The Alberta TESL (ATESL) accreditation standard is based on the amount of training carried out in a refereed academic institution, usually a university, rather than being restricted to a certain set of programs. The following is an overview of the ATESL requirement as described online at www.atesl.ca/join_accreditation.html

- **a university Bachelor's degree**
- **a minimum of 250 academic contact hours (18 credit units plus ten hours) of post-graduate or upper-level undergraduate coursework** that focuses on specialized training in second-language teaching from provincially recognized post secondary institutions. If this coursework is taken outside of a degree or postgraduate certificate program, it must be recognized as at least equivalent in rigour to postgraduate or upper-year undergraduate coursework.
- **at least 250 hours of documented ESL/EFL classroom teaching experience**, in classes of ESL/EFL students only. ESL teaching hours carried out within degree program practica or internships will be counted **if** the student teacher is placed in full charge of the class, including planning, teaching, and marking. Hours of tutoring and working as a teaching assistant cannot be counted. Volunteer teaching hours are counted **if** the volunteer is in full charge of the class. Applicants who have not yet accrued this experience may be eligible for Interim certification status.

ATESL's standard does not discriminate between adult and K-12 training and experience. It is also both more extensive than TESL Canada Standard I and in some ways more flexible, because although it strongly favours university-based training, it mandates no particular institution or menu of courses.

The TESL stream of CERTESL is accepted by ATESL because it is delivered by a charter university; its first course is given at a second-year level (TESL 21/ EdCur 291); and all other courses meet third- and fourth-year standards of difficulty.

CERTESL for Teaching in Ontario

Ontario is a complex TESL environment with many programs competing for registrants. Both the Ontario College of Teachers (which sets licensure and Additional Qualification standards for K-12 teachers employed by school boards) and TESL Ontario (which

influences employment standards in most adult ESL programs, including federally funded LINC and ELT programs) have established certification standards for teachers of ESL. Because these two sets of standards differ in some key respects, an Ontario teacher must consider his or her TESL training path carefully.

K-12 ESL Credentialling: the Ontario College of Teachers

As indicated above, CERTESL does not qualify its graduates for the teaching of children or adolescents in Ontario's publicly funded schools. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) has mandated a specific postgraduate ESL Specialist program comprised of the courses TESL I, II and Specialist. The program is offered at a number of Ontario universities as an Additional Qualification for teachers of ESL at the K-12 level. Information about this and other Additional Qualifications options for Ontario K-12 teachers can be located at OCT's website, www.oct.ca

The distance-delivered degree-stream sections of three CERTESL courses (ECUR 291, 391 and 393) may be accepted by OCT in lieu of ESL I. However, any interested Ontario K-12 teacher who wants credit towards the Additional Qualification should consult an OCT advisor before deciding to register in any course not officially mandated by OCT. If the OCT-mandated program is offered in your area, it will likely be a more efficient choice than CERTESL for obtaining the Ontario Additional Qualification.

Adult ESL Credentialling: TESL Ontario

If you are interested in teaching in Ontario-based LINC, ELT, or many other adult programs, you need to meet the certification requirements of TESL Ontario which can be found at www.teslontario.org. Their website provides a detailed rubric of the skills and knowledge required in order for a particular TESL training program to receive recognition. It is essential to study TESL Ontario's complete description of standards before selecting a TESL training path. In general, training must be carried out in a program such as CERTESL that has been formally recognized by TESL Ontario, although some provisions exist for Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) of formal training and workplace learning obtained in other program contexts (PLAR is discussed in more depth later in this section). **TESL Ontario certification requires completion of a university degree and, for non-native speakers, proof of an English proficiency standard of at least 600 on the paper-based version of TOEFL or the equivalent on another measure of proficiency acceptable to TESL Ontario.**

Some private for-profit venues in Ontario will engage ESL teachers who do not meet TESL Ontario's standards. Some of these are Languages Canada members (<http://www.languagescanada.ca>) who will at least require training equivalent to TESL Canada Standard I. If you are offered a position at an Ontario school that does not require even this absolute minimum level of training, check it out very carefully for your

own protection. If they are willing to compromise on quality of instructors, they may be less than ethical in other ways as well.

TESL Ontario recognizes an extended version of CERTESL for certification purposes, provided the CERTESL completer meets some particular specifications during training.

Academic Contact and Practicum Hours

CERTESL's core program consists of 220 academic contact hours in TESL theory and methodology, 20 hours of guided classroom observation and 10 hours of supervised practicum teaching. Ten of the guided classroom observation hours must be carried out prior to practicum enrollment. The rest of the observation and all of the supervised practice teaching takes place in the course TESL 42, which consists of 20 academic contact hours, 10 guided classroom observation hours and 10 supervised teaching hours.

The TESL Ontario training rubric specifies that a program must consist of at least 250 hours of academic contact hours in TESL theory and methodology; 30 hours of classroom observation in an adult English language learning context; and 20 hours of practicum teaching in an adult TESL classroom under the supervision of a qualified teacher of ESL. At least half of the teaching time must occur in an Ontario location.

TESL Ontario accreditation candidates in CERTESL must therefore complete seven CERTESL courses, including the Practicum (TESL 42), rather than the core of six. They must also register in our Practicum Additional Hours module in order to complete 10 additional practicum observation hours and 10 additional practicum teaching hours. These additional hours should be completed during the same term as TESL 42, preferably under the supervision of the same local supervising teacher. Local practicum supervising teachers must match or exceed TESL Ontario certification standards in order to enable the student-teacher to qualify for his or her own TESL Ontario certification.

Stream of Study

TESL Ontario certification candidates must take the following seven courses in CERTESL's TESL stream:

1. TESL 21/ECUR 291 Overview of TESL
 2. TESL 31/ECUR 391 Theory and Methods of Skills Development in TESL
 3. TESL 32 Materials Selection and Development
 4. TESL 33 Grammar and Phonology
 5. TESL 35/ECUR 393 Approaches to Second Language Teaching
 6. TESL 42 Supervised Practicum
 7. A choice of TESL 43 - Professional Project, **or** TESL 36 - Literacy in TESL/TESD
- They must also take the following module in order to meet practicum hours requirements:

8. Practicum Additional Hours Module (to be completed during TESL 42).

Registration for the Practicum Additional Hours module is carried out through the CERTESL Program Office rather than through the central University registration system because it is regarded as a noncredit component.

Assignment Adaptations

The CERTESL assignments of TESL Ontario certification candidates must be based on adult learning situations, as much as possible using LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), ELT, adult ESL literacy or employment-related ESL program settings. Interviews and observations carried out in TESL 21 and 31 should be based on adult noncredit ESL, EAP, LINC or ELT settings if at all possible. When given viewing options in study questions related to the *TESL Live* videotape/DVD, please pay particular attention to Part 2 since it is based on an immigrant setting (Parts 1 and 3 take place in English for Academic Purposes classes for international students.)

Practicum Requirements

As noted above, TESL Ontario requires more substantial classroom observation and teaching than those of the CERTESL practicum, which was designed to conform with TESL Canada parameters. TESL Ontario also requires that at least a portion of your practicum be carried out in a program that meets the needs of adult immigrants to Canada such as LINC, immigrant pre-employment programs, emergency ESL programs for refugees, programs for permanent residents who no longer qualify for LINC, ESL literacy programs, or professionally-taught programs in multicultural or other community agencies. Your pre-practicum observation hours should be carried out in two or more types of adult ESL education settings (immigrant, English for Academic Purposes or international). During the practicum and additional hours, your observations and teaching must take place under the guidance of a teacher who meets TESL Ontario's training and university degree standards and has at least three years of ESL classroom teaching experience, or who was accredited by TESL Ontario under "grandfathering" provisions which were in place from early 2000 until June 30, 2002, or through Prior Learning Assessment which was instituted in 2004 (see below.) Please note that although some "grandfathered" teachers do not have university degrees, such individuals are able to serve as local supervisors because CERTESL requires that local supervisors have degrees.

If you wish to carry out your practicum for TESL Ontario certification purposes, you will need to discuss your proposed placement option in advance with the CERTESL Academic Coordinator. If your placement proposal does not meet TESL Ontario's usual expectations, the Academic Coordinator may need to discuss it with the TESL Ontario certification coordinator before approving your choice of setting and supervisor.

Most TESL Ontario certification candidates must register formally for **Practicum Additional Hours** at the same time as they submit their Supervisor Approval Form for TESL 42. The teacher who you nominate as Local Practicum Supervisor must complete and sign both the [TESL 42 Supervisor Approval Form](#) and the [Practicum Additional Hours Registration Form](#). To register for TESL 42, you will follow normal CERTESL registration procedures, but you will register for Additional Hours by submitting the form (found online at www.ccde.usask.ca/go/certesl) with payment by mail or fax directly to the CERTESL Program.

Note that if you have completed the mandatory additional practicum observation and teaching hours in some other TESL program, under conditions similar to those specified above, you may be exempt from having to complete Additional Hours within CERTESL. Please consult the CERTESL academic coordinator if you have completed hours that you believe might be eligible. If the hours were completed with learners who were not adults, or in EFL courses delivered for university or high school credit, the hours will **not** be acceptable; however, hours completed with adult ESL/EFL learners may prove acceptable as long as standards approximate those set by TESL Ontario.

TESL 43: Professional Project or TESL 36: Literacy in TESL/TESD

For TESL Ontario purposes, you have two choices for your seventh and final course in the program: TESL 43 (Professional Project) and TESL 36 (Literacy in TESL/TESD).

TESL 36 (Literacy in TESL/TESD) is probably the most suitable seventh course for people planning to work with lower-level learners in LINC or pre-LINC programs. TESL 36 was developed as a direct response to needs expressed by instructors and CERTESL students who have observed, volunteered and taught in LINC and other second language/second dialect programs with learners who lack functional literacy and numeracy skills in their first languages. The course was created with financial assistance from Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Saskatchewan Intergovernmental Affairs because both regard literacy training as an essential tool in the adaptation of immigrant and refugees to Canadian society. For the same reasons, TESL Ontario is encouraging provincial certification candidates in CERTESL to select TESL 36. As of December 2009, TESL 36 is the only course addressing second language literacy needs delivered at a distance by a Canadian postsecondary institution (although a second such course is under development in Nova Scotia, also with HRSDC support.) If you take TESL 36, make sure that you focus your assignments on adult ESL learning contexts.

TESL 43 (Professional Project) is also acceptable to TESL Ontario provided the CERTESL student selects a focus that will be useful in Ontario adult contexts. TESL 43 allows students to create curriculum and/or do research while enabling them to meet specific real needs of present or future students. Research projects should deal with a question or issue of practical significance in an ESL learning environment, and can focus

on either relevant literature or on field-based investigation. Curriculum projects should be grounded in classroom-based needs assessment. For TESL Ontario purposes, the Project (like the Practicum) should be directed at particular contexts and themes relevant to adults learning English in Canada, especially those learning in a LINC or employment-related context, with specific reference to the TESL Ontario training rubric. Generally speaking, the Project works best for people with teaching experience who have a strong desire to conduct particular research or curriculum development because of some real-life challenge the candidate has encountered. Genuine inspiration is the best precondition for a successful project.

Projects created by TESL Ontario accreditation candidates should incorporate one or more of the following areas of interest related to language learning:

- Literacy learning in TESL
- Participation of immigrant learners in education, employment or business in Canada
- Barriers to success of immigrants or refugees in English language learning
- Barriers to participation by immigrants or refugees in Canadian society
- The immigrant learner and cultural pluralism in Canadian society
- Anti-racism and the immigrant or refugee learner
- Influences of culture of origin on language learning, or
- Applications of the Canadian Language Benchmarks to immigrant or refugee learner needs.

Project instructors must have experience as researchers and curriculum developers. Therefore, they are well able to provide guidance to you as you decide on your topic and develop your Professional Project.

Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR or RPL)

CERTESL is the only program not based in Ontario that has received formal TESL Ontario recognition, and before 2006 it was the only distance program that had received TESL Ontario recognition. Therefore, many well-trained ESL teachers who have perfectly valid credentials do not qualify for TESL Ontario certification through the regular path, completion of a recognized program.

In 2004, in order to meet the professional certification needs of these skilled teachers, TESL Ontario decided to allow Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) as a path by which such teachers could meet certification requirements. Because CERTESL was part of the Extension Division (now the Centre for Continuing and Distance Education) of the University of Saskatchewan which had a strong track record in Prior Learning Assessment for other programs and professions, TESL Ontario engaged the Extension Division to develop and deliver an adjudication process for Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR).

Through PLAR, trained ESL educators who have applied for TESL Ontario certification can be referred to our Centre for Continuing and Distance Education (CCDE) for adjudication of their prior academic and experiential learning. This enables them either to qualify directly for certification or to complete additional training in only in those sets of skills that TESL Ontario requires but that their prior courses, inservice learning and workplace experiences have not provided. TESL Ontario-University of Saskatchewan PLAR information and application materials are available through a link at www.ccde.usask.ca/go/certesl

Note that we provide the TESL Ontario PLAR service only to individuals who have been formally referred to us by TESL Ontario. TESL Ontario will not refer individuals whose training and experience are unlikely to cover at least half of the TESL Ontario rubric.

If you need TESL Canada PLAR as well as TESL Ontario PLAR, please apply for TESL Ontario PLAR **first**. On your request, we will send a Letter of Opinion to TESL Canada detailing those aspects of your Ontario PLAR adjudication that are relevant to the TESL Canada standards.

If you apply for TESL Canada PLAR and then decide to apply for TESL Ontario PLAR on the basis of the same credentials, we will provide the same type of letter. However, in that case you will need to pay an additional fee because TESL Ontario PLAR adjudications are more complex than TESL Canada adjudications. For the same reason, TESL Ontario PLAR is usually more expensive than TESL Canada PLAR.

A small number of programs qualify completers for a cheaper streamlined version of TESL Ontario PLAR because they have been the subject of several assessments and consistently have been found to require very limited, perfectly predictable amounts and types of specific additional post-PLAR training. These programs are listed within Form B1-S on our PLAR website.

CERTESL for Teaching in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, CERTESL is accepted by two accrediting bodies: SCENES (Saskatchewan Association for Educators of Non-English Speakers), the provincial association of EAL/ESD educators, and BTEC (Board of Teacher Education and Certification), the body which controls standards of teacher certification for the Public and Separate K-12 school systems.

SCENES

SCENES accredits teachers of ESL/EAL and ESD who have university degrees; at least

240 hours (18 credit units) of postsecondary training relevant to TESL/TEAL/TESD; and at least 1000 hours of professional classroom teaching experience in the ESL/EAL/ESD teaching field with some allowance for volunteer hours. CERTESL's 250 hours slightly exceeds the training specifications required by SCENES, detailed at www.scenes.sk.ca.

SCENES is more flexible than TESL Canada and TESL Ontario in three respects:

- 1) SCENES does not distinguish between students who complete a teaching practicum or a professional project, because the 1000 hour experiential requirement ensures that the person has proven his or her teaching ability;
- 2) SCENES accreditation does not distinguish between TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), or TELD (teaching English Language Development), or between adult or K-12 training and experience; and
- 3) A wider range of course options may be included in the candidate's training history.

All 240 hours may be TESL-specific coursework, but other types of relevant university-based courses may also be considered in accordance with the following ratio between TESL/TEFL/TELD and related topics:

- At least 120 hours (9 credit units) in TESL/language acquisition theory, TESL/language acquisition methods and grammar/linguistics
- Up to 80 hours (6 credit units) in education, adult education or counseling
- Up to 40 hours (3 credit units) in second language acquisition in a language other than English, or in the relevant fields of psychology, special education, anthropology or sociology, provided these hours address language and/or cultural issues.

Therefore, although SCENES accreditation candidates must have more academic training in TESL theory and methodology than the hundred hours required for TESL Canada Standard I, they may have a more eclectic mix of additional relevant background than can candidates in other provincially-mandated systems. As a result, some CERTESL participants are able to receive SCENES accreditation before they have finished the whole CERTESL program.

SCENES is considering re-institution of an Interim certification status for those who have not yet achieved 1000 hours of experience. We will update this information following the April 2010 SCENES annual meeting.

BTEC (Board of Teacher Education and Certification)

In order to qualify for a permanent certificate to teach in Saskatchewan K-12 schools, a teacher must have a Bachelor's degree or postgraduate-level credential in Education. If the teacher's B.Ed. was earned in a K-12 jurisdiction other than Saskatchewan, he or she may need to take some additional coursework within a Saskatchewan-based B.Ed. program in

order to meet the provincial K-12 standard. For instance, teachers moving to Saskatchewan from other provinces must often take a course in Saskatchewan educational administration and/or supplemental curriculum or Educational Psychology courses.

A B.Ed. degree by itself places a Saskatchewan teacher in Class 4 of the six-step provincial K-12 salary grid. In order to advance to Class 5, a teacher may complete a B.A. or B.Sc. degree, **or** take 30 credits (ten 3-credit courses, or one academic year) of approved courses in a single specialization area which will qualify him or her for an "Additional Qualification Certificate" (AQC).

Advancement to Class 6, the highest level of the salary grid, requires 30 credit hours of postgraduate credit study.

With an approved 4-course extension, CERTESL is recognized as an Additional Qualification Certificate provided the candidate follows the TESL stream and starts his or her training with the ECUR twins of TESL 21, 31 and 35 (ECUR 291, 391 and 393) which are distance-delivered courses of the College of Education.

Two paths are possible to complete the AQC:

1. Pure TEAL Focus

The AQC candidate will take the following courses:

1. ECUR 291
2. ECUR 391
3. ECUR 393
4. TESL 32
5. TESL 33
6. TESL 34/EIND 375
7. TESL 36
8. TESL 42
9. TESL 43
10. One additional upper-year or postgraduate course related to the needs of the candidate's ESL/EAL/ELD students, approved by the Academic Coordinator of CERTESL

2. Integrated Program Component in TESL

The Integrated Program Component option requires special advance approval from the candidate's Board of Education and the Board of Teacher Education and Certification.

The candidate will take six CERTESL courses that serve as the Integrated Program Component:

1. ECUR 291
2. ECUR 391 or EIND 375/TESL 34
3. ECUR 393
4. TESL 32 or TESL 36
5. TESL 33
6. TESL 42 or TESL 43

The candidate will then take four additional upper-year (300 or 400 level) or postgraduate (500 or 600 level) courses in another subject area or areas that his or her employing Board of Education agrees complement his or her TEAL training and that will be useful to the school division. The additional courses must also be approved by BTEC. Possible secondary concentrations could include courses in topics such as the teaching of other languages; intercultural education; Indian education; global education; special education; or linguistics.

CERTESL for Teaching Internationally

Although some programs claim internationally “recognized” status, in fact **there is no single certification standard that is formally “recognized” around the world.** In fact, if you encounter a TESL training program that claims some form of internationally accredited or recognized status, you should seek your training elsewhere!

Every market has its own expectations for training, education, and experience. As a rule of thumb, the richer the country, the higher the expectations of employers.

In addition to expected professional standards, **you must also be aware of visa requirements for foreign language teachers before you seek work in any country of which you are not a citizen.** Many people have had good experiences in countries where they were teaching illegally. However, taking the chance adds to the stress of working abroad. If you accept a position without an appropriate visa, you may be subject to fines, deportation, confiscation of assets, and in some places even jail time.

United States

Before applying for teaching positions in most U.S. states, please consult the Department of Education of the state regarding government-mandated requirements, regardless of whether you plan to teach in adult or K-12 programs. Most states require that you have a degree in Education, especially for K-12 positions, and many require that this degree be a postgraduate-level credential. Some state education departments will accept CERTESL as an Additional Qualification, but other state departments will not because CERTESL courses are delivered within the context of a professional certificate program rather than a degree-stream or postgraduate program.

If you plan to register in CERTESL but are concerned about your status in any U.S. state, please apply initially to the University of Saskatchewan as a degree-stream student with Open Studies college affiliation in order to start CERTESL with ECUR 291, 391 and 393, rather than applying initially to CERTESL and taking TESL 21, 31 and 35. These two sets of courses are identical twins in terms of content, expectations and rigour, but licensing bodies are sometimes more interested in counting degree credits than in the particular content or difficulty of those credits.

Either path to completion of CERTESL is useful for finding positions in many adult education programs in the United States, provided the applicant also has a degree.

However, even in such programs, CERTESL is more likely to be counted towards salary increases if you start it in the degree credit stream.

You may have heard that many non-U.S. citizens who have no valid U.S. work permits are employed in the United States. Note that they are not employed as ESL teachers, and that they are breaking U.S. law. **Please do not try to “buck” the U.S. immigration system for the sake of a teaching job.** ESL teachers are far more visible than the migrant labourers or domestic workers whom they may teach. For your own protection, make sure that your status in the U.S. is legal.

Other Countries

Many people succeed in finding and holding overseas teaching jobs without appropriate work visas. This can and has worked in some locations, but those who do it may be risking fines, deportation, loss of possessions or investments, and/or jail time. Because legal sanctions can be serious, an illegal teacher is also open to abuse by some of the less ethical employers. Before you take any chances with legal status, visit www.efl-law.com and also do a Google search using this keyword combination: efl/esl + jobs + blacklist/greylist + the name of the country in which you are interested. If you're going to risk trouble, you need to know what kinds of trouble you should expect. Even if you plan to work legally, such a web check is useful; not all overseas employers are trustworthy, and sites such as EFL Law do a great service in flagging the patterns of employer problems that emerge in particular countries.

Japan, Korea and most other developed nations require that applicants for teaching visas have university degrees. Other countries, such as Thailand, prefer degreed visa applicants, but may compromise if a non-degreed person with a reputable TESL/TEFL credential is available, if that person is vouched for by an employer who has a good relationship with the immigration department, or if the position is in a location where few qualified native speakers are available to teach English. Also, Thailand will often allow an individual with no degree to accept a short-term position on the basis of a three-month tourist visa, renewable no more than twice.

Less-developed nations are more likely to allow nondegreed candidates to teach, especially if a candidate has reputable TESL-specific training. They may also have a less-developed system of work permissions in general. However, check each country individually. Just because a country is less-developed in the economic sense does not mean it will be unambitious for its people, and a country committed to human development needs will be less likely to compromise on credentialing of foreign workers.

Many countries will not issue teaching visas even to well-qualified candidates unless no equally qualified citizen of the country is available to accept the job. In countries belonging to the European Union (EU), such preferred status is extended to citizens of all EU member countries. Canadians who do not qualify as EU citizens may be able to find legal positions in the EU, but only if their credentials are better than those of locally available citizens of the United Kingdom who are native speakers of English and often well-trained as ESL/EFL teachers.

If you do not have some form of work permit before you arrive, some countries will require you to leave for a few days because of regulations that restrict you to applying for your teaching visa from outside of the country. Check such things out before leaving home, and make sure you bring with you a special stash of travellers' cheques to cover this and other normal expenses of setting yourself up in your new location, such as deposit fees on apartments.

Preferred TEFL Qualifications

As noted above, **there is no such thing as an internationally sanctioned professional standard for EFL teachers.** However, if an applicant can provide evidence that he or she has trained in a reputable program, especially from a charter university, most of the better employers will consider that applicant favourably.

Unfortunately for the reputation of the profession, many employers are not particular about qualifications. Sometimes this is because too few verifiably qualified teachers exist to fill local needs; employers and students have to do the best they can with the talent available. However, there are employers who hire according to criteria other than credentials, such as whether they think they will be able to take unfair advantage of the applicant, or whether the person's age, physical appearance and entertainment ability are likely to attract profit. In general, the better places to work are those that give credentials priority over youth, blondness, or gullibility. Consider it a blessing if your application is turned down by a "school" staffed largely by naïve and underqualified Caucasians in their 20's. Two questions you might want to ask during an interview are "What is the average age of your foreign teachers?" and "Do foreign teachers stay here for an average at least two years?"

Occasionally, you will encounter a responsible employer who is reluctant to accept a credential from a "distance" or "online" program. This is an unfortunate result of a number of unrefereed commercial online programs that will happily take your money in return for a piece of paper that says "certificate" after you do a set of "read-and-click" exercises on the internet. If you graduate from CERTESL, you don't need to worry about this prejudice. Your transcript will come from a university; your Certificate of Successful Completion will ensure that you have learned at least as much as a completer of on-campus programs that claim the same number of academic contact hours; and your prospective employers will be able to confirm CERTESL's status and reputation very easily via online processes.

Often an overseas employer will want to know how CERTESL compares to CELTA or the Trinity TESOL certificate, two good UK-based credentials that are well known because they are licensed for delivery in many locations internationally. Basically, completion of CERTESL's six courses means that you have twice as much training as a CELTA or Trinity completer, and in fact CERTESL allows just eighty hours' worth of academic transfer credit on the basis of either of these two programs.

At the high end of the preferred credentials scale are the wealthy countries of the Persian Gulf, most notably Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Qatar. Most positions in these countries go to individuals with relevant Master's degrees because local employers can afford to be very picky. Elsewhere, however, someone with a degree and CERTESL is well-qualified.

If you have no degree

Generally speaking, if you have no degree but travel on your own to a place such as Mexico or the interior of China where visa regulations around English teaching are relatively loose and ESL teachers are desperately needed, you will be able to find work if you are at all presentable and can prove you know something about teaching English. If you go to a country and then start looking for jobs, rather than accepting a job that you are unable to check out while still in Canada, you will also be in a better position to judge whether the position is one you would be wise to accept. CERTESL works very well in this kind of context because it is so easy to check out, as noted above.

If you are under a particular cutoff age that varies from country to country, a working holiday visa may allow you to accept some types of temporary EFL-related employment (i.e. for individual tutoring, in conversation lounges, or as an au pair). Some countries also allow holders of study visas to engage in a limited amount of paid employment.

Note that you are very unlikely to receive financial assistance with housing or transportation in such short-term positions. The situation can vary greatly depending on the country and its current needs.

Recruitment Services

Although many ESL teachers enjoy the challenge of looking for employment after they have arrived in a country that interests them, many others prefer the security of having a job waiting for them when they arrive. Degreed people can easily find jobs through an internet search (EFL/ESL + jobs + the name of the country, or a quick cruise through postings at www.eslcafe.com which is the famed Dave's ESL Café). However, checking out prospective employers who advertise online can be a challenge. One solution is to find a reputable recruiting service based in your own country and rely on that service to help you find a position that will work well for you.

When deciding on a recruitment service, you should check out a few key characteristics of the service. Most reputable recruiters for paid positions do not provide teacher recruitment services for nondegreed people, and give strong preference to people with experience, reputable academic background in TESL/TEFL, and/or a B.Ed. degree. Of course recruiters for voluntary agencies (that is, positions that are unpaid or provide only living expenses) may be less particular. Some very interesting volunteer positions can be found at www.goabroad.com and other sites for the globally responsible traveler.

Reputable recruiters will be pleased to provide as references the names of former teachers who are no longer beholden in any way to the recruiter. Good recruiters provide follow-up services, such as mediation and legal support if your employer does not give you the kind of assignment or compensation specified in the contract, and will not send future recruits to institutions in which such problems recur. They should also check in at some set time after your job starts to make sure that the placement is working well for both you and your employer.

Do not pay any recruitment service for placing you in a paid teaching position.

Reputable recruiters are paid by the employing institution. They are **not** paid by the teacher

who is being placed. If the recruiter wants money from you, please look elsewhere for your own protection.

Contractual Conditions

Review these carefully before you sign. Ideally, you should receive the contract in both English and the local language. You should have both versions reviewed by some bilingual person whom you trust in order to ensure they are the same. If there are differences in meaning between the two, the version in the local language will be the one the courts of the country regard as binding. Such differences sometimes creep in inadvertently, but deliberate differences have also been known to occur.

Tax Issues

If you are Canadian, you should contact Canada Customs and Revenue in order to find out details of tax treaties between Canada and your destination country. In some locations, employers have been known to deduct more tax than appropriate during the first year of employment, when most Canadians should still be paying income tax to Canada. The employer may be making an honest mistake, in which case you can ask the local government for a refund. On the other hand, some employers are fully aware of regulations and are pocketing money of yours that you may think is going to the local taxation authority.

Although in Canada, both provincial and national income taxes are handled through one federally-operated revenue agency, in other countries there are national, state, and/or municipal income taxes that may be handled by separate agencies. Find out how many separate parties are expecting your income taxes, and make sure you know when each type of tax takes effect.

Make sure you know your rights and responsibilities with regard to both Canadian and local income taxes, and do your own math on payday. If you find your employer's calculation confusing, ask questions (respectfully and preceding the request with "sorry to trouble you", but do ask.) A responsible employer will be pleased to answer any questions you may have about this and other conditions of your employment.