



**MATSOL POSITION STATEMENT  
ON MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESOL PROGRAMS**

**I. Academic Credit for ESOL Courses**

MATSOL endorses the following policy statement from TESOL International Association:

**Position Statement on Academic and Degree-Granting Credit  
for ESOL Courses in Postsecondary Education**

*Approved by the TESOL Executive Committee, June 2012*

With the growth in the number of nonnative-English-speaking students at postsecondary institutions in the United States and other English-speaking countries, there has been an increased demand for English as a second language (ESL) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses in postsecondary academic institutions. Unfortunately, ESL or ESOL courses are frequently mischaracterized as developmental or remedial courses, and thus are not always acknowledged for academic or degree-granting credit. These policies and practices fail to recognize that ESOL courses offer a rigorous, standards-based academic program that requires students to perform at a level similar to and on par with the subject matter in other degree-bearing courses, such as courses in English composition or in foreign language. TESOL International Association advocates that ESOL courses in postsecondary academic institutions receive academic, degree-granting credit.

In postsecondary institutions, nonnative-English-speaking students require a strong foundation of advanced language and academic skills. To enter specific academic and professional communities such as business, humanities and the arts, science, engineering, and medicine, learners require not only additional expertise in content, but also specialized knowledge in vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and pragmatics.

Postsecondary ESOL coursework is designed to continue the normal cognitive, academic, linguistic, and cultural development that accompanies the acquisition of an additional language, and does not equate with remediating first language skills. The material studied in these ESOL courses demands the highest level of second language proficiency, including knowledge of contrastive phonetic, syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical information, as well as an understanding of university expectations and classroom norms in a new culture.

Just as native-English-speaking students earn degree-granting credit for their foreign language study and for courses in linguistic analysis, nonnative English speakers enrolled in ESOL courses are similarly entitled to academic credit for their study of English as a second or foreign language.



**II. Equity for Diverse Populations**

MATSOL urges leaders of higher education institutions to exercise fairness and equity in administering program changes and cuts so that culturally and linguistically diverse student populations are afforded equal opportunities to pursue their educational and career goals.

**III. Inclusion of ESOL Faculty in Program Changes**

It is vital that ESOL faculty, the experts in the discipline, have significant input when changes or reductions in Community College ESOL programs are being considered. ESOL faculty support educationally sound decisions that take into account the language acquisition and cultural factors that are necessary for our students' success.

**IV. Access to ESOL Courses Statewide**

Current wait lists for ABE classes are long, and will only become longer if more students are funneled into the ABE system without also increasing capacity. If students no longer served by Community College courses are to be redirected to Adult Basic Education classes, higher education leaders must support additional ABE classes becoming available to meet the increased need. The Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education which oversees ABE programs must work together statewide to ensure that students do not lose access to educational opportunity.

*Approved by the MATSOL Board of Directors, April 9, 2014*