

The Practicum

Overview

Sookmyung TESOL MA has created a special experience with the design of the Practicum. The Practicum presents itself as the ultimate culmination of one's experience in the MA by utilizing and integrating three essential elements. These are teaching, deep reflection on practice, and elaborating ideas.

In the first of these, one needs to teach. Practicum people can use as a teaching venue their own current setting or they can help teach a purpose-built undergraduate class at the university along with Prof. van Vlack and the other Practicum people. The class is called English in Action and in the spring the focus is on speaking while in the fall it focuses on writing. There is a special webpage for the class (<http://udindfor.com/english-in-action.html>) which shows the class from the students' perspective. From the Practicum perspective, the class is designed to give the participants an opportunity to plan, design, and teach a production-based class in a unique way which allows them to use the concepts learned in the MA.

The second main part of the Practicum the participants reflect on their teaching practice in the Practicum 1 and 2 classes. They do this, more specifically, by writing reflections on their weekly performance as teachers and by analyzing recordings of their teaching week on week. More generally, deeper reflection is achieved through the creation of a teaching portfolio. Finally, Practicum students also enhance reflection by conducting action research in their teaching context. The third leg of the Practicum is made up of the Comprehensive Exams. It is important that participants view the exams not as a separate component to be tackled on its own, but as a complement to the other parts of the experience. The teaching and the reflection aspects inform participants toward the exams and the exam question impel students to think more carefully about their entire MA experience as it comes to a head in the Practicum.

Descriptions

Practicum I

This three-hour-per-week course has as its main component the running of a detailed Action Research project to be conducted individually (or in some cases pairs) by the Practicum participants within one of the teaching settings to which they might have access. Generally, participants will be doing the Action research project within their own teaching settings. For those who are not currently teaching a setting will be provided them. In the course, participants will be guided through a detailed Action Research project that requires them to reflect critically on their own teaching situations and implement substantive changes to their own teaching situation. In doing so participants will get a chance to critically reflect on their own teaching situation and will also find ways of enhancing their own teaching.

Practicum II

This three-hour-per-week course has two main components. The first of these is the reflective component. We will be using the reflective journals and videos taken during the teaching of the participants' courses to reflect on our own individual teaching practices as well as on elements of in-class language learning. Reflection is one of the key elements for further developing teaching skills in in-service teachers and as such is used as a way of getting teachers to develop skills which enable them to become more autonomous in their own development as teachers. The second component of this class revolves around the design and creation of a teaching portfolio. Here we will be working individually and in groups to create a portfolio that highlights our training, skills, and achievements as teachers. An important part of this portfolio, which will be handled for the most part in the sister course (Practicum I), will be an action research project. In this way, this course is seen as a real-world review for the comprehensive exams and a practical application of all that has been learned in the entire TESOL MA program.

Here is a link to the portfolios that have been posted by the Practicum people:

<http://tesol.sookmyung.ac.kr/ma/teacher/list.php?strLink=52::3>

Comprehensive Exams

Students who choose the Practicum option are required to take and pass three different comprehensive exams. These are written exams which cover three different essential areas within the field of TESOL: Current Issues in EFL/ESL, Materials and Course Design, and Second Language Learning Theories. These exams cover specific aspects from many of the different courses offered in the MA. As such, these are true comprehensive exams in that they cover all different aspects of the programs. Students who pass the exams have really mastered the field of TESOL.

To help facilitate the exams study process, students are organized into study groups for more effective, information-based studying. They work in groups and share information. Group study sessions are arranged with professors who provide feedback and final instruction. All in all, the comprehensive exams are interesting end to the MA experience.