TESOL International Association conducted surveys of TESOL members and nonmembers in January and February 2012 to learn more about the professional development needs of specific groups within the English language teaching field. The surveys included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Key trends from the survey on higher education are provided below.

**Respondents to the higher education survey**

This survey was sent to TESOL members and nonmembers worldwide who had higher education selected in their TESOL profile.

- Of the 479 respondents, the vast majority were members of TESOL International Association (87%) and their TESOL affiliate organization (57%).

- Respondents are from a variety of countries, the majority being from the United States (62%).

- Most of the respondents have been in higher education for more than 6 years (79%), with only 7% having 2 years of experience or less. A vast majority of the respondents have master’s degrees or doctoral degrees in TESOL or other areas.

- Respondents have different professional roles in higher education (see Figure 1), including working as researchers, teacher trainers, or instructors in Intensive English programs (IEPs) and master’s-level classes. Respondents work in private or public institutions as well as in universities and community colleges.

**Key trends and concerns**

**Finances**

- Personal and institutional finances, benefits, and funds for professional development are some of the challenges in higher education settings.

- There are also challenges related to being adjunct or part-time related to finances, benefits, and job status. Here is a sample comment:
As an adjunct, I am grossly over-worked and underpaid. I receive NO BENEFITS whatsoever... no sick days, no paid vacation, NO HEALTH CARE COVERAGE, nothing! If I am sick and cannot teach, I must pay my own substitute!

Teaching context and research

- There is a wide variety of teaching strategies used in higher education: online instruction, use of technology in a language lab or other setting, traditional classroom instruction (lecture style), blended (face-to-face and online) instruction, and one-on-one student advising or coaching.

- Teaching and administrative workloads as well as working with administrators are some of the challenges in higher education settings. Here are two sample comments:

  Handling additional administrative tasks and paperwork, committee work and service assignments in addition to full time; unnecessary faculty meetings are challenges.

  Administration with no background in TESOL […]

- There are several factors that impact the quality of teaching and research in higher education contexts, such as students unprepared for university or college-level work and the lack of understanding of the nature of language learning or of TESOL as a unique discipline by administrators. Figure 1 shows more factors that impact quality of teaching and research in higher education contexts.

![Figure 1: Factors that Impact the Quality of Teaching and Research](image)

Professional development
There are various topics of interest for future professional development opportunities, such as use of technology in the classroom; assessing students and types of assessment; teaching how to do research; implications for teaching based on what research says; best practices and teaching methods; teaching pronunciation and teaching of core skills; teaching about culture; program development, administration, and evaluation.

Webinars, in-person workshops, books, and other online resources such as classes, seminars, and discussions are useful professional development formats. Here are two comments:

Plenty is already available, but free webinars are very enriching and convenient at the same time.

Funding is tight and often I can’t attend the national conference and so webinars, books and online discussions are important.

Lack of funding for professional development impacts the quality of teaching and research in higher education settings. One sample comment:

I have not had the opportunity (release time or financial support) to attend the TESOL annual convention in the past few years. However, this year I will attend, using my own funds and taking annual leave during a semester break. (I plan to look for a new job while there.)