

# TEACHING GUIDE

## MASTER DISSERTATION (ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT)

**Master's Degree in  
Teaching English as a Foreign  
Language**

**Academic year 2025/2026**

## TEACHING GUIDE

Name of the subject:	Action Research Project (Master's Dissertation)
Code:	201321
Degree in which it is taught:	MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Developing English Teaching Skills)
Department and Area of Knowledge:	Modern Philology, English Philology
Character:	Compulsory
ECTS credits:	16
Year and term:	Annual
Faculty:	All teachers in the Master's can act as supervisors
Tutoring Schedule:	Upon request
Language of instruction:	English

### 1. PRESENTATION

The Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 29 October, establishing the regulation of official university degrees, indicates that all official postgraduate teaching will conclude with the preparation and public defence of a Master's Dissertation (hereafter MD), which has to be part of the curriculum. To complete the degree programme, in-service teachers are required to prepare a research project with didactic proposals for implementation in the classroom. Students will only be admitted for public defence of their projects once they have passed all the other components of their programme of study.

### 2. COMPETENCES and LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Basic and general competences:

CB8 – Students should be able to integrate knowledge and handle the complexity of making judgments based on information that, while incomplete or limited, includes a series of reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities connected to applying knowledge and judgments.

CG3 – Can integrate knowledge and handle the complexity of making judgments based on information that, while incomplete or limited, includes a series of reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities connected to applying knowledge and judgments.

CG4 – Communicate conclusions, underlying knowledge and reasons clearly and unambiguously to specialised and non-specialised audiences.

CG5 – Possess learning skills to continue studying in a largely self-directed or autonomous manner

- Transversal competences:

C1 – Communicative competence in English.

C2 – Ability to think critically

C3 – Manage bibliographic resources

- Specific competences:

CE1.1 – Learn the interaction and communication process in the classroom, master the social skills needed to foster learning and coexistence in the classroom, address disciplinary problems, and practice conflict resolution.

CE1.3 – Deepen the knowledge of the English language and perfect academic discourse, both oral and written, used in the English classroom.

CE1.4 – Learn technical resources and strategies that foster the development of linguistic and communicative competence and their assessment.

CE2.1 – Plan, develop and assess the teaching and learning process by encouraging educational processes that facilitate the acquisition of competences specific to the English language in bilingual teaching environments and other settings where English is taught as a second language.

CE2.2 – Design the curriculum to be implemented in educational institutions, participate in collaborative planning, and apply didactic methodologies for groups and personalised ones adapted to students' diversity.

CE2.3 – Learn strategies to stimulate students' effort, promote their ability to learn for themselves, and develop thinking and decision skills that enable autonomy, confidence, and personal initiatives.

CE2.4 – Design and conduct formal and non-formal activities that make the educational institution a space for participation and culture in its setting; participate in the assessment, research, and innovation of teaching and learning processes.

CE3.4 – Identify and plan how to address educational situations that affect students who possess diverse skills and learn at different paces.

CE4.1 – Participate in debates and group activities related to teaching the English language while developing the ability to think critically and for oneself.

CE4.2 – Plan, structure, and develop properly and with certain originality written papers and oral presentations in English about topics related to the teaching approach of the language, conveying ideas effectively and correctly.

CE4.3 – Develop a sense of scientific writing on topics related to teaching.

CE5.1 – Search, obtain, process, and communicate information (oral, printed, audiovisual, digital, or multimedia), transform it into knowledge and apply it in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

CE5.2 – Get started in research in applied linguistics and the teaching of English as a foreign language, being capable of formulating initial hypotheses and using a methodology that will enable valid conclusions to be reached.

CE5.3 – Independently design and execute research projects in the classroom, setting the goals of the project, its phases, and necessary resources.

CE5.4 – Pursue ongoing training as teaching professionals by using a suitable bibliography, participating in courses, attending conferences, etc.

### **Learning outcomes:**

Students should be able to:

- Design and implement a small-scale research project.
- Demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge adequately and think critically.
- Locate relevant bibliographical references and use them appropriately.
- Write an academic paper in English.
- Analyse teaching practices to identify areas for improvement or growth.
- Propose specific actions for improvement, either as a pedagogical intervention, a set of guidelines or a list of remedial actions
- Self-assess their work, evaluating its impact

## **3. CONTENTS**

<b>Content blocks</b>	<b>Total classes, credits or hours</b>
Identifying area of research	2 credits
Literature review	2 credits
Designing and implementing research plan	4 credits

Collecting and analyzing data	4 credits
Writing a research report	4 credits

#### 4. TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES - TRAINING ACTIVITIES

##### 4.1. Distribution of credits (specify in hours)

Training activities	Hours
Face-to-face/Virtual tutorials:	3 hours
Study of theoretical content:	97 hours
Independent study:	300 hours
Total:	400 hours

##### 4.2. Methodologies, materials and teaching resources

Methodologies	Teaching materials and resources
Exchange with director of Master's Thesis	Through these exchanges the director will guide and supervise the work done by the student. The exact nature of these exchanges as well as their frequency will depend on the students' needs. It is the students' responsibility to seek the director's advice and to then follow his/her indications.
Literature review	Students will need to find relevant bibliography about the area they are going to do research on, so as to make sure that their own teaching intervention is informed by current thinking about teaching.
Writing the research report	Students will need to write a research report of 8,000 to 12,000 words.
Oral defence	Students will present their research orally.

## **5. ASSESSMENT: Procedures, assessment and marking criteria**

Given that this is a post-graduate course, a level C1 student is required to follow the course contents and complete the course assignments satisfactorily.

Students will be required to present and defend their work publicly in front of an Evaluation Committee. Once the MD is completed, the supervisor will send an electronic copy of the work with a brief report to the President of the Evaluation Committee. The report should state explicitly that the MD is ready for public defence and contain a suggested mark. This must be sent ten days before the date of the public defence.

There will be two examination procedures during the academic year. Exceptionally, when a student has completed all the modules of the programme in February, there may be a special public defence earlier in the year if permission is granted by the Academic Committee of the Master's. The President of the respective Evaluation Committee will notify each student well in advance the place, date and time set for their exam. During their exam, each student will have a few minutes to orally present a summary of key aspects of their work. After the exposition, students will answer questions and clarifications that may be requested by members of the Evaluation Committee.

### **Assessment criteria**

The Evaluation Committee will consider the following assessment criteria:

- Clarity, precision, accuracy and consistency in the determination of objectives.
- Appropriateness of the methodology used.
- Depth and mastery of topics and contents that are dealt with (state of the art, context, teaching strategies, etc.).
- Degree of originality and personal contributions.
- Handling of bibliography.
- Correction in the writing, organization and presentation of work.
- Clarity, correctness and structure of the oral defence.

#### **• Extraordinary call**

There will be a resit opportunity in September with the same assessment criteria

### **Final assessment:**

Considering the special characteristics of this subject, supervisors will follow a continuous assessment of the dissertation writing process, so there is no final assessment method.

While the assessment tests are in progress, the guidelines set out in the Regulations establishing the Rules of Coexistence of the University of Alcalá must be followed, as well as the possible implications of any irregularities committed during these tests, including the consequences of committing academic fraud according to the Disciplinary Regulations of the Student Body of the University of Alcalá.

The teaching-learning methodology and the assessment process will be adjusted when necessary, following the guidelines of the Unit of Attention to Diversity, to implement curricular adaptations to students with specific needs

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hubbard, R. S., and B. M. Power (2003) *The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher-researchers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Mills, Geoffrey E. (2006) *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher*. London: Prentice Hall

McNiff, Jean, Pam Lomax and Jack Whitehead (2003) *You and Your Action Research Project*. London: Routledge.

Sagor, Richard (2004) *The Action Research Guidebook: A Four-step Process for Educators and School Teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Stringer, E. (1996) *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

### Links to action research web sites

Action Learning and Action Resources (ALAR). It lists frequently asked questions about action research. <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/arfaq.html>

Action Research at Bath University (UK): <http://www.actionresearch.net/>

Action research for professional development. Concise advice for new action researchers, by Jean McNiff: <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html>