

British Council

Master's Dissertation Awards 20/21

Overview

The British Council is pleased to announce the 9th British Council ELT Master's Dissertation Award for work with the best potential for impact on ELT practice. This award recognises and promotes the achievements of students on UK university Master's programmes. The scheme is an opportunity for institutions to promote their programmes and for recent graduates to establish themselves in the field.

Call for entries

Each institution is invited to submit one dissertation which has already been marked at distinction level. A summary of no more than two pages, written or approved by an appropriate member of academic staff, should be sent with the dissertation. In addition to summarising the dissertation, this should address the issue of potential for impact. Impact here is defined as the potential of

the work to change the attitudes, practices or policies of individuals or institutions. The British Council will publish the best dissertations and summaries online free of charge. All previously published papers can be found on the TeachingEnglish website ([link](#)).

A document with FAQs about the scheme is attached to this message

Conditions of entry

Permission from the author for both the summary and the dissertation to be published in any form by British Council on a non-exclusive basis.

Application process

Please submit the following:

- The dissertation
- The summary – maximum two pages written in Arial 12, single-spaced with a line between paragraphs. Bullet points may be used.

The first section should contain the summary of the dissertation (which may include the abstract written by the student), including, as appropriate, the aim and context of the dissertation, research questions, relevant theoretical perspectives, approach to data collection and findings/conclusions.

The second section should address the issue of potential for impact (see FAQs below for details).

This summary should be written or approved by the institution, with appropriate input from the author. Please see an example of a good summary below.

N.B: Both the above documents must be completely unbranded with no reference to the submitting author, tutor or university. Applications which do not comply will not be accepted.

- A covering letter with the name and email addresses of the submitting university, the member of staff submitting the dissertation and the student.
- A statement of permission from the dissertation author for the submission and permission to publish.

Deadline for applications: Friday, 18 December 2020

Please send submissions and queries to ELTMasters@britishcouncil.org

FAQs

What is the purpose of the scheme?

To recognise the potential for impact of Master's dissertation research and scholarship in a field related to ELT. Impact here is defined as the potential of the research to change attitudes or priorities of individuals or institutions with regard to the development of policies and practices at local or regional or national levels. A secondary purpose of the scheme is to encourage students to focus on areas of research that will have impact.

Who is eligible?

To be considered for the award the dissertation must have been completed in the 2019-20 academic year at a tertiary level institution in the UK recognised as an accredited degree-awarding body. Any submission will have been marked at distinction (70+) level. The dissertation can be completed in any mode (e.g. full-time, part-time or distance learning).

Does eligibility depend on nationality?

No, the scheme is open to all Master's students at UK universities. The nationality of the student is not relevant.

Can students apply directly or only institutions?

Only UK institutions can apply, with a single dissertation. If an institution mistakenly submits more than one dissertation, we will get back to you to agree which is the official submission.

What is the application process?

The institution submits a maximum two-page summary of the dissertation. This should be written by the institution, with any appropriate input from the author. This summary includes a statement of the practical potential of the ideas presented in the dissertation. The application should also include the dissertation itself, and permission from the author to publish the dissertation or summary free of charge online.

What form should the summary/dissertation take?

The summary should be written in Arial 12, single-spaced and submitted in word format. The first section should summarise the dissertation. The second section should outline the potential for impact. In order to allow for blind review, neither the summary nor the dissertation should contain any branding or other reference to the author or the submitting institution.

How does the British Council define 'Impact'?

For this award, the British Council defines impact as: "the potential of the research to change the attitudes, practices or policies of individuals or institutions." Possible elements of impact are:

- **Credibility:** A solid theoretical and empirical basis for the findings is necessary for credibility of the dissertation in the eyes of decision makers internationally.
- **Novelty:** If a dissertation replicates results that are already available, it is questionable whether it can potentially have a further impact.
- **Applicability:** Unless it is clear how the implications of the dissertation can be translated to action on the ground (e.g., in terms of policy decisions, of materials design, or of classroom activities), the potential impact will be lessened.
- **Breadth of impact:** How wide or limited is the potential audience for the impact?

What is the evaluation process?

The first ranking round will be based on the two-page summary. The second round will be based on the full dissertation.

Who can be a judge?

We will invite institutions to nominate an appropriately qualified and experienced individual. We welcome volunteer judges from participating universities, although there is no commitment for universities to nominate a judge.

What is the deadline for applications?

The deadline is Friday, **18 December 2020**

What will happen with the dissertations judged to be the best?

The dissertations and / or summaries will be published online by the British Council.

What about copyright?

The author agrees to the papers being published for educational purposes globally and retains rights to publish in other formats. The British Council owns the copyright of any compilation but not of the individual dissertations.

Do the dissertation and summary have to be written in English?

Yes, all submitted documentation should be written in English.

Are dissertations which focus on English Literature or the English language eligible for the scheme?

No, this scheme focuses on English language teaching.

Example of a good summary

Dissertation title:

Exploring experienced teachers' and supervisors' perspectives on post-observation feedback sessions

Summary:

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the views of both experienced teachers and supervisors concerning the challenges they face during feedback sessions. As of writing this dissertation, a considerable body of literature has been written on observations. However, much less attention has been given to post-observation feedback sessions. As Howard (2015, p.195) rightly contends, 'the majority of texts focus on observation, while discussion about feedback is generally limited, if it has been covered at all'. A good portion of literature written on feedback sessions concentrates on methods for carrying them out but, again, less empirical evidence is available on what actually happens during feedback sessions themselves (Copland, 2012). Furthermore, published work about observations and feedback often focuses on pre-service and novice teachers and, as King (2015) suggests, there is a short supply of information concentrating on experienced teachers.

Feedback sessions can be challenging to both experienced teachers and supervisors. Different approaches have been proposed to help render sessions less stressful and more effective, but difficulties continue in the TESOL and ELT communities today. The study reported in this dissertation, therefore, aimed to address the following questions: (1) What are experienced teachers' perspectives on receiving feedback after being observed? (2) What are supervisors' perspectives on giving feedback to experienced teachers after observations?

A qualitative approach was adopted to answer these research questions. To help strengthen the study's validity, respondent triangulation (Bush, 2007) was implemented. Experienced teachers and supervisors carry out different responsibilities in feedback sessions. Therefore, they experience sessions differently which may generate dissimilar perspectives. By interviewing and then analyzing what was pointed out by those who have different viewpoints, a clearer and richer picture of what takes place in feedback sessions emerged. Three teachers (years of teaching experience ranging from 4-14) and three supervisors (years of supervision experience ranging from 9-34) participated in this study. A set of questions were prepared in advance and further follow up questions were employed to facilitate participants offering more 'depth and breadth' of sharing their experiences and opinions. All interview questions were piloted several days before the interviews began.

After transcribing audio-recorded interviews, the text was read several times so as to grasp the general ideas which were mentioned in the dissertation. This was accompanied by taking notes in the margins of the transcriptions. The next step was coding in which pieces of information relevant to the aim of the research project were labelled (Cohen et al., 2018; Punch, 2014). Codes were then put into categories by merging them if they had similar traits. In this stage, themes and patterns were recognized. The final step was to answer research questions through interpret the meaning of the themes, patterns and unexpected data recognized during the coding stage (Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018).

The directive approach was perceived negatively by the majority of the participants (both teachers and supervisor). However, half of them supported the use of the non-directive approaches while the other half supported the directive approach to improve feedback sessions. These findings led to a number of possibilities. First, the context in which people work can influence which approach they prefer for feedback sessions. Second, if context and a number of aspects of each individual need to be taken into consideration, supervisors may have to decide what approaches to use in different situations. To do so, training seems necessary for them to become familiar with multiple approaches and how to assess situations, so they can choose which methods to apply.

Impact:

Credibility:

- Research questions were clearly informed by a perceived gap in the literature (Howard, 2015; King, 2015)
- The study was designed and conducted in a rigorous and robust manner. Interview questions were piloted and refined.

Novelty:

- This is the first empirical study addressing the way in which experienced teachers and supervisors perceive post-observation feedback. Given the prevalence of post-observation feedback sessions the study has opened up a new and important avenue of research.
- The design of the study (i.e., triangulation of respondents: teachers and supervisors) was a novel initiative which helped interpreting the results of the study.

Applicability:

- The findings of the study would help teachers and supervisors to make informed decisions regarding the approach (directive or non-directive) that they adopt in post-observation sessions.
- The study also puts forth the notion of training supervisors which could open up a new avenue of research in the area of English Language Teacher Education.

Reference:

- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2018. *Research methods in education*. [Online]. 8th ed. London: Routledge. [Accessed 7 June 2018]. Available from:
- Copland, F. 2012. Legitimate talk in feedback conferences. *Applied Linguistics*. 33/1, pp.1-20.
- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. 5th ed. London: Sage.
- Howard, A. 2015. Giving voice to participants in second language education evaluation. In: Howard, A. and Donaghue, H. eds. *Teacher evaluation in second language education*. London: Bloomsbury, pp.194-210.
- King, M. 2015. Evaluating experienced teachers. In: Howard, A. and Donaghue, H. eds. *Teacher evaluation in second language education*. London: Bloomsbury, pp.168-179.
- Punch, K. 2014. *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. 3rd ed. London: Sage