



## **TIRF CALL FOR PROPOSALS:** **MASTERS RESEARCH GRANTS**

TIRF invites proposals for its 2020 **Masters Research Grants** competition.

**PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
**Thursday, April 23, 2020**  
**(at 17:00 China Standard Time)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) was founded in 1998 as an international, non-profit organization. Its aim is to generate new knowledge and to collect and organize existing knowledge about the teaching and learning of English for the purposes of informing educational policy; improving classroom practices; and, ultimately, expanding educational, occupational, and social opportunities for individuals in a global society.

TIRF is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Trustees composed of scholars, authors, and individuals working in the corporate sector. It is supported by charitable donations. TIRF is committed to developing and implementing an innovative, proactive applied research program to help ensure that English as a second or foreign language is taught, learned, and tested in a manner that is demonstrably effective, expedient, and economical. TIRF is also committed to strengthening links between theory, practice, and policy and to fostering partnerships among researchers around the world. One of the activities TIRF undertakes to advance its mission is the funding of research.

### **Sponsorship**

TIRF would like to thank our partner, [Words Up Your Way](#) (WUYW), for its generous support of the TIRF Masters Research Grants program. Mr. Zhou Jian, Chief Executive Officer at WUYW, and his team at the company are dedicated to the language education profession and believe that funding this grant program will deliver positive benefits to masters-level students in Chinese-speaking contexts who are embarking on a career in the field of English language education.





## Description

In 2020, TIRF will consider masters-level research proposals about English language teaching and learning from individuals enrolled in masters-level programs at universities in Chinese-speaking contexts, including individuals living in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Funding during this competition cycle is intended to support worthy applicants who have had their MA thesis proposals accepted by a supervisor or supervisory committee. This criterion is absolutely necessary and must be confirmed by the MA student's supervisor in the required letter of support. Proposals and supervisors' letters of support are due by **Thursday, April 23, 2020**. No proposal will be considered unless a supervisor's letter of support is on university letterhead and submitted by the deadline.

TIRF will review the first 100 viable proposals it receives before the application deadline. A "viable proposal" includes the application and the supervisor's letter of support.

## Eligibility

There are two levels of Masters Research Grants (MRGs) that will be offered in 2020:

- *Level One:* The first level targets students who have been admitted to MA programs and have had their MA thesis research proposals approved by their supervisor or supervisory committee.
- *Level Two:* The second level targets MA students who received a Level-One MRG, have finished their studies, and wish to disseminate their results at well-known conferences internationally and in Chinese-speaking contexts. (If you are applying for a Level-Two MRG, please scroll down to page five and find the heading: "MASTERS RESEARCH GRANTS: LEVEL-TWO GRANTS.")

## MASTERS RESEARCH GRANTS: LEVEL-ONE GRANTS

### Research Topics

Proposals for TIRF Masters Research Grants must closely and explicitly address one of the following research foci. A detailed explanation of TIRF's research topics and the areas of focus that can be used for masters-level grants can be found by clicking on the links below.

- [Content-based Instruction](#)
- [Digital Technology in Language Education](#)
- [Language Assessment](#)
- [Teaching English to Young Learners](#)

### Features of Masters Research Grants

- Only the first 100 viable proposals that TIRF receives before the deadline will be reviewed. After this limit is met, the competition will be closed.
- Level-One TIRF MRGs are awarded in amounts between RMB 5,000 and RMB 15,000 per proposal. In no case will a Level-One TIRF MRG exceed RMB 15,000. Costs for travel and accommodations related to data collection are allowed in a Level-One budget.



In addition, books, software, and photocopy expenses are allowed. Items related to conference travel and registration fees are not allowed in a Level-One budget. Personal expenses, such as the cost of tuition, storage, moving, insurance, childcare, income replacement, editing the theses, and rent, are not allowed in a Level-One budget. Allocations of funds are made subject to budgetary availability.

- Tell TIRF if you have other sources of funding. Other sources of funding are allowed; however, it is essential that you explain the contribution that having a TIRF MRG will make to your research.
- If English proficiency testing is planned (for either students or teachers), TIRF strongly recommends the use of appropriate international, standardized English language tests, so that researchers in other contexts can easily interpret the results. If other tests are to be used or developed, applicants should explain the rationale for the selection or development of these particular instruments.
- MA theses supported by TIRF can be written in any language, but applications, interim reports, final reports, and all correspondence with TIRF must be submitted in English.
- TIRF strongly encourages grantees to disseminate their findings via electronic media, as well as via the standard means of academic and professional presentations and publications. **TIRF must be acknowledged in all forms of dissemination.**
- In addition to submitting a progress report to TIRF after the first six months, TIRF MRG recipients must submit a two- to three-page narrative final report for the project by August 31, 2022. The final report should be written for a general audience, and the report should reflect current APA formatting guidelines in both the summary and the reference list. TIRF also requires a final financial report by August 31, 2022, documenting how the funding was used. Grantees must write to TIRF and ask to be sent the final report guidelines. Final reports should be sent to [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org).

**NOTE:** TIRF reserves the right to fund less than the amount requested in TIRF MRG proposals. The amount awarded is based on TIRF's available funding and on feedback from reviewers about the appropriateness of applicants' budgets.

### **Characteristics of Successful Proposals**

Applicants must use the application form (link provided below), supply all of the required information, and not exceed the page limits. Successful applicants will:

- have written proposals directly and clearly related to one of the priority research topics identified by TIRF for MRGs;
- have written literature reviews that (1) demonstrate familiarity with recent research on the topic and related issues and (2) identify a gap in the research that motivates the proposed masters-level research;
- have clearly articulated the research question(s) and/or hypothesis/es;
- have provided detailed accounts of the data collection procedures and data analysis methods to be used;
- submit a professional CV;
- propose research projects in which data collection can be completed in one year;
- propose projects that may have implications for English language educational practices;



- have proposals in which the research methods (both data collection and data analysis) are clearly articulated and are appropriate for addressing the research question(s) and/or hypothesis/es; and
- provide a clear and appropriate budget.

### Common Reasons Proposals Are Not Funded

The most common reasons for not funding a TIRF MRG proposal are the following:

- The applicant is not a masters-level student.
- The supervisor letter of support is weak and/or does not confirm the applicant's readiness to write his/her masters-level thesis.
- The applicant is not yet far enough along in his/her masters studies (i.e., does not have his/her research approved by a supervisor or supervisory committee).
- The proposal does not fit well with TIRF's areas of research focus for MRGs.
- TIRF's proposal guidelines have not been followed carefully.
- The proposal has not been carefully proofread.
- The proposal is poorly written.
- The literature review is weak (incomplete, not up to date, etc.).
- The reference list is inaccurate, incomplete, and/or does not follow [APA format](#).
- The budget is vague and/or includes disallowed expenses.

TIRF strongly recommends that you get feedback on your proposal from your research supervisor before submitting your proposal to TIRF. In addition, please ensure that ethics approval has been granted for your study before applying for a TIRF MRG.

### Application Procedures

- The deadline for receipt of complete proposals is **Thursday, April 23, 2020** (17:00 China Standard Time). No late proposals will be considered under any circumstances.
- [Click here](#) to download the Level-One MRG application form. All applicants must complete the application form.
- All applications must be submitted via TIRF's website using a single PDF document that includes all parts of the completed application. (The MRG proposal format is found near the end of this call for proposals.)
- Submit only one application. Only the first application received will be processed.
- You will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your application within five business days after the application has been uploaded. If you have not received acknowledgement within five business days, contact [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org) using the subject heading "MRG Application Received?"
- If you have difficulties submitting your proposal, send an email to [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org) using the subject heading "2020 MRG Application – Technical Difficulty."
- Please note that all communications with TIRF must be conducted in English.
- Applications must comply with the required proposal format located at the end of this document.



- Applications that do not follow these specifications or are incomplete will be rejected.
- Applicants may not exceed page limits noted in the application form.
- [Click here](#) to submit your application to TIRF. Be sure to select “MRG: Level One” from the drop-down menu on TIRF’s website.

### **Notification of Results and Disbursement of Funds**

Notification of results for TIRF MRG awards will be made by **August 31, 2020**. The project summaries of successful proposals and photographs of grant recipients will be posted on TIRF’s website by October 31, 2020.

Funding is typically paid in two installments.

1. Once awardees accept a TIRF MRG grant, they will receive the first installment, which is 70% of the award. At that time, they will also indicate what they expect to accomplish by the time the first interim report is due (i.e., the benchmarks).
2. An interim report is required at the six-month interval. In the report, awardees must note which of their research benchmarks they have reached.
3. When the research is completed, the TIRF MRG awardee has successfully defended his/her masters research, and a two- to five-page final report has been submitted and accepted by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), the third and final payment (30% of the grant) will be sent to the awardee. MRG awardees should contact TIRF for final report guidelines.
4. TIRF also requires a final financial report documenting how the funding was used. It is expected that 2020 TIRF MRG awardees will complete their research and defend their thesis within two years; therefore, final reports for TIRF MRG awards for the 2020 competition are due by August 31, 2022. Final reports should be sent to [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org). Requests for extensions beyond this date must be approved by TIRF; otherwise, monies for final payments may not be available.
5. TIRF will work directly with grantees in order to deliver installments on time. Grantees will be expected to provide their banking information to TIRF, in order to satisfy payments. TIRF will not under any circumstance provide a grantee with an audit trail for the transference of award monies.

## **MASTERS RESEARCH GRANTS: LEVEL-TWO GRANTS**

### **Features**

Level-Two MRGs are designed to assist individuals in disseminating information about their studies at conferences around the world. Such dissemination activities will assist successful applicants in their professional development efforts.

Please note the following key features of the Level-Two MRGs:

- You may only apply for a Level-Two MRG if you have been awarded a TIRF Level-One MRG in the past.



- If you are selected for a Level-Two MRG, you will need to send TIRF the conference acceptance letter you receive. At that point, you will be eligible to receive funding.
- Payments will be made to successful applicants in two phases. The first 80% of the grant will be made after award decisions are finalized. The remaining 20% will be sent to the grantee after s/he sends to TIRF a copy of the program with their name in it along with a short summary (maximum 200 words) of their experience at the conference.
- Level-Two MRGs are awarded in amounts up to RMB 14,000 per proposal. Level-Two budgets may include travel expenses, visa expenses (if applicable), conference registration fees (if any), hotel accommodations, and meals.

Please note that TIRF reserves the right to fund less than the amount requested in TIRF MRG proposals. The amount awarded is based on TIRF's available funding and on feedback from reviewers about the appropriateness of applicants' budgets.

## Application Procedures

In order to apply for a Level-Two MRG, please complete the following steps:

- [Click here](#) to download the application form. Complete the application form for Level-Two MRGs. The application form must be saved as a PDF when submitted to TIRF. In the application, you will be asked to:
  - Provide the requested background information.
  - Compose a maximum 200-word statement about why a Level-Two MRG will assist your professional development efforts.
  - Submit a short budget showing the anticipated costs of attending the conference. Allowable budget items include travel expenses to the city where the conference is being hosted, visa expenses (if applicable), conference registration fees (if any), hotel accommodations, and meals. No other budget items are allowed.
- Ask your supervisor to write a letter stating that you have completed your degree. This letter must be submitted as a PDF to TIRF on the university's letterhead. The letter must be submitted separately from your application by your professor.
- The deadline for receipt of complete proposals is **Thursday, April 23, 2020** (17:00 China Standard Time). No late proposals will be considered under any circumstances.
- All applications must be submitted via TIRF's website using a single PDF document.
- Submit only one application. Only the first application received will be processed.
- You will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your application within five business days after the application has been uploaded. If you have not received acknowledgement within five business days, contact [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org) using the subject heading "MRG Application Received?"
- If you have difficulties submitting your proposal, send an email to [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org) using the subject heading "2020 MRG Application – Technical Difficulty."
- Please note that all communications with TIRF must be conducted in English.
- [Click here](#) to submit your application to TIRF. Be sure to select "MRG: Level Two" from the drop-down menu on TIRF's website.



Please note that if you are planning on presenting at a conference in the future, you should apply now for a TIRF MRG and notify TIRF later that your paper has been accepted. Conference acceptance does not necessarily need to be obtained before applying to TIRF for funding.

In the event you are awarded a Level-Two MRG but your paper is not accepted by a conference, you can apply to another conference to use the funding. Conference acceptance must be earned within six months of award notification. TIRF reserves the right to adjust the level of funding for Level-Two MRGs, as well as cancel the awards, in the event an awardee's paper is not accepted by a conference after six months of receiving the MRG.

## TIRF MRG ADJUDICATION

TIRF MRG proposals will be reviewed by the TIRF Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and other scholars in the field who serve as external reviewers. Each proposal is vetted by at least two reviewers. If the two reviewers are not in agreement, the proposal is sent to a third reviewer. TIRF does not use external reviewers who are supervisors for students applying for MRG funding. TIRF's RAC retains final authority over all decisions concerning recommendations for funding made to the TIRF Board of Trustees. TIRF is unable to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

TIRF reserves the right to use information from project proposal summaries and final reports, including the grant recipient's photograph and email address, for dissemination on its website and in other media. Copies of publications resulting from TIRF-funded research should be sent as PDFs to [info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org). In addition, all publications and professional presentations resulting from a TIRF grant must acknowledge the support of TIRF.

## TIRF 2020 LEVEL-ONE MRG PROPOSAL FORMAT

**You must use the MRG Level-One application form when submitting your file. [Click here](#) to download that application form.**

**Items 1-5 must be sent in a single document. Be sure to save your file as a PDF before uploading it to TIRF's website. Also, it is vital that you ensure that your masters supervisor writes a strong letter of support for your application (see Item 6 below). Your supervisor must submit his/her letter of support at the link provided at the end of this document as a PDF. If the supervisor's letter is not received by the deadline, the application will not be considered.**

1. Cover page must contain each of the following pieces of information:

- Title of project
- The area of focus for TIRF Priorities

- Content-based Instruction
  - Digital Technology in Educational Contexts
  - Language Assessment
  - Teaching Young English Learners
  - Your full name and affiliation(s)
  - Your email, phone, fax, and mailing address.
  - Name, address, and email address of the research supervisor or advisor.
  - Indicate that your supervisor has provided you feedback on your application.
  - Indicate that ethics requirements have been met.
2. Project summary (200-250 words): NOTE: The summaries of successful proposals will be made public on the TIRF website as well as through other media. Please prepare your summary with this general audience in mind, and please proofread your proposal carefully.
3. Detailed proposal (four-page maximum, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font): using the following section headings:
- **Statement of research issue:** State the problem and its relationship to the area of focus under [TIRF's Research Priorities](#).
  - **Theoretical background:** Please integrate within this section the research literature that you are drawing upon to situate your study; you must convince the reviewers that you are familiar with current, relevant research in the area of the research priority.
  - **Research methodology:** Articulate the research questions (and/or hypotheses) and clearly explain what data collection and data analysis procedures will be used. The data collection and analysis procedures must be well chosen to address the research question(s) and/or test the hypotheses.
  - **Implications:** Provide a clear statement of the likely implications of the proposed research for theory, policy, and practice.
  - **Timetable:** Provide a clear timetable (in months) of the tasks that will be accomplished in order to complete the research and write the dissertation.
  - **Research ethics:** Provide a brief explanation of how principles of research ethics will be upheld. If you are not familiar with guidelines for ethical research, you may consult the "[Informed Consent Guidelines](#)" published at the back of each issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* or in most current research methods textbooks in education.
  - **References:** Provide an up-to-date list of selected references (one to two pages maximum) in APA format (please use 7<sup>th</sup> edition). References are not included in the four-page limit for your detailed proposal. (For help with APA formatting, consider visiting:  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_style\\_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html))
4. Detailed budget and brief rationale for all items (two-page maximum):
- Itemized expenses directly related to the research (e.g., personnel, transportation, communication, dissemination, supplies, and other expenses).



- Please note that purchases of computers or computer hardware are not allowable budget items. Personal expenses, such as the cost of tuition, storage, moving, insurance, childcare, income replacement, and rent, are not permissible budget items.
  - Travel funds for data collection and/or required researcher-meetings are allowable in Level-One TIRF MRGs. A brief rationale is needed for all budget items. Please be as specific as possible and indicate all costs in United States dollars. Also, please make sure to include a final total amount and double-check that the total is correct.
  - If applicable, provide a statement about other research funding applied for or received for the same project or for a larger/related study. Also explain how the TIRF MRG grant will make a unique contribution to the successful completion of the project. (NOTE: You are permitted to seek or obtain additional funds to complete the research project, but you should explain the nature, amount, and function of the funding from the different sources.)
  - For other information about allowed/disallowed budget items or limits, please see TIRF MRG Grant Features section, above.
  - The budget is not included in the four-page limit of the detailed proposal.
5. A short, current CV (two-page maximum) must be included within the master document that you upload to the TIRF website.
- Please do **not** send separate attachment files for each section of the proposal, including this one.
  - The two-page CV is **not** included in the four-page limit.
6. Letter from masters supervisor:
- Supervisor letters are due on the same day that the TIRF MRG applications are due. A signed **one-page letter of support** must be uploaded to TIRF’s website by the supervisor of the masters-level student. Supervisors **must first save the letter as a PDF** and then [click here](#) to upload the document. (After clicking the link, the supervisor must select “Supervisor Letter of Support for TIRF MRG Applicants” and complete the remaining fields. It is important to include the TIRF MRG applicant’s name in the “Subject Title or Description” field.) Supervisors will receive a confirmation email from TIRF within five business days notifying them that their letter of support has been received.
- Please do not submit letters from more than one supervisor. To be eligible, you must have your research proposal or topic approved by your masters-level supervisor, your supervisory committee, or by appropriate faculty. The letter from the research supervisor should comment on your readiness and ability to undertake the proposed research project. The supervisor should also indicate that he/she has read the proposal that is being submitted. Applicants should make sure their supervisors understand that the letters of recommendation are essential to the TIRF MRG proposal adjudication process and must be submitted by the stated application deadline.
- [Click here](#) to submit your 2020 TIRF MRG proposal.