This article under the heading “Education up close” continues our series of presentations about educational institutes for translators and interpreters. National and international institutes are given the opportunity to introduce themselves. Furthermore we would like to call other educational institutes to send us their contributions, presenting their educational focus and their special features.

Das Fremdspracheninstitut der Landeshauptstadt München
Munich’s College of Translation Studies

- a practice-oriented training course to become a state-certified translator and interpreter

If you are looking for a sound, future-oriented training course geared to everyday practice to help you graduate as a recognised state-certified translator and/or interpreter within a short period of time, Munich’s College of Translation Studies, the FIM, is the right place to go. FIM is the only public institute in Germany offering a training course in preparation for the above qualification; the other four language colleges in Bavaria that offer the same course are private, fee-paying institutions. The exam itself can also be taken in other federal states. (MDÜ 3/2001, p. 43)

Depending on your language level the qualification can be obtained in 2 or 3 years. The students have to choose a major and a subsidiary foreign language from English, French and Spanish. In addition they specialize either in engineering or in economics.

Unlike many other institutes the teaching schedule is organized very strictly. Most of the classes are held in the core timetable from 8am to 2pm. This means, there is no time lost and it is taken into account that most students work because they have to earn their living. Since FIM has room for about 350 students and they are taught in relatively small groups, it is also possible to monitor each individual and nobody gets lost in the anonymous crowd.

What are the focal points of this vocational training?

The main priorities of our institute are set on training objectives and course structures that meet the requirements of the business world taking future trends into account all the time. That is why for many years computer-aided translation, theory and practice of terminology work and proficiency in the handling of the leading translation tools have been integral elements of the course. A learning module on the topic “Software Localisation” has been introduced, enlisting not only the expertise of in-house lecturers, but also the help of employees from well-known localisation companies and tool manufacturers.

The promotion of traditional skills is a matter of course i.e. foreign language and translation skills, mother-tongue abilities and cultural awareness. However, the last two have changed in content: the promotion of native-speaker competence now includes, among other aspects, text production and rhetoric with such activities as presentation technique. Cultural awareness is now more focused in intercultural differences and on imparting intercultural communication skills.
Students can attend a wide range of optional courses alongside their compulsory classes. Among these courses you will find information technology, workshops for further foreign languages and, part of their training, career related course for example on DIN standards (DIN 12345) or quality management. Key qualifications such as teamwork ability, the ability to communicate, the ability to work under pressure and the motivation to perform, are promoted in the form of project work.

**How can practice-oriented vocational training be guaranteed?**

This goes of course hand in hand with project-oriented teaching methods. With the help of projects students can take their first steps into the real world of translation and interpreting. Translation projects are organized for example to familiarise students with the acquisition of clients, the estimation of costs, the translation itself as well as how to issue an invoice. On the one hand this is a simulate situation, yet on the other hand it practice-oriented experience. This practice-oriented work involved for example, among other things, an internet homepage for “Projekt-Management GmbH”, a customer information brochure for a Fresh bank (CMB) on the euro cash exchange and a lot more. A project under the title “Final exams passed – what next?” was worked on in teams and resented in front of a large audience. The project entailed the analysing of the translation marked, interpreting and terminology work by means of current market research methods.

During their studies we also offer particularly committed students the opportunity to interpret at conferences and other organisations, for example, for international companies or institutes like the Institut Francais and also media companies like the Discovery Channel or provide a service for written translations. These jobs are supervised by our lecturers, most of whom also work as translators and interpreters, alongside teaching. In this way we are able to create the best conditions to achieve our aim of combining theory and practice. Here is one example, which shows that our endeavour pay off. In October 2001 students at our college had the opportunity to prove their skills as a simultaneous interpreter in practice at the Xarxa congress – a municipal authorities association comprising seven cities in different European countries which promotes the quality of vocational training. And although the cabins for the interpreters had been provided, the system was working, the terminology had been prepared and the members of each team of interpreters were used to each other, they all had sweaty hands and butterflies. But thanks to the detailed preparation and the intensive training given by our lectures, the interpreting was done so well, that our “beginners” got numerous offers for future jobs straight away.

**What else does FIM offer?**

The institute is a beautiful neo-renaissance building from the 19th century, which is located in the direct vicinity of the university in the centre of Munich. It has all necessary things, well, almost all: an extensive library, up-to-date computer rooms and last bit no least a cozy cafeteria. In the newly landscaped gardens you can find peace and quiet.

More than half of our lecturers come from more than ten English-, French- and Spanish-speaking countries; our students hail from more than 30 countries. This means that the field of intercultural communications is not only prevalent in theory, but it also contributes decisively to the open-minded and tolerant atmosphere that has a vital influence on people working tighter well.
What are the career prospects?

In Munich itself there is a large number of international companies, local authorities, software developers and patent attorneys. News has spread that the training at FIM is good and therefore appropriate job offers are often made directly to FIM itself. This has enabled as to place numerous students in good jobs. Of course there are offers from throughout Germany and above all from foreign countries of the languages the students learn, too. FIM alumni can be found all over the world. Many of them keep in contact with their alma mater, which enables us to pass on useful advice to our students.

For detailed information check out

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