



Translating and interpreting

Travel and trade between countries has increased dramatically in recent years with the introduction of the Internet and high-speed transport links. Communications between nations is vital and has led to a burgeoning demand for translating and interpreting services. This is reflected in the increasing number of courses in translation and interpretation – including new degree courses – available in the United Kingdom (UK).

Checklist: Why study translating and interpreting in the United Kingdom?

- the UK has responded to growing demand for these skills with new first degree and postgraduate courses
- your UK degree will be recognised all over the world
- you can study at many levels, both through academic courses and through the UK professional body, the Institute of Linguists
- your mastery of English will improve dramatically as you live and study in the country in which it is spoken
- UK institutions have a long tradition of welcoming international students and many have dedicated international departments to help you academically and socially.

1 What can I study?

Before you choose a course, you need to be clear on whether your interest is in interpreting (spoken language) or translating (written language).

Interpreting is a highly specialised skill that will not suit all linguists, however proficient. It is usual for interpreters to specialise in either simultaneous interpreting (where you interpret what someone is saying at the same time as they are speaking) or consecutive interpreting (where you wait for the speaker to finish a few sentences and then interpret what has been said).

Translating calls for slightly different skills. Translators need a meticulous mind to search for the correct word or phrase and to make sure that they are clear about ambiguous or complicated wording. In literary translation, for example, the translator needs to recreate the literary effects the original novelist, playwright or poet intended in another language.

Many courses combine translating and interpreting, but others specialise in just one. If you opt for a course that combines both, you will have the flexibility to focus on whichever proves to be your stronger area. Universities can provide advice prior to enrolment.

There are degree courses in both modern languages and translation and modern languages and interpreting. There are also first and postgraduate qualifications that offer options in specialist areas, including:

- film translation
- literary translation
- machine translation
- translation from English
- ab initio languages (languages from the beginning)

- linguistics

Type of study	Description	Examples
<p>Professional qualifications</p> <p>The Institute of Linguists (IoL) is the UK's largest membership organisation for professional translators, interpreters, language educationalists and those using languages in industry and commerce.</p> <p>The IoL is also a language assessment and accredited awarding body.</p>	<p>The examinations are qualifications of practical and vocational linguistic skills, currently available in nearly forty languages at centres throughout the UK and overseas.</p> <p>The Institute provides a range of public examinations from upper-intermediate to professional translator or public service interpreter level.</p> <p>They can be taken at the IoL's London centre or at other accredited centres.</p> <p>You can take them part time or full time. You can see all the IoL qualifications on the website www.iol.org.uk (see 'Qualifications')</p>	<p>Diploma in Translation</p> <p>Certificate in Bilingual Skills</p> <p>Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (available in health, local government, English law, Scottish law)</p> <p>Final Diploma in English and Chinese</p>
<p>First degrees</p>	<p>Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) or undergraduate Master of Arts (MA) degrees taken at universities. A BA/BSc can take three or four years and an undergraduate MA four years. Some courses include an additional year spent abroad in a country where the language you are studying is spoken – these are known as sandwich courses.</p> <p>A complete list of courses may be viewed at www.educationuk.org.</p> <p>Some IoL qualifications are also linguistically equivalent to a degree (such as the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting) – all IoL qualifications are listed on its web site www.iol.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting and translating with double honours languages (four year full-time BA, University of East Anglia) • Languages (interpreting and translating), German/Spanish (four year full-time MA, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh) • Modern languages and Arabic translation and interpretation (four year full-time BA, University of Salford) • Aston University in Birmingham offers three four year BSc sandwich degrees in modern languages with translation studies (with French and German combined or as single languages)
<p>Postgraduate diplomas and degrees</p>	<p>You can do either a diploma or a Master's degree in interpreting and translating. These are usually combined, but may be one discipline only.</p> <p>Some universities prepare linguists for professional careers, covering documentary translation, liaison interpreting, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting.</p> <p>The IoL Diploma in Translation has one general paper and two specialised papers in technology, business, literature, science, social science or law.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Leeds offers a twelve-month MA in interpreting and translating studies with options in film translation, machine translation, translation from English, ab initio languages and linguistics • The University of Bath offers a twelve-month postgraduate diploma for professional interpreters and translators • Exeter University offers a twelve-month MA in literary translation
<p>Qualifications for professionals other than linguists</p>	<p>Community Interpreting – Essential Skills and Knowledge course, accredited by Open College Network London Region. The course offers accreditation at levels 2 and 3.</p> <p>Community Translation – Principles and Practice course, accredited by the same body and also offering levels 2 and 3. You would need a good grasp of English www.iol.org.uk or www.educationuk.org.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IoL Diploma in public service interpreting • The Mary Ward Centre, London – ten-week part-time certificate in community interpreting, immigration and police services

Checklist: Choosing the right course

- Do some research in the countries in which you want to work to see if a degree would carry more prestige than a professional qualification.
- Make sure you are clear on the differences between interpreting (spoken language) and translating (written language), as some courses either concentrate on one or the other of these.
- Always get the prospectuses of individual institutions.
- If you are interested in the Institute of Linguists' professional qualifications, download the handbooks for the examinations from the IoL website.

2 Entrance

For degree courses, you will be asked for A-levels/Scottish Highers or the equivalent – the grades will vary according to the institution.

Your skill in English

Academic courses in the UK presume that you will be translating/interpreting into and out of English, so you will require a very good standard of English. Some universities insist on TOEFL 570–590 or IELTS 6.5–7, but may still make a conditional offer provided a pre-sessional English Language training course is taken before the degree programme starts.

3 How can I register as a professional?

There is no requirement for translators or interpreters to be registered in the UK, but you should check in the countries in which you want to work.

The internationally recognised professional association for foreign language practitioners is the Institute of Linguists (IoL). The IoL has four categories of membership:

- Fellow FIL
- Member MIL
- Associate AIL
- Registered Student.

Fellow (FIL) is the highest class of membership and is a mark of advanced professional standing, distinction as a linguist, or distinguished services to languages.

Member (MIL) is the main professional grade of Institute membership and is intended for those whose professional skill as a linguist is a primary requirement for the work in which they are engaged. To become a member you must have either (a) a recognised degree-level qualification and at least three years' professional experience, or (b) a recognised postgraduate qualification and at least one year's professional experience.

Associate (AIL) is the grade for those whose foreign-language skill is a valuable professional tool but not necessarily a primary qualification for their job; or those whose employment demands high level foreign-language skill, but who do not yet have the requisite length of relevant experience, or appropriate qualification for admission as members.

You can also register as an interpreter on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI), maintained by the IoL.

Would a United Kingdom qualification be recognised in other countries?

Your qualifications in this field should be recognised all over the world. The Institute of Linguists' qualifications are recognised in education, industry and professional life as a measure of competence in language skills.

Checklist: Your next steps

- Look carefully through individual course details and through the examination structure of the Institute of Linguists to see which best suits your needs.
- After your preliminary searches, always obtain the prospectuses of institutions that interest you.
- Make sure your English Language skills are good enough for the course you want to take – this is especially important as many students believe their English does not have to be good.
- For an objective view of the standard of the university department, look up the Teaching Quality Assessment www.qaa.ac.uk/revreps/reviewreports.htm to see how the department has scored (See *Quality issues* in this series for further information).

Where can I find more information?

British Council Education information

Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

EducationUK Scotland

Website www.educationukscotland.org

Wales International Consortium

Website www.walesinternationalconsortium.com

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

P O Box 28
Cheltenham
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Institute of Linguists

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Web site www.iol.org.uk

Other useful resources

British Qualifications 34th ed. (Kogan Page, 2004 0 7494 4138 0) – lists every recognised qualification on offer in the UK, by schools, colleges, universities, business schools, learned societies, trade and professional bodies and associations.

Careers Using Languages (Ostarhild E, Kogan Page 2002, ISBN 0 7494 3731 6) – comprehensive descriptions of the structure of the industry and the jobs available. Includes lists of places to study, useful addresses and further reading.

Occupations 2004 (DfES 2003, ISBN 0 86110864 7) Connexions compilation of in-depth guide of over 600 career choices of all types from unskilled to professional work, also list prospects and qualification for each occupation.

NB. Please note these books may not be available at your local British Council office.

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