



UCC

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Fheabhsú Cáilíochta
Quality Enhancement

SCHOOL OF
LANGUAGES, LITERATURES AND CULTURES

QUALITY REVIEW

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GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

***WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN THE MA TRANSLATION STUDIES:
E-PORTFOLIOS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

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1. CONTEXT

Translation Studies is a core area of interdisciplinary work in the **School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (SLLC)** at University College Cork, crossing the boundaries between applied linguistics, comparative literature, history and area studies, cultural studies, audio-visual studies, and ICT. This is manifest through translation education and research at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as in the contributions to practice and scholarship from the School's vibrant research community and the Translation and Creative Practice cluster within the Centre for Advanced Studies in Languages and Cultures (CASiLaC). However, it is most notably through the delivery of the **MA in Translation Studies** that staff across the five departments in the SLLC bring together their expertise in several aspects of the discipline, in collaboration with the School of Irish Learning. This makes for a rich programme which allows students to develop the high-level linguistic and intercultural competence necessary to become professional translators, build a career in the language and localisation industry, or work in a broad range of other fields like business, commerce, publishing, tourism, and journalism.

Since its establishment in 2012, the MATS has evolved to draw on existing strengths and long-standing research interests within the School, while responding to a changing job market through opportunities for specialist training which reflect national and international occupational standards. In 2018 the programme became member of the **European Master's in Translation (EMT) Network**, an internationally recognised accreditation, awarded to programmes that meet the European Commission's criteria for translation education. The current structure, content, and learning outcomes of the course reflect the EMT's priority of enhancing the work-readiness of translation graduates through a focus on **work-integrated learning**. The combination of academic and work-related activities in the programme is best exemplified by the introduction of a professional practice workshop series culminating in the creation of a digital portfolio which is aimed at making connections between all aspects of the curriculum and their practical application to the workplace.

Professional E-Portfolio

MODULE	LL6018 – Contemporary Translation Theory and Practice
CREDITS	5/10 credits
DELIVERY	6 x 1 hr workshops: tutor-led practical work and guest speakers Self-directed learning: individual research and group discussions
COHORT	15-20 MATS students (EU and non-EU)
OBJECTIVE	To provide students with an understanding of the knowledge, skills and competences required of a professional translator
ASSESSMENT	2,500-word digital portfolio showcasing evidence of learning in each of the key professional competences

2. PURPOSE

Societal changes and technological advances are having an impact not only on the way translation and localisation services are performed, but also on the range of activities that individuals and businesses in the sector need to provide to respond to an increasingly globalised but equally diverse market. As a result, the MATS at UCC seeks to make students aware of the challenges and opportunities arising from this ever-evolving landscape and to equip them with both specialist and general skills that allow them to adapt accordingly.

The MATS has always benefited from broad collaborative links established through individual and institutional membership of translation organisations, joint research work, and formal and informal relations with employers and practitioners. Over the years these have resulted in numerous **employability initiatives** such as careers talks, research seminars, practical workshops, talks by industry guest speakers, field trips and community events aimed at providing students with a clearer understanding of the language industry. The e-portfolio was introduced with a view to formalising and integrating all these learning experiences in a meaningful manner that allows students to better articulate their impact.

The MATS professional e-portfolio is a collection of assignments, reflections, and learning experiences structured in a customisable online format. As a pedagogical tool, the e-portfolio facilitates **assessment of and for learning**, allowing students to synthesise the knowledge and skills gained inside and outside of the classroom, and to demonstrate their capacity for critical reflection and self-evaluation. As a professional development exercise, it encourages students to chart their competences against the EMT standards, identify opportunities for growth, and build a professional profile that can be shared with potential employers.

3. DESIGN

To become a member of the EMT Network, the MATS had to demonstrate coverage of the five competence areas outlined in the **EMT Competence Framework** as key for translators to succeed in today's market: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal skills and service provision. The EMT accreditation process was therefore an important milestone in the development of the programme, highlighting the aspects that needed to be reinforced to ensure alignment between assessment, instructional activities, and intended course outcomes.

With an increased focus on new technologies to complement the strong existing strategic and methodological core, the introduction of the e-portfolio and the accompanying professional practice workshops then responds to the need for students to identify and develop their **personal and interpersonal skills** and their capacity to **provide professional language services**.

Tutor-led workshops address competences such as organising, budgeting, and managing translation projects or complying with professional ethical codes and standards, while talks by guest speakers raise students' awareness of industry needs and emerging job profiles. By building their portfolio, in turn, students are expected to analyse their own training needs, create a career plan, and showcase their progress in the different areas.

Underpinning the initiative is the MATS engagement with the **Connected Curriculum** at UCC. As a model of work-integrated learning, **employability** is a key feature, but the e-portfolio also contributes to bringing together all other aspects of the programme, such as the **interdisciplinarity and research-based nature** of its diverse module offering, as well as the course's **global reach**, which is evident in the range of languages and cultural contexts supported, its diverse student cohort, and its many collaborative links with scholars, practitioners, and employers.

The goals of the e-portfolio are in line with the **Graduate Attributes** programme in multiple ways too. As professional communicators, students learn to become creators and evaluators of knowledge, to develop advanced digital skills, and to find creative solutions to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication issues arising from social and business relations in an increasingly interconnected world while considering potential ethical implications.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The professional e-portfolio is a compulsory element of continuous assessment in **LL6018 - Contemporary Translation Theory and Practice**, a 10-credit core module in the MATS. The objectives of this module are to introduce students to the main theories, methodologies, and concepts applicable to translation research and practice, and to provide students with an understanding of the knowledge, skills and competences required of a professional translator.

Through group seminars and self-direct study, the first part of the module explores the various linguistic, cultural, and ideological issues that arise when translating a text into another language and culture. This is assessed by a 3,000-word essay on any aspect of the theories and approaches covered. The second part focuses on the development of the skills required for **professional practice and service provision** and is delivered by means of six one-hour workshops dealing with the following topics:

- Discovering careers in the language industry
- Conducting a training needs analysis and building a professional CV
- Using social media for professional purposes
- Getting started as a translator, acquiring clients and managing projects
- Researching the local employment landscape
- Self-assessing the use of translation technologies
- Discussing ethical codes and standards in Europe and Ireland

The workshops are led by a tutor with the presence of various guest speakers and include different activities like personal reflection, group research and online discussions. The assessment involves the creation of a **2,500-word digital portfolio showcasing evidence of learning in each of the key professional competences**. Students can create their portfolio directly on Canvas, UCC's virtual learning environment or any other platform of their choice, like Pathbrite or WordPress, which allows them to make their work public as a first professional website, if they wish to. As a personal space, students are free to customise it to their liking, although they are required to include the following sections:

1. Personal summary stating experiences, goals and ambitions
2. Training needs analysis, career plan and professional CV
3. Language competence goals and progression
4. Samples of translation work with a commentary of the skills acquired
5. Evidence of development of technology competences
6. Evidence of personal/interpersonal skills, link to professional social media profile
7. Evidence of service provision competences and summary of key learnings from a sample of talks and workshops with external speakers.

The sections are linked to each of the key translator competences as defined by the EMT Competence Framework and, together, provide a **snapshot of students' personal and professional development** in the course. The e-portfolio represents 100/200 marks for the module, awarded based on the inclusion of all the required elements, a professional presentation and a clear demonstration of critical and reflective thinking.

5. EVALUATION

EMT accreditation is undoubtedly a sign of the MATS focus on providing students with comprehensive professional training that responds to new market requirements. The programme attracts around 15-20 students each year, some of whom go on to further study, and many of whom enter the labour force shortly after or even before graduation.

Many of the MATS students find employment in different roles with global companies based in Ireland (e.g., Amazon, Apple, Vox Pro, Dell EMC, TikTok, Facebook, Cognizant, GlobeTech, Blizzard), while others take different paths within the language industry: from starting their own businesses as freelance translators and interpreters to taking up internships in supranational organisations such as the EU Parliament or the Court of Justice, or working in-house as project managers, language specialists, or localisation testers for various language service providers and communication enterprises (e.g. Nova Languages Solutions, Vistatec, MoGi, TransPerfect, Translation.ie, Translit, Zendesk). This strong track record of facilitating **the integration of its graduates into the job market** is perhaps the best proof of the success of the professional practice workshop series and the e-portfolio.

Since its implementation in 2018, the e-portfolio has proven to help students develop the ability to integrate and articulate the competences acquired in the programme by creating a dedicated space to document and showcase their learning. While many of the initiatives around the portfolio predate its introduction, their configuration around this innovative method of assessment (i) enhances their **visibility**, (ii) highlights the **synergy** that exists between all aspects of the course, and (iii) makes their workplace **applicability** more explicit to students. Samples of students' portfolios demonstrating their capacity to critically reflect on their skills development can be seen in the Appendix below.

Nevertheless, some challenges remain. In the medium to long term, the value of the portfolio as both an assessment and a professional development tool could be enhanced through a redistribution of core credits. As part of an independent module, the portfolio and professional practice workshops could be directly linked to **placement opportunities** or simulation-based training through the establishment of a **translation laboratory** or virtual company that allowed the students to gain first-hand experience of various roles within the language and localisation industry.

In the short term, the **sustainability of employability efforts** is perhaps the greatest threat facing the e-portfolio initiative and the MATS programme as a whole. The professional practice workshops and expert talks rely heavily on both the experience and expertise of staff in temporary contracts and individual relationships with industry representatives and practitioners willing to act as guest speakers. Although opportunities abound for establishing formal partnerships or regular collaborations with scholars and employers, **further investment in strategic resourcing** is necessary to ensure the effective management and continuity of these activities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The current MA in Translation Studies was developed considering industry needs and training standards, following examples of good practice in other universities, both nationally and internationally, and bringing to the fore existing expertise in the School. Throughout the years, the programme has evolved with a view to improving the student experience, responding to the growth and diversification of cohorts and addressing the changing needs of the market.

With work-integrated learning as a driver, not only can students avail of professional training that matches internationally recognised criteria, but they also receive guidance in how to connect, assess and articulate their skills. By offering a dedicated professional practice workshop series and encouraging students to reflect on their learning through a digital portfolio, the MATS facilitates the integration into the labour market of new language professionals who are trained in the tools and methods used by contemporary translators and are ready to adapt to the many career paths available to them inside and outside of the language and localisation industry.

APPENDIX

The **EMT Competence Framework** identifies five key competence areas for translators to succeed in today's market: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal skills and service provision. The following extracts from students' portfolios exemplify student learning in each of these areas and how they are integrated through their work across the programme.

Service provision

"The seminar made it clearer that the EMT is organised in such a way that it aims to prepare you with the skills to actively find work in the translation industry by not only focusing on translation but also the skills and competences needed from a technical and practical viewpoint. It also aims to help you understand and implement the standards that are applicable in the provision of a translation service. This seminar highlighted the necessity of the marketing and profiling capabilities that are indispensable to find work as a freelance translator."

"I learned that service provision in translation is heavily reliant on an understanding of the market and demands of the industry. I also acknowledge the significance of creating a network with other translators. Having a network allows you to collectively monitor new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements and emerging projects. I recognize that service provision goes beyond budget negotiation and project management, but that it also involves a certain responsibility. [...] From this exercise, I understood the importance of clarifying the requirement, objectives and purposes of the client. Establishing efficient communication between the client and translator is also important, especially for a time sensitive project. Effective service provision can improve your reputation as translator and in turn expose you to new projects."

"A big part of a (freelance) translator's job is to know how to negotiate effectively with potential clients. [...] As part of our professional practice workshops, I had the opportunity to practice negotiating with clients in a simulated situation. Along with a few classmates, I established a rate of pay based on the client's time frame and language requirements. [...] We defined a deadline with the client and managed to negotiate more time to work on the project as the original timeline was not feasible. I gained experience in discussing non-disclosure agreements and confidentiality in regard to the translation contracts. Additionally, it goes without saying that all of our correspondence with the client was done in a formal and professional manner. This simulated experience was incredibly valuable, and it shed light on the importance of client negotiation for me. It highlighted all of the various aspects of contract negotiations that translators need to be aware of and underlined how a translator can

negotiate politely and professionally while still ensuring that the terms they establish with the client are realistic and feasible.”

Personal and interpersonal skills

“Two examples of opportunities that have allowed me to use and develop my personal and interpersonal skills during the course have been 1) creating an online discussion space to connect and network with my classmates who primarily interact in an online environment because of the current pandemic and 2) carrying some collaborative research on the professional profiles of translators with one of my classmates. [...] We spoke about the people we knew, past colleagues and classmates who were now working in either translation or interpreting jobs and what we knew of their experiences in the field. The idea given in the class was to research the professional profiles of some professional translators and to pick out some things that were done well and some things that could be improved upon in terms of presentation and content. This was a first step in building a critique which we could then apply to our own professional profiles, in terms of layout and building the skills and experience now that might appear as lacking in other profiles.”

“Translators/interpreters are the link in a chain between two people who do not speak the same language to ensure that clear communication is possible. This is a huge responsibility. Having completed the Values Based Indicator of Motivation, it is clear that openness, integrity, personal growth and accountability are key values for me. A value that was identified as being "more important than consciously thought" was connection. This indicates that, for me, being part of a team is important. I think the solitary nature of freelance translation would not be the correct fit for my personality type. I also realise that I do not appreciate the uncertainty of self-employment, even with the benefit of the inherent flexibility, and would prefer to be employed by a corporation or an organisation.”

Technology

“For me, the greatest development in my translation-related technology competencies was mastering the basics of the computer-assisted translation tools. During the Introduction to Translation Technologies course, we had the opportunity to practice using the CAT tools SDL Trados Studio and Wordfast Anywhere. [...] I focused on the functionality of Wordfast Anywhere by creating a video presentation demonstrating that I could translate with the tool and use many of its function. I created the video presentation using Quick Time Player to record my voice and the screen at once and edited it in iMovie, which also allowed me to practice with creating and organising multimedia files to make a finished video product.”

“In our module on translation technologies, we focused on the CAT tool SDL Trados for translation and post editing. I plan to take the SDL Trados exam by the end of the academic year to have the official certificate to add to my CV and LinkedIn, as competency and experience with CAT tools is an excellent way to stand out to an employer.”

Translation

“I learned that the quality of subtitles relies on how well-structured and well-timed they are. They also must coincide with the correct reading speed. The fact that they are idiomatic and consistent is also extremely important. From the point of view of localization, I also learned how important it is that the tagline of a product or show must translate to all the required cultures and languages. This information has taught me how important quality is in translation, and how much success high quality output can generate for a product.”

“One of our translation assignments involved lightly post-editing a translation. The native document was in a PDF format, meaning I needed to use a CAT tool that would allow me to convert the file to a bilingual translatable format. The CAT tool also needed to have a built-in machine translation (MT) that offers Irish translation. It is interesting to learn about translation technologies through a minority language, as there is still a lot of work to be done to improve MT output. A lack of data prevents certain MT output from reaching the same standard as is available in bigger languages, but NMTs like Google Translate are carving the path for future MTs by showing that an increase in data equals an improvement in MT quality. [...] Initially, I found it difficult not to make any preferential or stylistic changes to the text, but instead to ensure that the text was comprehensible. Post-editing asks the translator to work with the machine and to optimize what it has produced, as opposed to working against it. Light post-editing in a sense goes against a lot of what we learn as linguists, and therefore takes practice.”

Language and culture

“During the professional development classes, we discussed the importance of demonstrating proficiency in writing in your target language or L1, in my case, English, and how we might do this by publishing some samples of writing during the year. After reflection, I can understand why a solid command of my L1 is essential for secondary translation activities such as proofreading and post-editing. I decided to write some pieces for submission to the student hub in the second semester as well as signing up for a subscription to the Irish Times and committing to reading it weekly. Staying up to date with current affairs also proved helpful for the Interpreting module in semester 1 and is generally useful when taking on a range of texts for translation. I plan to continue with these two new habits, as well as keeping up my teaching skills, to progress with my training and plan.”

JUDITH ALFIS E-PORTFOLIO

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Welcomel Benvenuti!

My name is Judith Alfis. I am currently completing an MA in Translation Studies in University College Cork, specialising in Italian translation. Prior to attending UCC, I completed a Bachelor of Arts (Interpersonal) in BA(LC), studying English and Italian. During this time, my love for language and literature truly blossomed and I received multiple academic achievement awards from both the English and Italian department. As part of my undergraduate degree, I spent a year studying at the University of Urbino, Italy. During this year, I greatly enhanced my Italian communication skills as well as intercultural skills and I had the opportunity to study both Italian and English literature.

While I have always been passionate about languages, I experienced first-hand the value of intercultural communication skills after spending a year abroad. Furthermore, through studying literature in both English and Italian as part of my undergraduate degree, I became aware of the wide variety of texts and stories that were made available to me through translation. As a result, I realised that a career in translation could be an ideal way to satisfy my love for literature and the Italian language. Therefore, my long-term ambition is to become a literary translator while my short-term goal is to complete my master's degree having made the most of the resources and tools at my disposal.

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Experienced.

My name is Gillian Quinlan and I am currently a student on the Masters in Translation Studies program in U.C.C. I graduated from U.C.D. with a Bachelor of Social Science in 1990 and a post-graduate Diploma in Business Studies in 1991. I completed a H.Dip in French in U.C.C. in 2020, graduating with first class honours. I lived in France for almost 10 years which is where I acquired my great love of the French language. I have a wide range of experience in my previous career. I worked in the textile industry for almost 20 years as Sales and Marketing Manager for a fabric editor specialising in haute couture and interior design fabrics.