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Online course to boost translators

In a bid to boost the number of good English-language translators, Bristol University has launched an on line master's degree.

The European Commission recently highlighted the need for translators and this year over 40 new postgraduates at the University are rising to the challenge.

The innovative e-learning teaching method is aimed at busy professionals who wish to retrain or acquire a new skill.

Available to study on a part-time or full-time basis, the programme allows students to fit studying around other commitments and prepares them for work.

Students can choose from one of seven languages including Czech, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish. These are taught by professional translators and academic staff, combining academic rigour with a practical grasp of industry needs. Although working from home terminals all over the world, the students meet up and network in a virtual seminar room. Students can gain a competitive edge in the job market through internships in the European Union, collaboration with professional associations and links with translation companies. One student, who lives in Germany, said: "I decided that a flexible learning opportunity would give me the opportunity to start off as a freelance translator while acquiring the necessary qualification. This MA is testing my self-discipline, which is a pre-requisite for a freelance translator, while offering me help, assistance and encouragement all the way."

"Although everything works virtually; I really feel I am part of a study group, which is fun and helpful. I find the diversity of the other students fascinating: some are working full time, some have children to look after, some live in an other country like me."

"There is a great group atmosphere on Blackboard the learning platform. We 'talk' on Blackboard like we would talk on any social forum. Although I am not in the same country as my tutors, I know they are always available for me and I am treated as a 'normal' student. One of them organised a work placement for me at the European Commission, which was a truly fantastic experience."