UCL Education
Translation studies: unique agreement between UCL and NATO

On 23 January 2018 UCL and NATO headquarters in Brussels signed a cooperation agreement in the field of translation. The objective is to facilitate the entry into the workforce of UCL translation students via internships and workshops commissioned by NATO managers.

The first steps in the professional workforce can sometimes resemble an obstacle course. It’s no different for the translator. Students sometimes mention the difference between university learning and practising the profession on a daily basis, especially when it comes to the pace of professional life, the need to quickly make a decision on the best choice of translation and the need to compromise and respect deadlines, whereas the student could take the time to perfect his or her work.

Thus UCL decided to increase its number of partnerships with the professional world, especially intergovernmental institutions, in order to better equip its students. After establishing links with the European Union, the Louvain School of Translation and Interpreting (UCL) signed an agreement with the translation service of the headquarters North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The agreement provides for terminological exchanges, visits and workshops by conducted by NATO translators at UCL, as well as enhanced recruiting collaboration.

Philippe Hiligsmann, Dean of the UCL Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Letters, said, ‘The signing of this agreement with NATO is one of UCL’s priorities: strengthening links between training and the wider business community. The purpose of these links is not to generate “tailor-made” graduates but to familiarise students – long before they enter the labour market – with the expectations and constraints of international companies and organisations. This agreement with NATO will contribute to improving the quality of educational programmes.’

Raphael Prono of the NATO Translation Service explained, ‘We wanted to connect with a large university such as UCL because we realised that French translators were not necessarily aware that NATO was a bilingual organisation and that its headquarters had an internal team. We see an opportunity to better inform students about our work and help them prepare for our recruitment competitions.’ For the NATO Translation Team, the goal is clear: finding new talent that will flourish in a service that strives for excellence.

UCL’s translation students have already had the opportunity to undertake professional internships during their studies (especially with the EU). According to Zoé, who worked with the European Commission’s translation service, her experience helped me get ahead and gain confidence in my work. The critiques were always constructive and justified. I think I made the most of it: the recommendations and information collected from my colleagues during my internship will allow me to take another step towards working life.’ With this new agreement, UCL students will be able to benefit from the advice of professionals accustomed to translating the joint statements of the heads of state and government of the 29 NATO countries, as well as cutting-edge technical documents.

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