

A new look for the PSG

It is only five years since Lanna Castellano launched the Peer Support Group. The scheme has been a huge success and we are inviting applications for next year's course



Cate Avery is a freelance translator, specialising in patent translations and working from German and French to English. She has been joint coordinator of the PSG, and sometimes a tutor, since its inception in 2003.

Thanks also go to Nick Rosenthal for additional material. Nick is the Managing Director of Salford Translations Ltd. He has been a tutor on the PSG since 2005 and has a special interest in marketing.

What exactly is the PSG?

The PSG is a business course, which is run annually, starting in March. It all takes place online and participants have come from all over the UK and beyond: last year's course included one person on the island of Skye and another in the United States. There are typically 20 to 25 participants. The course is only available to Associates and Qualified Members of ITI, so it is one of the many benefits of joining.

The course consists of exercises in which, under the guidance of senior and experienced translators, mentees work on their CVs and marketing literature, develop a business and marketing plan, draw up an equipment/technology plan and gain insight into negotiation with clients and other business skills. The mentors are experienced translation professionals, and they give advice, feedback and encouragement through a private online e-group.

And in addition to the comments from the experienced mentors, ideas are debated via the e-group and solutions pooled among the fellow mentees. In this way, participants not only learn about the profession, but also build up a lasting community of friends and colleagues. In this private, friendly and supportive environment, newcomers gain the confidence to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ITI, such as its language and subject networks.

The course focuses on the business of translation – the skills that you will need to run your own business as a self-employed translator. You will learn how to present yourself to potential clients,

'Participants not only learn about the profession but build a lasting community of friends and colleagues'

how to go about invoicing for jobs that you have completed, and how to ensure that you get paid on time (and what to do if you don't). The one thing that the course does not specifically cover is translation skills.

The course is aimed at freelance translators, so it is most suitable for those who are already self-employed.

So what's new for 2008?

Recently there have been some changes to ITI's training events. The

Professional Development Course, which used to be run as a five-module event over five separate weekends, has now been redesigned as four modules over two weekends. In addition, ITI offers a much wider range of training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events than ever before.

In line with this, the PSG has been renamed the ITI Professional Support Group. The course content and format remain the same. [In the November/December 2007 *Bulletin* there was an announcement for the 'ITI Business Development Course', which was actually the PSG under another name. If you are looking for more details of that, you've come to the right place!]

Another new development is that the value of the PSG is being taken more seriously than in the past. The course is very intensive, and participants need to put considerable effort into it: if they spend any less time than 12 hours per week, people have difficulty keeping up with the discussions online. And that's before they attempt to complete the eight exercises, which demand detailed

COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

We have been delighted with the remarks from participants in previous years. People often enrol as a result of word-of-mouth recommendations, and rumour has it that some people have even applied for ITI membership in order to be eligible to take part in the PSG!

'I found the PSG an absolutely brilliant course. I learnt so much new stuff, and also benefited hugely from the support of other people.'

Julia Littlefair 2007 (Spanish to English translator)

'The PSG was fantastic – it really helps bridge the gap between the more theoretical world of university

and the real world of translation. In addition to this the mentors are exceptionally kind and knowledgeable and are happy to share their expertise with us. The mentees feel like friends who are in the same boat.'

Rachelle Goodwin 2007 (French and Hebrew to English translator)

'The PSG has completely transformed my career and I now feel much better equipped to succeed professionally. As a result, I have gained new clients in the last few months and increased my workload. I highly recommend it.'

Silvia Ferrero 2007 (English to Spanish translator)

thought as well as the absorption of new information. Applicants should give careful thought to whether the PSG is right for them at this stage, as it will be very demanding if they are in full-time employment, for example.

With all this in mind, a CPD value has been set for the ITI Professional Support Group: those who complete

the course are considered to have earned 15 days' worth of study to record in their CPD booklet. ITI has recommended 5 days per year as a reasonable level of CPD, so it can be seen from this just how demanding the course is. In line with this, the enrolment fee for the ITI Professional Support Group in 2008 will be £270

including VAT. This is payable once your application has been accepted, and before the course starts.

If you would like to enrol in this year's course, contact Parveen Mann (membership@iti.org.uk) for an application form. The deadline for applications is 1 February, so there is no time to lose!

And a new addition to ITI's training menu: the ITI Orientation Course

resources, such as dictionaries, for your language/subject.

So what's the commitment? And the outcome?

The two-month course begins on 15 March. You should expect to spend about 12 hours on it every week. Like the PSG, it will be run through a members-only online group. If you are new to e-groups, don't worry – we'll help get you started.

You will need to think about what you want from your career and how you will achieve your goals. The mentors are there to guide you, but they cannot make decisions for you.

By the end of the course, you should have a far clearer idea of your strengths and weaknesses as a translator, and a plan of where to go for training to hone those skills that may need improvement. You will be encouraged to join networks and attend ITI events. And, like those who have gone through the PSG experience, you will be a confident member of the highly supportive ITI and translation community.

As an offshoot of the PSG, this online course is for new members of ITI who have only just decided on a career in translation and need to acquire practical experience



Lanna Castellano is a freelance – and formerly a staff – translator from French and Italian, specialising in law. A founding member of ITI, her special interest is supporting new entrants to the profession.

What is the Orientation Course?

One of the toughest problems facing new translators is knowing how well you are doing compared with your peers. Are the skills you learned on your MA course comparable with those of professionals in the field? If you have come to translation from a different career, are you aware of the conventions that others perhaps take for granted? Do you have the word processing and internet research skills that translators need today?

Brand new for 2008 is the ITI Orientation Course. Like the PSG, this has been devised by Lanna Castellano, and we have high hopes that it will prove just as successful.

It will provide a friendly, private online environment, in which would-be translators can acquire a sense of what they need to do to become a professional. It will look at essential skills, including the ability to write in the right register and IT knowledge. It will not teach them but, through feedback and support, will allow the mentees to evaluate their skills and find ways to overcome their weak points. It is therefore an orientation course, helping them to plan their future intelligently and hone the

skills they need in launching their career – freelance or otherwise.

This down-to-earth course is in two parts, and will last two months:

1. The online team of tutors – all senior ITI members – will set realistic exercises and give feedback on what you produce. Within the group forum, you will have the chance to ask questions on and discuss the subjects covered in the exercises, which include job applications, good translation style, the conversion, processing and presentation of texts, and plans for specialisation.

2. In parallel, and outside the forum, you will prepare two pieces of work, to be evaluated privately by your own special mentor with the same language pair as you:

- you will write a piece in your target language, on a topic relevant to your career plans
- you will translate into your target language a text you have found on the internet in a field that interests you professionally.

Your mentor will give constructive, straightforward feedback on how your work will measure up in the commercial world, and answer your questions on your market and the

HOW TO BOOK

The enrolment fee for the Orientation Course is £120 (including VAT). Its Continuing Professional Development value is set at 5 days. The course is available to all individual members of ITI, including Student Associates once they have completed their full-time studies.

If you would like to enrol on the course for this year, contact Parveen Mann at the ITI office (membership@iti.org.uk) for an application form. The deadline for applications is 1 February, but since we need to find the ideal mentor for you, the earlier the better.