

The ITI PSG – your questions answered

Recent PSG mentee Philippa Hammond and mentor Nick Rosenthal interview each other to reveal their experiences of the Professional Support Group

Nick Rosenthal MITI is Managing Director of Salford Translations Ltd. He is a qualified translator, a former member of ITI Council, and has run the marketing module of the PSG course several times.

Philippa Hammond MITI is an alumna of the PSG 2008, and is now working full-time as a freelance translator from Spanish, French and Portuguese into English.

Cate Avery FITI is a freelance translator from German to English and a specialist in patent translations. She has given talks at various ITI events, and has taught on the PSG since it began in 2003.

The next ITI Professional Support Group begins in March (see details, opposite), and to register, you will need to contact the ITI office by the end of January. If you're still wondering if enrolling on the course is the right step to take, 2008 PSG mentee Philippa Hammond and highly experienced PSG mentor Nick Rosenthal have asked (and answered) some of the most common questions that you may have. Whether you're curious about the format of the course, or wondering how much of your time it will take up, you'll find the answers – and lots more besides – in this article.

Philippa's questions for Nick

Q: How many mentors and mentees usually take part in the PSG?

A: The PSG course has been running as an online course for several years now. We have had as many as 35 mentees in one year, and as few as 18. There are generally seven or eight mentors, all of whom are ITI members with many years' experience.

Q: Who are the mentors – what is their background, and what makes them qualified to tutor on this course? Do the same mentors tutor on the course each year?

A: All mentors are very experienced professionals in the translation

industry. Some are translation company owners, some are freelancers, but each brings a particular area of expertise to the group. All of them have a commitment to excellence and a passion for helping others to get the best out of themselves. The same



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core team of tutors works on the PSG each year, with some rotation.

Q: When mentees begin the course, what stage are they generally at in their translation careers? Are there any assumptions made about participants' translation or business skills?

A: The mentees are mainly in the process of launching their freelance careers, or planning to do so within the next year or so. We have also had a few participants who had already been working freelance for a year or two, and who wanted to strengthen their skills in the areas of marketing, understanding of technology, and financial management.

We take it as a given that participants on the PSG course have good translation skills, and as such we do not train mentees in how to translate. We assume that they can do that already; the course functions more as a 'roadmap' for a successful full-time freelance career.

Q: Would you say that it is wise already to be working full-time as a freelance translator before taking part?

A: Each mentee usually begins the course with slightly different circumstances, but it would be wise already to be working at least part-time as a freelance translator, or to be planning to launch a freelance career in the very near future. It is a practical course, so it tends to work best for people who are able to put what they learn into practice. And the course is about mutual support, too – so it is a good, supportive environment to have around you as you launch your freelance career.



'The PSG was the ideal stepping stone for me in my transition from my in-house career to my freelance career'

Nick's questions for Philippa
Q: Why did you decide to apply to participate in the 2008 PSG?

A: I was working in-house as a translator, and, having handed in my notice in autumn 2007, my plan was to go freelance in February 2008. I had been preparing the groundwork for this for several years, but I wanted some practical business guidance on how to become a successful full-time freelance translator, as I had no prior experience of running my own business. I saw the course details on the CPD section of the ITI website and decided that it was the ideal stepping stone for me in my transition from my in-house career to my freelance career; I already had a few years' translation experience, but I now needed to know how to apply those skills in a different environment. The PSG came to form a crucial part of how I approached this transition, and the timing of the course, which begins in March each year, was perfect, as it meant that

I could pretty much apply what I was learning 'as it happened'.

Q: How many hours per week did you put into the 2008 PSG?

A: On average, around 15 hours per week. It would vary from week to week depending on when assignments were due in, but there was always an ongoing discussion of separate issues raised by the mentors or mentees. I did need to allocate a lot of time to the course, but the fact that it is delivered online via an egroup, meant that it was fairly easy to do so, and I generally 'checked in' with it whenever I had a chance, several times each day.

Q: Which aspects of the course did you find helped you the most?

A: I found that the format of the course, with the mentors being available to answer your questions and concerns by email, was a really constructive way of learning. It meant that, rather than approaching

BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO THE PSG

What is it?

The ITI Professional Support Group is a business course for freelance translators. It runs annually, starting in March. It all takes place online and participants must be associates of ITI, or MITIs.

How does it work?

Eight tutors set eight exercises, which the 20 or so mentees upload and discuss online. Topics include CV design, quoting for work, using TM, finding a specialisation, computer equipment and marketing.

How much time does it take?

Expect to spend at least 12 hours per week on it during the 14 weeks of the course: most exercises take a lot of thought. Completing the course is considered equivalent to 15 days of CPD.

How much does it cost?

Last year the enrolment fee was £270 (inc VAT). The 2009 rates are likely to be similar. There will be a very limited number of bursaries of £200 available.

Is it a translation course?

No. It teaches business skills. Applicants who want to hone their translation and computer skills may prefer the Orientation Course, also run online.

How do I apply?

Write to Parveen Mann at ITI (membership@iti.org.uk) and she will send you an application form by email. This has to be sent back before 1 February 2009, so you will need to act fast! Applicants will be contacted during February by the course organiser, Cate Avery (cate@cateavery.com).

Cate Avery

problems in a black and white fashion, mentees received a rounded perspective from several experienced professionals. The group was a welcoming environment, and no question was treated as irrelevant or elementary.

In terms of launching my own freelance career, by taking part in the course I was able to get an inside view of what potential clients may look for on a translator's CV, and how to nurture client relationships. I also gained the confidence to market myself effectively to potential clients, and learned the value of a proper administrative system, especially for invoicing and tracking payments. Particularly useful was how we went through a series of 'worst-case scenarios' and discussed how to tackle them. In short, it really shaped up how I operated as a businessperson. ©

To register for the 2009 PSG course, please contact the ITI office by the end of January.