

# Staying on course

Academic, practical and physically stretching, **Laura Fuller** found that ITI's Professional Development Course left her better informed and in better shape



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**W**hen I first read about ITI's PDC in *bulletin* last summer, I had been a translator for a year and a half. Ever keen to improve my skills and meet other members of the profession, I convinced my employer to send me on all five modules, bought some nice coloured pens to write my notes with and a special notebook to write them in, and arrived an hour early (oops) for the first module in October 2004. Since then, those of us who have been lucky enough to attend all five modules of the course have covered a wealth of information presented by a number of excellent speakers – translators, interpreters and non-linguists – and had the opportunity to meet a variety of people attending the modules, all of whom enriched the experience.

## A variety of backgrounds

People attending the PDC came from a variety of backgrounds. Some, like me, were relatively new to translation, some were highly experienced translators or interpreters who had been practising for many years, others were looking to move into translation from other fields (particularly teaching!). The one thing we all had in common was our awareness of the importance of continuing professional development in our work, and the desire to make the most of the modules we were attending. We had plenty of time to get to know each other and exchange experiences and views – a lunch hour and two coffee breaks per day, as well as an optional evening meal out on the Saturday of each module – and the tutors often had quite a struggle to persuade everyone to stop chatting and get back to business at the end of each break.

The first four modules could be classified as two 'academic', and two 'practical' sessions. Modules 1 and 2 ('Language Skills' and 'Subject Knowledge') covered all things language-related: keeping up your mother tongue and source languages, terminology, dictionaries, plain English, revision, proofreading, and subtitling, as well as finding and maintaining a specialism. Karin Band, Chris Durban and Emma Wagner provided a useful insight into their own specialisms (medicine, finance and the EU), and gave examples, hints and tips that could be applied to any other field. A particularly interesting part of module 2 was the talk by Professor Brian Lee (a non-linguist) on technical reports from the end user's, rather than the translator's, point of view.


The first of the 'practical' sessions, 'Business Practice', covered everything from the support available when becoming self-employed or setting up a small business to tax and financial matters, PII, pensions, and websites. The role of ITI in providing help and advice (such as the legal helpline) to its members was also set out by Alan Wheatley. Of particular interest to many of us was the talk by Gerald Dennett of STAR UK, with hints on what translation companies expect of translators, and what we can expect from them. Gerald also featured in module 4 ('IT and Equipment'), setting out the essentials of a good office, and providing a half-day hands-on session in the computer suite on 'power word processing'. This module also provided a straightforward and helpful overview of various CAT and terminology management tools, job management tools, file formats and more on websites from Iwan Davies, and a

very enthusiastic introduction to voice recognition software from Gillian Lee.

The final module of the course was held in May and focused on the personal aspects of translating, from our health to ethics and the ITI Code of Conduct. Between them, Joanna and Genevieve Waller provided an informative series of talks on marketing, negotiating and presenting yourself, a high point of which was their highly entertaining role-play demonstration of how and how not to deal with marketing agencies. Juliet O'Connor gave sound advice on fitness and diet (complete with healthy snacks for us to try) and got us all up on our feet to practise useful stretches for computer users, as well as shoulder massage. Both Eleni Markou and Joanna Waller – possibly the world's most organised woman – shared their secrets for staying on top of, well, everything, and encouraged us to think positively about ourselves and what we do.

## Inspiring talks

The PDC offered the opportunity to hear talks from some of the best in the business, an inspiring range of professionals who were enthusiastic about their subjects and keen to share their experiences and suggestions with us. The contribution of non-linguists was particularly valuable, as they were able to offer a different view and remind us of how we fit into the world. The mixture of lectures, demonstrations, practical exercises, role plays (even if they did scare most of us!), and discussions across the course provided a varied way in which to learn, and the attendees provided a friendly and lively forum for debate.

One of the most important lessons we learned from the PDC (besides the importance of ITI, a good chair and a stable blood-sugar level in our professional lives) is the importance of continuing professional development. What better way than to follow the PDC itself? 

See opposite for this year's PDC dates.

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