EMCI CORE CURRICULUM

1. Preamble

In early 1997 the European Commission's Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (SCIC) and Directorate General for Education (DGXXII) approached the Thematic Network Project (TNP) in the Area of Languages (SOCRATES-ERASMUS Programme) about the possibility of launching a European pilot project for the joint development of a university programme at advanced level (Masters type) in Conference Interpreting to remedy the shortage of highly qualified conference interpreters, particularly with language combinations which include less widely used and less taught languages. As a result of this initiative, in late April, the TNP Coordinator circulated a pilot project proposal amongst higher education institutions specialising in the training of conference interpreters, inviting them to submit expressions of interest. The proposal and expression of interest form were also publicised on the SCIC and TNP Web sites. In a further development, the Interpreting Service of the European Parliament also became involved in the initiative.

Out of a total of 30 institutions that had come forward by early June, seven were invited to form a working group to develop a core curriculum for a 'European Masters' in Conference Interpreting, with an eighth joining subsequently. The selection was made on the basis of such principles as geographical spread and pooling of expertise. The project partners met in Brussels on 20 June 1997. At that meeting the coordination of the pilot project was entrusted to the University of Westminster and at the request of the other members. Financial support was pledged by the SCIC and the European Parliament. Between September 1997 and February 1998 the members of the working group, who were assisted in their deliberations by representatives of the SCIC, DGXXII, the European Parliament and the TNP, held a total of five meetings at which they identified a number of key issues, reviewed current curricula and agreed a number of elements regarded as being essential to a programme of this kind. They drew up a draft core curriculum which was circulated amongst all institutions that had expressed their interest in the project and all participants in the second SCIC-Universities Conference in December 1997; it was also publicised on the SCIC Web site. All interested organisations were invited to comment on the working draft.

After careful analysis of the comments received the group produced and adopted a revised draft. An agreement to formally establish the EMCI Consortium was signed on May 9, 2001, at a signing ceremony hosted by the European Parliament. Work on transforming the EMCI Consortium into an international Consortium began in 2010 and concluded in 2012 with the signing of the new EMCI Consortium Constitution.

The basic format of the core curriculum is that of a curricular framework rather than a detailed syllabus.

2. Aims of the Programme

Within the framework of the European Union's drive towards the promotion of knowledge through wider access to specialist education and of the objective of improved employability through the acquisition of specialist competence, this programme is designed to equip young graduates with the professional skills and knowledge required for conference interpreting. It seeks to meet the demand for highly-qualified conference interpreters, in the area of widely used as well as less widely-used and less-taught languages and in view of the expansion of the Union and of the Union's increasing dialogue with its non-European partners. The curriculum was developed in consultation with the European Institutions and continuation of this cooperation is an integral part of the programme.

In developing the core curriculum, the participating institutions combined their individual expertise, and it is their aim to optimise their use of resources through transnational cooperation in the delivery of the interpreting programme.

In order to honour their commitment to quality in interpreter training as laid down in the EMCI Quality Assurance Standards, the participating institutions shall regularly review changing needs and new developments and update the programme. The training programmes shall make use of new

technologies where appropriate and shall contribute to the dissemination of their application.
The partner institutions shall pursue a common policy on student recruitment and assessment, based on the aims of the EMCI Consortium and on the Quality Assurance criteria, as laid down in the Quality Assurance Standards, which underpin the core curriculum. The participants aim to contribute to spreading good practice across and outside Europe.

3. Core Curriculum

This curriculum sets out those elements agreed by participating institutions as being essential to a post-graduate university programme in Conference Interpreting.
The content of the programme shall comprise the following:

- the theory of interpretation
- the practice of interpretation
- consecutive interpretation
- simultaneous interpretation
- the EU and international organisations.

These need not be discrete modules.
In addition, a range of optional courses may also be offered.

3.1 The theory of interpretation
Students shall be made aware of the distinctions between translation and interpretation; theoretical aspects of interpretation; aspects of research findings in disciplines that have a bearing on interpretation, for example, the language and cognitive sciences.

3.2 The practice of interpretation
In order to prepare the students for their future professional careers, the programme shall include elements such as communication skills, e.g. voice coaching, public speaking; conference preparation techniques such as terminology, information retrieval and other uses of information technology; professional ethics; conference procedures; working practices and conditions.
A study visit to the European Commission, the European Parliament and/or international organisations will be organised in order to familiarise students with the working environment of conference interpreters.

3.3 Consecutive interpretation
At the end of the programme students shall be capable of giving a fluent and effective consecutive interpretation of a speech reflecting real professional market needs, accurately reproducing the content of the original and using appropriate terminology and register.
Training in these skills will require a variety of exercises, such as content analysis and memory exercises, consecutive interpretation without notes, summarisation, sight translation and note taking techniques. Speeches used shall confront the students with a diversity of subject areas, styles, and registers, and their length, information density and degree of technicality and specificity will increase as the programme progresses.

3.4 Simultaneous interpretation
At the end of the programme students shall be able to provide a fluent and effective simultaneous interpretation of speeches reflecting professional conditions in conference settings, accurately reproducing the content of the original and using appropriate terminology and register.
While training in these skills will build on the same kind as those used to practise consecutive interpretation, additional exercises specifically designed to establish and consolidate the SI skills will be required. Furthermore, students shall be trained in booth techniques and team interaction.
Speeches used shall confront the students with a diversity of subject areas, styles, and registers, and their length, information density and degree of technicality and specificity will increase as the

programme progresses.
Once they have acquired simultaneous interpreting skills, students shall also be taught how to interpret with the text in front of them.

In studying the EU and International organisations the focus shall be placed on how these institutions operate in order to familiarise students with institutional processes and procedures.

4. Course structure and workload

This full time post-graduate university programme is designed to correspond to between 60 and 120 ECTS (i.e. the equivalent of one to two years of full time study) under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
The programme shall normally offer no fewer than 400 class contact hours, of which a minimum of 75% shall be devoted to interpreting practice. In addition, students shall devote time to group practice of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and other self-directed learning (i.e. background reading; use of information sources, e.g. radio, TV, Internet; preparation of glossaries). The programme is based on the expectation that the number of class contact hours, group work hours and self-directed study shall total no less than 800 hours.
Interpreting classes shall be conducted by practising/experienced conference interpreters with teaching skills. Where interpreting is taught into B, the class should preferably be conducted by an interpreter with an A in the target language. Where this is impossible, the class shall be conducted by a 'tandem' composed of a native speaker of the students' B language and an interpreter trainer who speaks the two languages. Moreover, the native speaker shall be thoroughly informed of skill acquisition, professional practice and interpreting needs. Interpreting into the A language is taught by an interpreter with an A language in the target language.

5. Admission to the programme

5.1 Candidate profile
In order to be eligible for admission to the programme candidates must:

- hold a recognised University degree or equivalent (in any subject);
- have an excellent command of their mother tongue (A language) over a wide range of topics and registers;
- have an in-depth knowledge of their working languages (B and C);
- offer at least one of the following language combinations[1]:
  - ACC or ABC or AA (where the language combination is offered by the University concerned),
  - AB may be offered for less widely used languages and in the light of market requirements;
- have a good overall knowledge of international affairs and be well-informed of the economic, social and cultural background of the countries in which their working languages are used.

 During training, candidates will be expected to have:

- good powers of concentration, analysis and synthesis
- good communication skills
- a high degree of motivation
- the ability to work under pressure
- and a readiness to accept feedback.

5.2 Admission Tests
Admission to the course is subject to success in an aptitude test which is designed to assess suitability

for training in conference interpreting.
The test panel shall:

- include a majority of professional interpreters and interpreter trainers
- represent all the languages for which a candidate is to be tested and include at least one assessor with the candidates' A-language
- arrive at a decision by consensus.

One member of the panel shall normally be present throughout to ensure consistency in decision-making.

The complete admission test shall include:

- the oral reproduction of short and structured speeches (2-3 minutes) from the candidates' C and B languages into A and, where appropriate, A into B
- a general knowledge test
- an interview with the candidate.

Additionally the test may include:

- sight translation
- a brief oral presentation by the candidate on a subject chosen by the panel
- written tests, etc.

6. The final examinations

The students shall be assessed at the final examination in consecutive and/or simultaneous modes of interpreting according to their combination; AB, ABC, AB (con)C; ACC.

In order to be awarded the EMCI certificate, candidates shall be required to pass all examinations for each language pair at one and the same session. In order to obtain the EMCI certificate, only one resit is allowed. However, candidates who do not achieve a pass in interpretation from additional C languages or into their B language in an ABC combination may be awarded a degree with an ACC combination. The EMCI certificate shall clearly state the language combination for which it has been awarded.

6.1 Assessment
The examinations shall comprise speeches on a variety of subjects in different registers. The speeches shall be prepared to a standard commonly encountered by professional interpreters and delivered as if impromptu by practised speakers.
Speeches will be approximately 5-7 minutes for consecutive interpretation and 10-15 minutes for simultaneous; their length shall be consistent for all candidates within one and the same training course and examination session.
Candidates shall be assessed on the mastery of their interpreting skills, using the criteria defined in the present Core Curriculum (sections 3.3 and 3.4). They shall demonstrate sufficient competence to be able to join a team of professional conference interpreters.
Recordings of the final examinations shall be kept for one year.

6.2 Assessors
The panel shall be composed of a majority of experienced interpreters of whom at least two must have the A-language of the candidate in their combination, including one who is a native speaker of the target language of the examination.
The panel shall also include at least one external examiner. The European Institutions, other

international organisations, and other member institutions of the EMCI Consortium shall be invited to send a representative.
If necessary, the panel may invite speakers or observers who are entitled to take part in the deliberations.
The final decision on the candidates' performance shall be taken by consensus.

7. Mobility

In order to foster exchange of information and experience and also the dissemination of good practice participating universities welcome visits from staff and students from member institutions of the EMCI Consortium.

8. Joint programmes

Partner institutions propose to organise joint intensive and/or degree programmes bringing together students and staff of different member institutions of the EMCI Consortium.

Note [1]: Definition of working languages

ACTIVE LANGUAGES
A: The interpreter's native language (or another language strictly equivalent to a native language), into which the interpreter works from all her or his other languages in both modes of interpretation, simultaneous and consecutive.
B: A language other than the interpreter's native language, of which she or he has perfect command and into which they work from one or more of their languages.
Some interpreters work into a 'B' language in only one of the two modes of interpretation.

PASSIVE LANGUAGES
C: Languages, of which the interpreter has a complete understanding and from which s/he works.

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