

To the attention of:

Vice Chancellor Professor Alec Cameron

The Board of the European Society for Translation Studies would like to express its grave concern at the announced plan to close the Department of History, Languages and Translation at Aston University. As a society of Translation Studies researchers, we are particularly concerned at the prospect of two internationally respected MA programmes being discontinued: the MA in Translating for Business and International Institutions, a programme accredited by the European Master's in Translation network, and the MA in TESOL and Translation Studies. We believe that closing down these two programmes together with the underlying undergraduate programmes would be severely detrimental to the international reputation of Aston University. Closure of the Department would send the unfortunate signal that the governing bodies at Aston University believe all business can be conducted in English, with little or no awareness of history or foreign languages, and that health can be studied independently of the quality of communication about it, not to mention dealing with the challenges associated with serving immigrant populations. Whatever programmes a university with international ambitions might wish to focus on strategically, they should be accompanied and supported by activities promoting international communication and access, not just in the local language, even when that is one of the 'world' languages.

In our view, a translation programme is important both to business and industry and to the well-functioning and well-being of a community, multilingual or not. For many years, Aston University has successfully maintained a very strong and internationally recognised position in Translation Studies and, with renowned British tolerance and flexibility, has contributed to generating a broader outlook. Business, engineering and health programmes, to be strong internationally, benefit from interdisciplinary cooperation with MA programmes in translation, albeit perhaps slightly revised to fit Aston University's new overall strategy. As you are certainly aware, the Western academic world now stresses the inherent value of interdisciplinarity, but in practice researchers often experience difficulties communicating about and across very different methodological and epistemological perspectives. Mediating across such disciplinary/cultural/linguistic barriers is an important speciality of Translation Studies, and universities would be wise to exploit strengths they may not even realize they have in this regard.

We are aware that Aston obviously has to consider the immediate context in which it exists in working out its strategy. From a European point of view, however, a plan to close down the Department of History, Language and Translation is very likely to be seen as the start of a retreat into a weaker English-only existence. We therefore strongly recommend that the plans to close Aston University's Department of History, Languages and Translation be reconsidered.

Frederiksberg, 12 May 2021

On behalf of EST, the European Society for Translation Studies.



Arnt Lykke Jakobsen,

prof. Emeritus, Copenhagen Business School, President of EST.