

To the attention of:
 Vice-Chancellor Professor Lerner and
 Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Walford Davies

On behalf of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST), the Board would like to express its grave concern at the announced plan to close the School of Modern Languages at Cardiff University. As a society of Translation Studies researchers, we are particularly concerned at the prospect of the whole translation section being discontinued. Closing the MA in Translation Studies as well as the underlying undergraduate programmes in modern languages and translation, and also the highly popular online course in translation, would be severely detrimental to the international reputation of Cardiff University, not least having grave consequences for the viability of maintaining communication in languages other than English in multilingual Wales.

In times when artificial intelligence and global English suggest exaggerated promises of seamless communication without human language competence, the closure of the School of Modern Languages programmes would send the unfortunate signal that the governing bodies at Cardiff University believe that language learning and translation do not have a place in a multilingual society, when in fact they are more important than ever. 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 one of the local languages, even if it currently happens to be one of the ‘world’ languages.

In our view, university language and translation programmes are important both to business and industry and to the long-term functioning and well-being of a community, multilingual or not. For many years, Cardiff University has successfully maintained a very strong and internationally recognised position in Modern Languages and Translation. To be strong internationally, business and engineering programmes benefit from interdisciplinary cooperation with MA programmes in translation. As you are certainly aware, the Western academic world now stresses the inherent value of international collaboration and interdisciplinarity, but in practice researchers often experience difficulties communicating about and across very different methodological and epistemological perspectives. Mediating across such disciplinary, cultural and linguistic barriers is an important specialty of Translation Studies, and universities would be wise to exploit internal strengths they may not even realize they have in this regard.

We are aware that Cardiff University obviously has to consider the immediate context in which it exists in working out its strategy. From a higher education point of view, however, a plan to close down the School of Modern Languages at Cardiff University is very likely to trickle down to other levels of education and be seen as the start of a retreat into a weaker English-only existence in times where human language learning and translation are more important than ever. We therefore strongly recommend that the plans to close Cardiff University’s School of Modern Languages and its programmes be reconsidered.

Stockholm, 19 February 2025
 On behalf of EST, the European Society for Translation Studies.



Elisabet Tiselius,
 Associate Professor, Stockholm University, President of EST.