

# Overcoming the challenges of studying during the pandemic to come out on top

– An interview with Sabine Centofanti

'Movers and Shakers' is a series of interviews with the interpreting profession's leading lights.

Sabine Centofanti is the recipient of 2021-22 NRPSI Award for excellence in the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI). The award, which forms part of the Chartered Institute of Linguists and Institute of Linguists Educational Trust Awards, is presented to the DPSI student graduating with the highest exam score. Here Ms Centofanti talks about her learning experiences and the added challenge of studying during the pandemic.

## Why did you choose interpreting as a career?

As I always had an interest in languages and they were the subject of my graduate studies, interpreting seemed like a natural career choice after spending many years travelling around Europe taking care of my family.



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HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO presenting Ms Centofanti with the 2021-22 NRPSI Award at the CIOL Conference in March 2022

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## Overcoming the challenges of studying during the pandemic to come out on top – An interview with Sabine Centofanti

### Where does your interest in languages come from?

I was born in Italy, where I was raised by my French grandmother. She did not have a good command of Italian and so I helped her to manage things. Consequently, I always had to maintain a bilingual mindset.

Very early in my life, I was exposed to a second language and developed an unconscious problem-solving approach to interpreting. By which I mean I understood the challenge of interpreting the meaning of sentences, including their intention, emotion and implication. I have always been fascinated by both the gap between linguistic universes and the process of interpreting one language into another in a matter of seconds.

### Why did you choose to study for a professional interpreting qualification?

It was important to me to achieve the skills that are specific to good interpreting. Such skills can't be developed just by speaking a foreign language. I also felt that the DPSI interpreting qualification would provide me with the right certification for the skills I would need to work in my chosen field.

“I have always been fascinated by both the gap between linguistic universes and the process of interpreting one language into another in a matter of seconds.”

A sector in which I can help other people and do good from a social point of view.

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### What was your experience of studying for a professional qualification like?

My experience of studying was completely satisfactory. Thanks to the course's part-time schedule, I was able to fit studying into my life and around family commitments.

The course delivery did undergo a sudden change due to the pandemic, switching from classroom-based sessions to full online participation. Despite this disruption, and with the help of technology, I was able to maintain my focus on my studies.

Even so, I would have preferred the physical learning process. Fortunately, my fellow students and I did have enough classroom sessions at the start of the course to build strong bonds with each other and our teachers, so moving to an online study format was relatively easy due to us knowing each other well already. Students would also organise online sessions among themselves, so we could practice as much as we wanted to. This also turned out to be a great social activity during the difficult times of lockdown.

### What single learning from the course or study experience stood out for you?

I had two very strong mentors. They were very experienced interpreters who taught me that, while good interpreting naturally involves many technical skills, it is the fluency and accuracy with which you interpret languages that makes the act of interpreting good. The fluency with which you convey the meaning and subtleties of languages is probably the most creative aspect of interpreting.



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**How does being qualified make you feel?**

It makes me feel more confident about my capabilities. I can provide an interpreting service that meets recognised professional interpreting standards.

**How important do you think it is for people to obtain an interpreting qualification and become a Registered Public Service Interpreter (RPSI)?**

I believe it is very important to become an RPSI. This is the outcome of a well-conceived professional path that includes several learning milestones, including obtaining an NRPSI-recognised interpreting qualification that covers speaking, writing, translating, and simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. The tools you gain through studying for the

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DPSI qualifications are numerous and invaluable. Achieving this qualification proves you have the skills necessary to perform your job as an interpreter to the highest standards.

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**What plans do you have for the future: where would you like to be in your interpreting career in the next five or ten years?**

This is a very difficult question! I don't really know, to be totally honest, but surely the DPSI qualification will help me to create opportunities in my professional life and find new challenges. I may even think about expanding my interpreting skills via another qualification! 🗨️



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