

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

on the Research Activity of the Institute of the Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philosophy and Science, Silesian University in Opava for the period 2015–2019

Introduction

The Institute of Foreign Languages consists of three departments: Department of English and American Studies, Department of German Studies, and the Department of Italian Studies.

The Institute carries out a total of 17 study programs in the bachelor, master and doctoral study programmes.

The Institute supports the academic involvement of students in all areas of research, developing their critical and creative thinking on the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral levels. The Institute also actively cooperates with regional schools, institutions, and companies. Our new practically-oriented study programmes reflect the changes of the Czech labour market and demographic development, preparing our students for their professional careers.

1. Focus and goals of research activity, management of research activity

1.1. Focus of research activities of the Institute

The scientific activity of the Department of English and American Studies focuses on both linguistic and literary research. Semantics, vocabulary of specific areas, and discourse analysis are at the heart of linguists. Literary research combines research in the field of American and British literature with cultural studies in given countries. The staff of the Department of English and American Studies investigates the concept of identity in minority literature and culture - they focus on post-colonial literature, Irish poetry, American Jewish fiction, and the issue of gender in literature. Research activities in the field of linguistics focuses on the discourse analysis, lexicology, and corpus linguistics. Academic staff regularly attend international conferences where they present current research results.

The Department of German Studies concentrates on contrastive linguistics, specifically the comparison of the German and Czech language systems on the basis of linguistic analysis of the text. The corpus linguistic approach makes it possible to work with authentic textual material and at the same time to obtain linguistic data for comparative studies of various types. Research activities in the field of literature focus primarily on the documentation and analysis of works of German-language fiction, which reflect the complex development of the Czech-German relations. The focus is not only on authors who have or have had a personal relationship with the Czech lands, their history and culture, but also on authors who thematise this history and culture in their literary work. Research in the field of didactics concerns the personality of the teacher and the question of choosing German as a foreign language in all types of schools with foreign language teaching. It also focuses on the analysis of German language textbooks (DaF) and work with mistakes.

The research activity of the Italian Department focuses on both linguistics and literature. The linguistic research is oriented to the sentence modality and the information structure of the sentence in Italian in comparison with English or/and Czech. The other field of the linguistic research focuses on the semantics, morphology and syntax of selected Italian dialects observed in their development from

Late Latin up to the present, and on the problems of language acquisition, especially the acquisition of Italian L2. Literary research is oriented to Italian contemporary literature, especially to the reception of literary works and the inter-cultural questions.

For a detailed overview of the Institute's research output between 2015 and 2020 see the Attachment.

1.2. Management and evaluation of research activity

The staff submit yearly reports on research activity, including publications, projects, citations, popular lectures and other activities connected to their position. The fulfilment of the criteria and academic plans are then evaluated. The two main evaluated areas are education and research activities.

The evaluation outcomes are used as a basis for salary bonuses from the budget for research activities. The advancements in academic careers are supported by internal grants, participation in international conferences, research stays abroad and access to electronic databases.

1.3. Academic personnel structure and career advancement

Department of English and American Studies:

There are 10 full-time academic employees and 4 part-time (0,5 position) employees. The staff includes 4 associate professors ("docents", i.e. after habilitation) and 7 assistant professors with a degree of Ph.D. or equivalent.

During the period under evaluation two department members successfully completed their doctoral studies:

2017 – PhDr. Diana Adamová, Ph.D.

2019 – PhDr. René Kron, Ph.D.

One department member successfully completed the habilitation procedure:

2019 – Doc. PhDr. Michaela Weiss, Ph.D.

Mgr. Marie Crhová, M.A., Ph.D. in 2016–2019 worked as Vice-Dean for Science and International Relations at the Faculty of Philosophy and Science of the Silesian University in Opava.

Department of German Studies:

During the period 2015 - 2019, the department had a total of 7 full-time academic employees, including one professor (Prof. PhDr. Iva Zündorf, Dr., terminated employment during the period under review), 3 associate professors (doc. PhDr. Gabriela Rykalová, Ph.D., Veronika Kotůlková, Priv-Doc Martin Martinach, DAAD lecturer) and assistant professors with the degree of Ph.D. (Mgr. Jana Nálepová, Ph.D., Miroslav Urbanec, Ph.D.). Both assistant professors are active researchers geared toward habilitation. Currently, the department has 2 associate professors, 2 assistant professors and one assistant, among them two German nationals.

During the period under review, 2 department members successfully completed their habilitation and were appointed associate professors in the field of German philology:

2015 - doc. Dr.Phil. Veronika Kotůlková 2015 - doc. PhDr. Gabriela Rykalová, Ph.D.

Since 2019, doc. Rykalová works as a Vice-Dean for Science and International Relations at the Faculty of Philosophy and Science.

Department of Italian Studies:

There are four academic employees: one associate professor (doc. Eva Klímová), two Ph.D. assistant professors (Táňa Pavlíková Alešová, dott. Giorgio Cadorini, Ph.D.), and one lecturer (Mgr. Jaroslava Malá). During the period under evaluation (in October 2019) dott. Giorgio Cadorini, Ph.D. has been substituted by dott. Egle Mocciaro, Ph.D., Italian native speaker with Ph.D. in linguistics and Ph.D. in didactics and methodology. The number of teachers fully corresponds to the three-year program of studies.

The Institute's academic staff are represented in editorial boards and advisory boards of scientific journals and work as reviewers for professional peer-reviewed journals and assessors of doctoral and habilitation theses. A number of them are members of doctoral studies boards at other universities, members of important national professional organisations, often invited as lecturers at international scientific events and at domestic and foreign universities.

2. Interconnection of the research activity with the educational activity

2.1. Linking research and study programs

The research and educational activities at the Institute are connected primarily in doctoral study program "Corpus Linguistics with a focus on a specific language group (English, German)," which is unique because it offers studies in the Cotutelle regime. This is an international study programme under the joint guidance of experts from the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Silesian University in Opava and experts from the Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg with the possibility of obtaining a so-called double diploma and a Czech or German doctoral degree.

Both PhD and MA students have the opportunity to actively participate in research within the framework of Student Grant Competitions. Students' publications represent an important and monitored parameter of successful fulfilment of the doctoral study obligations. Full-time doctoral students also actively participate in teaching, in domestic and foreign conferences and are expected to complete an internship abroad.

The majority of teaching staff are involved in research projects and their findings are used in classes. Students often participate in research activity as assistants or as members of research teams. Students attend lectures of scholars from other Czech and foreign universities, invited within inter-university cooperation programs.

The German Studies Department methodologically focuses on further education of primary and secondary school teachers. It regularly organises seminars and workshops, where participants

get acquainted with new trends in foreign language teaching, new teaching materials on the Czech market and where they can exchange valuable experiences and discuss current issues in teaching German. The staff are co-authors of several German textbooks of the German publishing house Hueber published for the Czech market.

2.2. Students' research

Among the priorities of the Institute of Foreign Languages is the support of students' research in all study programs. Thanks to the funding provided by the Student Grant Competition (SGS) of the Silesian University and other scholarship programs, active students have an opportunity to participate in both student conferences and renowned national and international conferences, where they gain their first experience in academic discussion with experts from all over the Czech Republic and abroad. The grant also supports students' research trips to foreign libraries, purchase of study literature, and publications in collective monographs or academic journals. A regular output of the Student Grant Competition is a collective monograph with contributions from both students and academics.

Collective monographs with student participation:

Text Analysis and Interpretation, eds. Gabriela Rykalová and Michaela Weiss. Opava, Silesian University in Opava, 2019.

Modern Approaches to Text Analysis, eds. Michaela Weiss and Gabriela Rykalová. Opava, Silesian University in Opava, 2017.

Multicultural Approach to Textual Analysis, eds. Michaela Weiss and Markéta Johnová, Opava, Silesian University in Opava, 2015.

Overview of the Institute's Student Grant Competition projects over the last five years:

2018–2019: Student Grant Competition, SGS/4/2018 project coordinator doc. PhDr. Gabriela Rykalová, Ph.D.

2016–2017: Student Grant Competition, SGS/12/2016, project coordinator doc. PhDr. Gabriela Rykalová, Ph.D.

2014–2015: Student Grant Competition, SGS/17/2014, project coordinator Mgr. Markéta Johnová, Ph.D.

For a detailed list of students' publications and conference presentations please see the Attachment.

The Institute favours an individual approach to students, providing them with the opportunity to develop in accordance with their interests and research focus. Students regularly meet and consult the Institute's staff as well as visiting scholars and professors from variety of fields.

Students have at their disposal technically equipped lecture halls, modern computer classrooms and several libraries. The largest is the Central University Library with 103,600 items.

The Institute of Foreign Languages is especially proud of its German Library which was established thanks to funds of the non-profit Hermann-Niermann-Stiftung fifteen years ago and generously expands its collection every year (currently 10,400 items). The Austrian Library with 7,100 books is also highly frequented.

Talented students are encouraged to study at foreign partner universities, both within the program Erasmus+ and other scholarship schemes (e.g., Studienbörse Germanistik, DAAD scholarship program).

3. National and international research cooperation

Department of English and American Studies:

The Department hosts thematic lectures by experts from foreign universities, whether within the Erasmus + project or other projects, from Ireland, Poland, Slovakia, Germany and others. Associate professors and professors from foreign partner universities offer block seminars and lectures within the Erasmus+ program. At the same time, the Institute staff also take advantage of internships at foreign scientific workplaces. In recent years, teachers' mobility was realised by PhDr. Diana Adamová (University of Limerick 2016), Mgr. Marie Crhová, M.A., Ph.D. (University of Limerick 2018), Mgr. Radek Glabazňa, M.A., Ph.D. (University of Southampton 2017) and Doc. PhDr. Michaela Weiss (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice 2015, 2016, University of Limerick 2016, 2018).

Both students and scholars are offered foreign stays at Erasmus + partner universities in Ireland (University of Limerick), Italy (Degli Studi di Sassari), Germany (Universität Paderborn), Poland (Uniwersytet Opolski, Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach), Slovakia (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice), Sweden (Högskolan Kristianstad) and Turkey (Canakkale Onsekiz Universit). Students can also use the Fulbright Scholarship for study in the USA. Mobility for students also runs in the opposite direction, so students can meet and work with students coming from other countries. We also cooperate with various universities especially in Slovakia, Ireland and Poland outside the Erasmus+ program.

Cooperation with other universities has also been established at a higher level, most recently in 2018 between the Institute of Foreign Languages and the University of Limerick in Ireland. A joint research project is currently under preparation.

The Department of English and American Studies, together with the German Studies Department has a long history of extensive cooperation with Julius-Maximilians-Universität in Würzburg in the field of corpus linguistics and doctoral study program. This includes scholars and students exchange between Opava and Würzburg, seminars, lectures, and Ph.D. theses supervision.

In 2018, doc. PhDr. Michaela Weiss, Ph.D. participated in the international project of Mgr. Iveta Jusová, Ph.D. (Carleton College, Minnesota, USA). She also submitted a project application of the Czech Science Foundation with an international participation entitled *The Concept of Myth and Heroism in Richard Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung and Its Modern Adaptations*.

Since 2006, the Department of English and American Studies has organised the international conference *Silesian Studies in English - SILSE*, which is held every three years. In September 2018, the fifth annual conference was attended by nearly forty speakers from six countries (Czech Republic, Ireland, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia). A regular output of the conference is a collection of selected papers; proceedings from the last three years of the conference were included in the *Web of Science* database. Further details about these projects are available from the webpage of the institute and in the annual reports of the institute for respective years.

Department of German Studies:

The Department's principal partner has been the Julius-Maximilians-Universität in Würzburg. In cooperation with colleagues from Würzburg the German Studies Department established a German-Czech parallel corpus (so-called *DeuCze-Korpus*) which enables working with authentic textual material and at the same time obtaining language data for comparative studies of various types. Intensive cooperation also includes the project "*Germanistische Institutspartnerschaften*" (2010-2015) and since 2011 the project "*Ostpartnerschaften Opava-Würzburg-Samara-Baku-Sarajevo*"

(Project-ID: 57096003), which was successfully prolonged till 2021. The department's staff regularly give lectures and lead seminars in Würzburg.

Both students and academic staff use the opportunity of short and long term stays at Erasmus+ partner universities: in Germany (Würzburg, Aachen, Potsdam, Paderborn), Austria (Graz, Linz), and Poland (Opole, Nysa). There is also an option to apply for scholarships as part of the Studienbörse Germanistik at a partner university in Würzburg. All subjects within the given program are taught in German. Associate professors and professors of foreign partner universities take part in the teaching, offer block seminars and special lectures within the Erasmus+ program. The German Studies Department provides advice on the possibilities of obtaining various types of scholarships, both within Erasmus+ and "Studienbörse Germanistik", as well as scholarships provided by the DAAD.

The German Studies Department, in cooperation with its German partners, has repeatedly organised important international conferences. In the last five years, it was the international German Studies conference "Zentrum und Peripherie" in 2016 in Opava, which was attended by almost 90 lecturers from 9 countries. Academic staff regularly participates in international conferences in the Czech Republic and abroad, where they present the current results of their research.

In cooperation with the German Ministry of the Interior, the German Studies Department regularly organises the project "Deutsch ist super" - motivational events for pupils and teachers of primary and secondary schools in the region. In collaboration with the East Prussian State Museum in Lüneburg (Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum Lüneburg) doc. Martin Maurach organised a study tour: "Studienreise durch Ostpreußen (Masuren)" in August 2016). The department also has a long-term cooperation with the Goethe-Institut in Prague.

Department of Italian Studies:

The department has a long-lasting collaboration with several Italian universities: Università degli Studi di Torino, Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" and Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, Università degli Studi "G. D'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara, etc. Recently a bilateral agreement has been signed with the University of Palermo in Sicily. Every year the Italian teachers visit these universities offering their teaching program or carrying out monitoring activities. (2015: Klímová, Rome „La Sapienza“; 2016: Klímová, Rome, „La Sapienza“; Cadorini, Nova Gorica, Università di Nova Gorica, Pavlíková Alešová, Turin, Università degli studi di Torino; 2017: Klímová, Rome „La Sapienza“; Pavlíková Alešová, Pula, Sveučilište Jurja Dobrila u Puli; 2018: Klímová, Rome

„La Sapienza“ and Roma 3; Pavlíková Alešová, Bánská Bystrica, Univerzita Mateja Bela; 2019: Klímová, Rome „La Sapienza“ and Roma 3.

Colleagues from foreign partner universities come every year offering their lectures to the students of Italian language.

4. Research and Public Outreach

The Institute of Foreign Languages has been involved in a number of projects enabling cooperation with various types of public institutions (especially schools) in the Czech Republic. The projects sponsor important support for further education of foreign language teachers, especially in the form of organisation of professional seminars (Teacher Competence Development project), but also cooperation with foreign universities, in which German and Austrian scholars give lectures at the

Institute of Foreign Languages (Ostpartnerschaften project). Academic staff are also authors or co-authors of textbooks and e-learning learning materials. Within the project Development of Education at the Silesian University in Opava, study plans are continuously innovated to reflect the modern needs of students with the aim of good employability of Silesian University graduates on the labour market.

The Institute's cooperation with the application sphere takes place at several levels:

- 1) Collaboration with employers in the preparation of new study programs reflecting the needs of the labour market (e.g. the project funded by the European Commission Development of education at the Silesian University in Opava),
- 2) Collaboration with employers and practice experts in the realisation of professionally oriented study programs (internships, lectures and seminars by practice experts): English for Professional Purposes, German for Professional Purposes, Italian for Professional Purposes,
- 3) Students' internships at schools of various types within the study programs focused on the education of future teachers,

Among the most important activities in the field of popularisation of research are:

- organisation of popularisation events at which the public is acquainted with the latest research results and development trends in language teaching (Tag der deutschen Sprache, Stammtisch)
- cooperation in organising regional tourist events (Opening the tourist season of Opava region in Silesia)
- film clubs (German films at Silesian University, Italian film club), literature discussions (Lange Nacht der kurzen Texte)
- organising competitions for pupils of all types of schools in the region (Wer wird Lese-Superstar?, Lesewettbewerb, Dramawettbewerb).