

## **Localization: Customizing Software for the World - By: ERIK BANSLEBEN & BARBARA KARSCH**

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# **Localization: Customizing Software for the World**

The Professional & Continuing Education (PCE) division at University of Washington (in Seattle, United States) is launching a new Certificate program this year in localization. Officially named [Localization: Customizing Software for the World](#), the program is comprised of a 3-course intensive format that was developed in partnership with industry, professional organizations, and academia.

### **Industry Relevance**

Even during this recession companies have been looking to fill positions for international project engineers (IPEs), localization project managers (LPMs) and similar job titles. These jobs are difficult to fill because the profiles require a breadth of skills that engineers, translators, product managers or technical writers may not have. To begin with, applicants must be good project managers. But beyond that they need to be able to solve localizability issues, manage translation memories, support terminology management processes, and serve as liaison between source and target language experts. Software producers and language service providers in the Puget Sound are aware of the complex nature of this profession and came together to help create a program that could meet those needs.

### **Merging Academia, Industry & Professional Organizations through Advisory Boards**

Each Certificate program created at UW Professional & Continuing Education is guided by an advisory board providing a broad range of professional & industry perspectives. For the Localization program, we had representatives from Adaquest, Lionbridge, Microsoft, Getty Images, CSoft, Adobe, and Google as well as UW Linguistics Faculty and the Director of the UW Language Learning Center. Board member titles include project managers, terminology researchers, professors, business trainers, and many others.

Together this board developed the program, courses, and the curriculum which all parties involved considered to be the most relevant to the industry today. The curriculum is varied and comprehensive, allowing students to get both an overview of many key topics in the field, but also to explore some of these in much greater detail as they develop their interests and specialization.

### **Focus & Approach**

The Certificate program is designed to be hands-on and practical. Instructors are industry experts and students hear from guest speakers working in the industry, research and use current translation and localization tools, as well as delve into both the technical and project management aspects. Upon completing this certificate, students are expected to be able to engineer and manage a successful localization project.

While the advisory board considered the possibility of delivering the program online or using a hybrid approach that would include a number of online sessions, it was decided that in its first year the program should be delivered as a classroom-based program so that the instructors could focus on the content and tweak the curriculum based on student interest. After that initial classroom offering an online or hybrid delivery format is certainly possible in the future. If online delivery is introduced (perhaps in Fall 2010), the program would then also be available to international students abroad. The application process would be identical to anyone else applying locally: students would need to meet the minimum technology requirements and would need to communicate well enough in English to be able to participate effectively. Additionally, since the program is currently noncredit, anyone meeting the minimum requirements could participate. Matriculation into a degree program would not be required.

### **Courses & Curriculum**

In addition to having an advisory board, all Certificate programs at UW PCE are approved by academic units on campus. Most programs typically have one approving academic unit, but because of this Certificate program's range and interdisciplinary nature, it actually has five approving academic units, namely Computer Science & Engineering, Linguistics, Geography, Germanics, and Human Centered Design & Engineering.

The curriculum can be briefly summarized as follows:

Course 1 introduces students to the basic concepts of localization which covers history, workflow, roles, technology tools, where to find a job and the future of the industry. Students will take these concepts and see how they relate to real-life situations as well as listening to guest speakers in the industry. Additional topics include translation vs. localization, real-life cases, and a technology overview.

Course 2 focuses on localization engineering. Localizability and globalization engineering is covered to enable students to understand the root causes of engineering issues. Additionally, hands-on experience with localization and terminology management tools is provided. Students are asked to apply the course content to real-life scenarios and think creatively as well as critically through issues. The expectation is that by the end of the class, students will be able to work in an entry-level localization engineer role. Information is provided during the quarter for students to read further on topics if desired.

Course 3 introduces students to in-depth concepts of the localization management business. Students will learn how to communicate deliverables effectively, collect process and technical information in localization kits that are handed off to production, and find out how to create and maintain budgets and schedules for international projects. Large portions of this course will include experiential group exercises that simulate the work environment which localization program managers face on the job.

### **Expected Audience**

Early indications of applicants suggest that students are interested who have an international background meaning they either speak a foreign language or have lived some time abroad. While this international background is not a prerequisite, the program does seem to resonate with this audience. However, we expect that the program will attract a wide range of individuals with both international backgrounds but also those who want to expand the application of technology and are interested in cultural diversity, international business, globalization, project management and user-centered design considerations.

## Authors



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