



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF



**WASLI**

World Association of  
Sign Language Interpreters

**WFD-WASLI**

**INTERNATIONAL SIGN  
INTERPRETER**

**ACCREDITATION  
HANDBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENT

# WFD-WASLI INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETATION ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENT .....	2
1. ABOUT US.....	1
2. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.1 WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL SIGN? .....	1
2.2 INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETER .....	2
3. WFD-WASLI INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION .....	3
3.1 ACCREDITATION .....	4
3.1.1 Essential skills.....	4
3.1.2 Desirable skills.....	4
3.1.3 Knowledge.....	4
3.1.4 Qualifications .....	4
3.2 PRE-ACCREDITATION.....	5
3.2.1 Essential skills.....	5
3.2.2 Desirable skills.....	5
3.2.3 Knowledge.....	5
3.2.4 Qualifications .....	5
4. CODE OF CONDUCT .....	6
5. STAGES OF THE ACCREDITATION .....	6
6. ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE .....	8
7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	8
7.1 ACCREDITEES .....	8
7.2 PRE-ACCREDITED IS INTERPRETERS .....	8
8. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS .....	8
9. REVOCATION .....	9
10. AMENDMENTS .....	9
11. CONTACT US .....	9
<b>APPENDIX A: STAGE 1 REQUIREMENTS – PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT FOR STAGE 1 – PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: STAGE 2 REQUIREMENTS – ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>6</b>

## 1. ABOUT US

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) was established in Rome, Italy, in 1951, and is an international non-governmental organisation with membership comprising national deaf associations of 134 nations (Ordinary Members), in addition to its Individual Members, Associate Members, and International Members. The WFD's legal seat is in Helsinki, Finland, and it also has eight Regional Secretariats, one Regional Co-operating Member, and a Youth Section (WFDYS). The WFD has consultative status in the United Nations (UN) and is a founding member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA). The WFD works towards realising its goals in accordance with the principles and objectives of the human rights mechanisms of the UN, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) is an international non-governmental organisation representing sign language interpreters. Our legal seat in Switzerland was established in 2020, WASLI promotes the development of interpreting worldwide through formations of national interpreter associations, and lobbies for effective training and standards of practice. WASLI's membership includes over 60 national interpreter associations (voting members), individual members, and supporting organisations (both non-voting). WASLI operates with a volunteer board of directors, which includes the executive members and seven regional representatives. By promoting the professionalisation of sign language interpreting, deaf people's human rights can be supported through the provision of qualified and ethical interpreting services. WASLI collaborates closely with the World Federation of the Deaf in order to advance issues of importance for both organisations.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, deaf people increasingly engage in the international arena. Similarly, much of the WFD and WASLI advocacy work is in the international forums. In all these platforms, International Sign is the primary mode of communication. Since its inaugural appearance at the WFD Congress in 1979, demand for International Sign interpreting has grown over time. Despite this, there has been no formal recognition system available for credentialing IS interpreters. To address this, the WFD and WASLI initiated an interim accreditation system which recognised 20 individuals by end of December 2015. These interpreters were awarded the official status of 'WFD-WASLI Accredited International Sign Interpreter'.

### 2.1 WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL SIGN?

International Sign is a contact sign, which has evolved among deaf people who need to communicate but do not share a common sign language. Despite the widespread myth that sign language is universal, national sign languages evolved separately, often with minimal contact with other sign languages. Early accounts of deaf people using an international gestural communication date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. Today, though it varies greatly from one context to another, International Sign has begun to become somewhat more standardised when used in a formal context, through frequent international meetings of the WFD, Deaflympics, the United Nations (UN) conferences, UN Committee sessions related to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities (CRPD), and other events. While most pidgins are syntactically relatively poor, IS exploits many grammatical features that seem to be common among most sign languages (use of space, directionality, personification, and a kind of mime on the hands), so that it is theorised to be more like a language than other pidgins.

## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETER

An International Sign interpreter is fluent in at least one national sign language and spoken/written language (English a present), and who interprets, usually simultaneously, in meetings where deaf people from different countries do not share a common national sign language. International Sign interpreters can be either deaf or hearing. International Sign Interpreters are often required to interpret in international forums. The following is a list of some of the situations or settings where International Sign interpreters *have already* been employed:

- ❖ Ad-hoc international conferences
- ❖ WFD Regional Secretariats Conferences
- ❖ UN Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
- ❖ UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- ❖ UN Conference of State Parties in New York Council of Europe
- ❖ CRPD Committee Sessions in Geneva
- ❖ Deaflympics
- ❖ European Commission meetings and conferences
- ❖ European Parliament events
- ❖ Press Conferences
- ❖ WFD Congresses/Conferences and WASLI Conferences
- ❖ International Disability Alliance (IDA)
- ❖ International conferences in deaf studies, sign language, linguistics and interpreting research
- ❖ African Forum of Sign Language interpreters (AFSLI), or European Union of the Deaf and European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI) seminars and conferences and events
- ❖ Research project meetings and conferences
- ❖ Training events

In most of these venues, the International Sign interpreter will be interpreting between English, other UN official languages and International Sign, though in meetings with simultaneous spoken language interpreting, they may interpret between IS and another spoken language, and for presentations presented in a national sign language, the International Sign interpreter may interpret directly from a signed language into International Sign.

### 3. WFD-WASLI INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION

The WFD-WASLI International Sign Interpreter Accreditation (hereafter '**the Accreditation**') exists to meet the increasing demand of International Sign Interpretation in the international arena.

It aims to:

- Set, maintain and promote standards in International Sign Interpretation
- Promote a quality-assurance system for credentialing practitioners
- Maintain a register of WFD-WASLI Accredited International Sign Interpreters (hereafter '**Accreditees**')

## 3.1 ACCREDITATION

Accreditees are practitioners who possess the following:

### 3.1.1 ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- Proficiency in International Sign (C1 [CEFR](#))
- Proficiency (C1 [CEFR](#)) in one of the testing languages (currently English)
- Proficiency in a national sign language and national spoken and/or written language
- Five years of experience (at least 150 days<sup>1</sup>) in interpreting for conferences<sup>2</sup> or high-level meetings at national level in the national sign and spoken languages
- Three years of experience (at least 50 days) in International Sign interpreting at international or regional events within conference or high-level meeting settings
- Skills in co-working or team working with other practitioners

### 3.1.2 DESIRABLE SKILLS

- Proficiency in a second national sign language
- Proficiency in a second spoken/written language

### 3.1.3 KNOWLEDGE

- Extensive knowledge on current affairs, e.g. international geography, history, cultures and social affairs
- Familiarity with the history and international structure of deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. WFD, WFD Regional secretariats, Deaflympics, WASLI, AFSLI, EFSLI, etc.
- Knowledge of the international institutions that cooperate with the international deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. UN, UN regional structures, International Disability Alliance, regional political organisations, etc.
- Knowledge of national countries, their culture, politics and history

### 3.1.4 QUALIFICATIONS

- Formal recognition with a professional registration body of sign language interpreters (if possible)
- A university degree preferably in a relevant field, e.g. interpreting and/or translation studies, sign language interpreting
- Membership of national and international professional interpreter organisations, e.g. the interpreter's national sign language interpreter's organisation, and WASLI, AFSLI, EFSLI, AIIC<sup>3</sup>.
- Membership of regional, national and international deaf organisations, e.g. the interpreter's

<sup>1</sup> A day is single interpreting assignment of at least 2 hours of interpreting work

<sup>2</sup> A conference setting is one where the interpreting is provided with the expectation the speaker will not be interrupted, e.g. Deaf Association business meeting, conference, meetings of officials, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Accreditees may wish to apply for the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) membership as an additional way to have their skills and abilities recognised at the international conference level. While the AIIC membership is not a requirement for work, the AIIC does have the formal role of negotiating working conditions at the United Nations for all interpreters. The AIIC, through the Sign Language Coordinator, are promoting the use of the WFD-WASLI Accreditees and lobbying for working conditions that are consistent with the WFD-WASLI guidelines for international work.

national deaf organisation, WFD, EUD

## 3.2 PRE-ACCREDITATION

Those who wish to work towards accreditation and are hoping to have opportunities to work alongside Accreditees can submit evidence to become pre-accredited; this should support mentoring and work opportunities within more experienced teams.

### 3.2.1 ESSENTIAL SKILLS

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- Proficiency in International Sign (C1 [CEFR](#))
- Proficiency (C1 [CEFR](#)) in one of the testing languages (currently English)
- Proficiency in national sign language and national spoken and/or written language
- Four years of experience (at least 120 days<sup>4</sup>) in interpreting for conferences<sup>5</sup> or high-level meetings at national level and regional level in the national sign and spoken languages
- Two years of experience (at least 20 days) in International Sign interpreting at regional events within conference or high-level meeting settings
- Skills in co-working or team working with other practitioners

### 3.2.2 DESIRABLE SKILLS

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- Proficiency in a second national sign language
- Proficiency in a second spoken/written language

### 3.2.3 KNOWLEDGE

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- Extensive knowledge on current affairs, e.g. international geography, history, cultures and social affairs
- Some familiarity with the history and international structure of deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. WFD, WFD Regional secretariats, Deaflympics, WASLI, AFSLI, EFSLI, etc.
- Some knowledge of the international institutions that in cooperate with the international deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. UN, UN regional structures, International Disability Alliance, regional political organisations, etc.
- Knowledge of national countries, their culture, politics and history

### 3.2.4 QUALIFICATIONS

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- Formal recognition with professional registration body of sign language interpreters (if possible)
- A university degree preferably in a relevant field, e.g. interpreting and/or translation studies, sign language interpreting
- Membership of national and international professional interpreter organisations, e.g. the interpreter's national sign language interpreter's organisation, and WASLI, AFSLI, EFSLI,

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<sup>4</sup> A day is single interpreting assignment of at least 2 hours of interpreting work

<sup>5</sup> A conference setting is one where the interpreting is provided with the expectation the speaker will not be interrupted, e.g. Deaf Association business meeting, conference, meetings of officials, etc.



AIIC<sup>6</sup>.

- Membership of regional, national and international deaf organisations, e.g. the interpreter’s national deaf organisation, WFD, EUD

#### 4. CODE OF CONDUCT

Both Accreditees and pre-accredited interpreters are to adhere to the WFD-WASLI [Code of Conduct](#) for WFD-WASLI accredited International Sign Interpreters; they are held accountable via the [Professional Conduct Review Process](#).

#### 5. STAGES OF THE ACCREDITATION

	APPLICATON FOR REGISTER OF WFD-WASLI IS INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION
<b>WHO</b>	Practitioners who are interested in joining the list of WFD-WASLI Accreditees who meet the criteria (see <a href="#">3.1.1.</a> ) or Pre-Accreditees who meet the criteria (see <a href="#">3.2.1</a> )
<b>STAGE ONE: APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS</b>	Portfolio of evidence for all criteria (see <a href="#">Appendix B</a> )
<b>STAGE TWO: ASSESSMENT</b>	Successful application leads to an assessment of IS work assessed against specific criteria (see <a href="#">Appendix C</a> ).
<b>PROCESSING FEE*</b>	Applicants from developing countries**: Accreditation – €150 Pre-Accreditation – €100  Applicants from non-developing countries Accreditation – €550 Pre-Accreditation – €400
<b>ACCREDITATION VALIDITY</b>	5 years
<b>APPLICATION TYPE AND PERIOD</b>	Once a year starting September 2016 Open to all meeting the application criteria

*\*The processing fee is payable upon submission of the application/renewal for the Accreditation. All processing fees are non-refundable. Successful applicants will receive confirmation by letter*

<sup>6</sup>Accreditees may wish to apply for the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) membership as an additional way to have their skills and abilities recognised at the international conference level. While the AIIC membership is not a requirement for work, the AIIC does have the formal role of negotiating working conditions at the United Nations for all interpreters. The AIIC, through the Sign Language Coordinator, are promoting the use of the WFD-WASLI Accreditees and lobbying for working conditions that are consistent with the WFD-WASLI guidelines for international work.

*from the WASLI within eight (8) weeks of application submission. Upon completion of the assessment process, successful applicants will receive:*

- ❖ *A laminated ID card with their name and photograph showing their IS interpreter recognition status*
- ❖ *A certificate of accreditation*
- ❖ *Name and contact details of Accreditees will be added to a directory that will be featured on the WFD and WASLI webpages.*

*\*\*Refer to <https://www.worlddata.info/developing-countries.php>*

## 6. ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The current International Accreditation Advisory Board (ISAAB) consists of individuals, approved by both the WFD and WASLI Boards, and consists of:

- ❖ Chair: Experience of interpreting accreditation and registration
- ❖ Representative: World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)
- ❖ Representative: World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)
- ❖ Representative: WFD-WASLI Accredited Interpreters
- ❖ Representative: WFD-WASLI aspiring Accredited Interpreters
- ❖ Representative: WFD-WASLI Accredited Interpreters service user

The Committee shall convene, when necessary, to oversee different aspects of the Accreditation including Application Assessment, Guidelines and Policy Review, Professional Development Review, Complaints, Dispute Resolution, Suspension and Revocation.

## 7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### 7.1 ACCREDITEES

The Accreditation requires the Accreditees to keep professional knowledge and skills up to date. To maintain the Accreditation, Accreditees must:

- ❖ Undertake 24 hours of activities per year that helps you develop your professional practice;
- ❖ Keep a record and evidence of your activity with relevant information such as what you did, when you did it, why you chose to do it, how it contributed to your professional development and
- ❖ Submit the record to [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com) by 15 December of each year.

Whilst the WFD-WASLI have set requirements for professional development, the WFD-WASLI also strive to be flexible. If there are any difficulties meeting the requirement, or uncertainty if an activity is acceptable, please contact the WFD-WASLI. Failure to meet the requirement with no satisfactory explanation offered may result in suspension or revocation of the Accreditation.

### 7.2 PRE-ACCREDITED IS INTERPRETERS

Pre-accredited interpreters should:

- ❖ Have an IS interpreter mentor
- ❖ Completed at least 10 days of IS interpreting work within more experienced teams to support their development in IS interpreting practice
- ❖ Inform [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com) by 15 December of each year of the name of your mentor and continuing the development of their practice.

## 8. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

If you think an Accreditee, or pre-accredited interpreter has not followed the [Code of Conduct](#) you should make a complaint in writing or International Sign video to [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com) with the following details:

- ❖ Your name and contact details
- ❖ Name of Accreditee you are making a complaint about
- ❖ Part or parts of the Code of Conduct you think the Accreditee didn't follow
- ❖ What, when and where it happened
- ❖ Name of witnesses, if any

The WFD-WASLI will only accept a complaint/complaint of incidents with complete information and that occurred within the past 3 months. Upon receipt of complaints, the Accreditation Advisory Panel shall convene and investigate the matter. Depending on the nature of the complaints, the Accreditation Advisory Panel shall strive to provide a resolution within 2 months.

## 9. REVOCATION

The WFD-WASLI reserves reasonable rights to revoke the Accreditation with prior notice to the Accreditee. Any violation of ethical or professional conduct outlined in the [Code of Conduct](#) may also result in the Accreditation being revoked.

## 10. AMENDMENTS

The WFD-WASLI may reasonably alter or amend the Accreditation Handbook, with approval from the WFD and WASLI Board, at any time at its own discretion with prior notice to the Accreditees.

## 11. CONTACT US

For matters relating to the Accreditation, contact [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com)



**APPENDIX A: STAGE 1 REQUIREMENTS – Portfolio of evidence**

Applicants for Accreditation (both Accreditee and pre-accreditation) must demonstrate the following essential skills and competencies as detailed [above](#):

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Proficiency in International Sign (C1 <a href="#">CEFR</a>)</li> <li>❖ Proficiency (C1 <a href="#">CEFR</a>) in one of the testing languages (currently English)</li> <li>❖ Proficiency in a national sign language and national spoken/written language</li> <li>❖ Skills/ability in co-working/ team working with other interpreters</li> </ul>

Applicants for accreditation must also demonstrate:

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES - ACCREDITATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Five years of experience (at least 150 days) in interpreting for conferences or high-level meetings at national level in the national sign and spoken languages</li> <li>❖ Three years of experience (at least 50 days) in International Sign interpreting at international or regional events within conference or high-level meeting settings (can be virtual)</li> </ul>

Applicants for pre-accreditation must also demonstrate:

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES – PRE-ACCREDITATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Four years of experience (at least 120 days) in interpreting for conferences or high-level meetings at national level in the national sign and spoken languages</li> <li>❖ Two years of experience (at least 20 days) in International Sign interpreting at national or regional events within conference or high-level meeting settings. (can be virtual)</li> </ul>

Applicants in Stage 1 are required to submit a portfolio of evidence (see [Appendix B](#)) that includes:

EVIDENCE	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Application form	Identification and Experience
Two (2) letters of recommendation from practitioners who have worked either WASLI or WFD events.	The letters shall include description of your experience and competence and addressing the qualities in point <a href="#">3.1.1</a> .
Two (2) letters of recommendation from deaf consumers.	Referees must have had experience working with you (i.e. have seen your visual interpretation). The letters shall include description of your experience and competence and addressing the qualities in point <a href="#">3.1.1</a> .

<p>A letter of recommendation from national deaf associations or interpreting agencies (including associations and private companies).</p>	<p>The letter shall include description of your experience and competence and addressing the qualities in point <a href="#">3.1.1</a>.</p>
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**APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT FOR STAGE 1 – Portfolio of evidence**

**SCORING RUBRIC**

**PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE – EVALUATION**

Please rate for each of the following by marking your response clearly.

Scores from Weak (1) Satisfactory (2) Strong (3) Very Strong (4)

<b>NO</b>	<b>DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>Score (1-4)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N.A</b>
1	Application form				
2.	Curriculum Vitae				
3.	Certificates of General Education				
4.	Copies of National Interpreting Training				
5a.	Certificates of Attendance for International Sign Training. If N.A, go to 5b. If 'Yes', rate strength of evidence provided.				
5b.	200-word justification about why International Sign Training has not been attended				
6.	2 x letters of recommendation from deaf consumer				
7.	2 x letters of recommendation from practitioner				
8.	1 x letter of recommendation from national deaf association or interpreting agency				
9.	Logbook/spreadsheet of contracted International Sign Interpreting bookings (50 days for hearing/ 25 days for Deaf interpreters)				
10.	Processing fee payment				

**TOTAL SCORES:**

0 /40



**APPENDIX C: STAGE 2 REQUIREMENTS – Assessment**

**MEANING BASED INTERPRETING RUBRIC<sup>7</sup>** (Debra Russell, Sheila Johnston, and Christopher Stone)

	SCORE	Proficient – 5	Competent – 4	Satisfactory – 3	Developing – 2	Beginning – 1
<b>Effective meaning-based interpreting</b>	0.0	Interpreting is meaning-based	Interpreting is primarily meaning-based		Interpreting is consistently influenced by the SL	Interpreting is heavily influenced by the SL
	0.0	Little or no SL influence	Some SL influence that does not skew the message	Some SL influence that does not significantly skew the message	SL skews the message	Several main topics are missing, and very little detail is included
	0.0	Includes all main topics and most details from source text	Main topics are included with some level of detail	Main topics are included	Some main topics are missing. Inadequate level of detail	Message is significantly skewed and/or incomplete
	0.0	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				
<b>Salient linguistic features of grammar and language use</b>	0.0	Interpreting both culturally and linguistically is highly appropriate	Interpreting is culturally and linguistically appropriate	Interpreting is in the main culturally and linguistically appropriate	Interpreting is somewhat culturally and linguistically appropriate	Interpreting is culturally or linguistically inappropriate
	0.0	Articulation is clear	Articulation is mostly clear	Articulation is clear enough	Articulation is unclear at times	Articulation is often unclear
	0.0	TL is highly cohesive	TL is cohesive	TL is usually cohesive	TL cohesion inconsistent	TL lacks cohesion
	0.0	TL includes highly appropriate topic boundaries	TL includes appropriate topic boundaries	TL consistently includes topic boundaries	TL topic boundaries are inappropriate	TL topic boundaries are insufficient
	0.0	TL correct grammatical structure throughout	TL has a few minor grammatical errors	TL has some grammatical errors	TL has numerous grammatical errors	TL contains serious and frequent grammatical errors
	0.0	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from: Claudia Angelelli (2009). Using a rubric to assess translation ability. In Angelelli, C. & Jacobson, H (eds). *Testing and assessment in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins. p. 13-47.

	<b>SCORE</b>	<b>Proficient – 5</b>	<b>Competent – 4</b>	<b>Satisfactory – 3</b>	<b>Developing – 2</b>	<b>Beginning – 1</b>
<b>Goals, Affect, Style, Register</b>	<b>0.0</b>	Vocabulary choices and inflection consistently convey participant’s goals	Vocabulary choices and inflection sufficiently convey participant’s goals	Vocabulary choices and inflection generally convey participant’s goals	Vocabulary choices and inflection inconsistently convey participant’s goals	Vocabulary choices and inflection do not convey participant’s goals
	<b>0.0</b>	Participant’s affect, register and style of the source are effectively incorporated throughout	Participant’s affect, register and style of the source are incorporated throughout	Participant’s affect, register and style of the source are mostly incorporated throughout	Participant’s affect, register and style of the source are inconsistently incorporated	Participant’s affect, register and style of the source are not incorporated
	<b>0.0</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				
<b>Situational Appropriateness</b>	<b>0.0</b>	Demonstrates masterful ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the TL	Demonstrates proficient ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the TL	Demonstrates the ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the TL	Inconsistently demonstrates the ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the TL	Is not able to demonstrate the ability to achieve the intended purpose of the interpretation
	<b>0.0</b>	Vocabulary choice is skilful and apt	Vocabulary choice is consistently very good	Vocabulary choice is consistently good	Vocabulary choice are sometimes appropriate and sometimes either too formal or too colloquial for the situation	Most phrasing and/or word choices are either too formal or too colloquial for the TL and participants
	<b>0.0</b>	Cultural references, discourse and register are completely appropriate for the TL domain and the participants	Cultural references, discourse and register are consistently appropriate for the TL domain and the participants	Cultural references, discourse and register are mostly appropriate for the TL domain and the participants	Cultural references, discourse and register are inconsistently appropriate for the TL domain and the participants	Cultural references, discourse and register are inappropriate for the TL domain
	<b>0.0</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>				
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>0.0</b>					

The minimum total score required to be accredited is 3 per each band (averaged) for a minimum of 12 to be satisfactory.