



**WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF**



**WASLI**

World Association of  
Sign Language Interpreters

**WFD-WASLI**

**INTERNATIONAL SIGN  
INTERPRETER**

**REPORT ON 2021  
Accreditation Process**

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## 1. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

In August 2019, the WFD transferred responsibility to WASLI to manage the WFD-WASLI Accreditation Process. At this time, WASLI was in the final stages of securing their legal seat in Switzerland, establishing a bank account in Switzerland, and obtaining tax exemption status. These matters took much longer than expected, creating delays for WASLI's management of the testing system. Two other major events altered our timelines: COVID-19 and the impact of the global pandemic on interpreters in every country, and then the ISAAB coordinator that was appointed in 2021 became ill and was not able to complete her duties. In Sept 2021, I, as Honorary President, agreed to manage the accreditation process with considerable support from Dr. Christopher Stone, WASLI President and former ISAAB chair, and Dr. Betsy Winston to ensure applicants could be tested and results known before Dec. 31, 2021.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, deaf people have increasingly engaged in the international arena. Similarly, much of the WFD and WASLI advocacy work takes place in international forums. In all these platforms, International Sign is the primary mode of communication. Since its inaugural appearance at the WFD Congress in 1979, the demand for International Sign interpreting has increased. 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 that 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 signing system, 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 and 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 and 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. 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 PRE-ACCREDITATION**

The WFD-WASLI International Sign Interpreter Pre-Accreditation exists to meet the increasing demand of International Sign Interpretation by supporting those aspiring to full accreditation through a screening and mentoring process. An interpreter who is seeking pre-accreditation status must have an accredited IS interpreter as a mentor and should also consider working with a Deaf IS consultant who uses IS in high-level meetings.

## 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

- 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>1</sup>) in interpreting for conferences<sup>2</sup> or high-level meetings at national level and regional level in the national sign and spoken languages
- PLUS
- 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

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

### 3.2.3 KNOWLEDGE

- 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 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

- 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, 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

#### 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

<b>APPLICATION FOR REGISTER OF WFD-WASLI IS INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION</b>	
<b>WHO</b>	Practitioners who are interested in joining the list of WFD-WASLI Accreditees who meet the criteria for Pre-Accreditees
<b>STAGE ONE: APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS</b>	Portfolio of evidence for all criteria
<b>PROCESSING FEE*</b>	Applicants from developing countries**: Pre-Accreditation – €100  Applicants from non-developing countries Pre-Accreditation – €400
<b>PRE-ACCREDITATION VALIDITY</b>	5 years
<b>APPLICATION TYPE AND PERIOD</b>	Twice per year, March and Sept 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 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 PRE-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 develop professional practice.
- ❖ Keep a record and evidence of activity engaged in with a mentor, with relevant information such as what was done, when it was done, why it was chosen, and how it contributed to continuing professional development: and
- ❖ Submit the record to [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com) by 15 December of each year.
- ❖ Inform [is.accred.wasli@gmail.com](mailto:is.accred.wasli@gmail.com) by 15 December of each year of the name of the mentor

The WFD-WASLI have no set requirements for mentoring, as each mentee will have different linguistic and interpreting needs. If there are any difficulties meeting the requirement, or uncertainty if an activity is acceptable, please contact the WFD-WASLI ISAAB Coordinator. Failure to meet the requirement with no satisfactory explanation offered may result in suspension or revocation of the Pre-Accreditation.

## 8. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

If someone believes an Accreditee, or pre-accredited interpreter has not followed the [Code of Conduct](#), they 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 Pre-Accreditation with prior notice to the Accretee. Any violation of ethical or professional conduct outlined in the [Code of Conduct](#) may also result in the Pre-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 Accredee and pre-accreditation) must demonstrate the following essential skills and competencies:

<b>ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES</b>
<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 pre-accreditation must also demonstrate:

<b>ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES – PRE-ACCREDITATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 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 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>

NOTE: If the applicant is a Deaf interpreter, the requirement is half of the above days (60 days and 10 days respectfully)

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

<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>
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 address the qualities required
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

<sup>4</sup> A day is 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.

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	shall include description of your experience and competence and address the qualities required
A letter of recommendation from national deaf associations or interpreting agencies (including associations and private companies).	The letter shall include description of your experience and competence and address the qualities required

**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 and National Sign Interpreting bookings				
10.	Processing fee payment				