OVERVIEW OF THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

FOR CANDIDATES

Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification

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Introduction

This document has been prepared to help persons aspiring to become certified court interpreters understand what the written test measures, how it is administered, and how to prepare for taking the exam. Each examinee should study this overview thoroughly in order to be more fully prepared for the written exam.

The written examination is only one part of the process for becoming a certified or approved court interpreter. Passing this test does not mean a person has become a "certified court interpreter;" rather, it means the examinee has met one of several requirements for certification.

The written test measures candidates' knowledge of three areas central to the work of a court interpreter at the level of a minimally qualified court interpreter:

1. English Language. To function as a professional court interpreter, one indispensable component is a high degree of proficiency in the English language. Accordingly, the written examination assumes a high degree of literacy in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. It tests comprehension of written English vocabulary and idioms.

2. Court-Related Terms and Usage. A second area of knowledge essential to successful professional performance is familiarity with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Accordingly, the written examination also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, *especially in the area of criminal courts*.

3. Ethics and Professional Conduct. The third area of knowledge required of professional court interpreters encompassed in the written test is general knowledge of standards guiding the performance of duties. Accordingly, the written exam includes questions aimed at measuring candidates' knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct.

What does the test look like?

The examination contains 125 multiple-choice questions. Each question has four choices, labeled A, B, C, and D. The candidate is instructed to select the ***best*** choice and mark that choice on the answer sheet (the specific form of the answer sheet will vary by state).

The test has two parts:

Part I: General Language Proficiency, and

Part II: Court-Related Terms & Usage, and Ethics & Professional Conduct.

Within each part there are several sections, each of which contains a particular category of questions. There are specific instructions for how to proceed at the beginning of each section. A complete list of the sections, including one or more sample questions for each, is provided in Appendix A.

How will the test be scheduled and what do I need to know about the test in advance?

An official of the state where you are taking the exam will notify you in writing by mail or e-mail a minimum of two weeks before the test date. The notice will advise you when and where to report for the test and may include directions to the test site.

Arrive early. **<u>No one will be admitted late.</u> There are no exceptions and no one arriving late for any reason will be able to take the test at that test session.**

Only small purses or wallets are allowed in the testing room. Leave everything else at home or in your car. Do not try to bring briefcases, palm pilots, dictionaries, gym bags, cell phones, calculators, paper, pens, pencils, or any other similar items into the test room as you will not be admitted to the test room with them. Pencils will be provided in the test room.

There may be a registration area where you will report and sign in. In the testing room, there will be a test administration supervisor, and there may be another test proctor present to assist.

Use the restroom prior to entering the testing room. If you ask to leave the testing room after the test has begun, you will be instructed to leave all of your test materials with the test administration supervisor prior to leaving the room. You may be escorted to the restroom to ensure that you do not use a telephone or converse with other individuals while you are outside of the testing room. No more than one candidate will be allowed to leave the testing room at the same time. No adjustments to the time allotted for completion of the exam will be made for any time you are outside of the testing room.

What if I need special accommodation due to a disability?

If you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must request special accommodation *in advance*. In order to do that, you should complete the attached Request for Special Accommodation and submit it to the director of the court interpreting program in your state as far ahead of the test date as possible. You must describe your disability and describe the type or kind of accommodation you are requesting. In addition, you must submit a statement from an appropriate professional documenting the diagnosis or evaluation of your disability.

How will the test be administered?

The administration protocol, described below, is recommended practice. It is specifically noted here that from state to state, there may be some deviation from the exact recommendation. However the protocol described will, in large part, reflect administration practices.

In most states, the test will be given in classroom style to a number of candidates at the same time in the same room. A test administration supervisor, who is responsible for oversight of the entire test administration process, will decide what staff members are present to assist with proctoring the examination.

Seating will be assigned. Depending upon the seating arrangements, some candidates may be asked to move from one seat and occupy another. If this happens, it is for test security measures and the candidates should not be troubled or concerned.

Security of the test materials is obviously essential. Examinees may not take notes or copy any portion of the exam.

Proctors will monitor candidates throughout the examination to prevent cheating and, if cheating occurs, detect and deal with it. They may circulate throughout the room, but they will not disturb the examinees. If a proctor suspects that an examinee is cheating in any way, including giving or receiving assistance during the examination, communicating with others, retaining or copying examination questions, or using prohibited aids, the proctor will follow specific protocol for addressing the situation.

If an examinee is disruptive, engages in clear or flagrant cheating, or attempts to copy questions or retain or record test materials, the examinee may be expelled from the testing room and advised that his or her examination will not be scored. Documentation of the expulsion and the reasons for it will be maintained by the state.

Once all examinees are seated for the exam, the test administrator will hand out materials packets and two pencils to each person. He or she will read instructions scripted to the examinees in order to ensure that all candidates receive the same instructions each time the examination is given. Then the examinees will be directed to read and execute an Agreement and Oath Form. Next, examinees will prepare their answer sheets by entering their name and social security number, the test date, and the test site. Examinees must listen to the instructions carefully and must not begin the examination until the test administration supervisor says, "You may begin."

Candidates are allowed two hours and fifteen minutes to complete the examination. A clock will be provided in each testing room to assist candidates who do not bring their own timepiece. Fifteen minutes before the end of the test, the test administrator will make the following announcement out loud: "You have fifteen minutes remaining."

At the beginning of each section there are instructions on how to answer the questions in that section. As examinees work their way through the test, they should carefully read the instructions for each section to be sure they understand how to answer that section's questions. The types of instructions you will find will be to select the answer that:

- Is closest in meaning;
- Most appropriately completes a sentence;
- Best answers a question or provides the best solution to a situation;
- Has the correct sequence of events; or
- Is opposite in meaning.

See Appendix A for sample questions from the various sections of the exam.

What is the score required for passing and how will I be notified about the results?

In order to pass the test, 80 percent of the items must be answered correctly. That means the examinee must answer at least 100 of the 125 items correctly in order to pass. The state's test administration supervisor will ordinarily advise the examinee of the results of his or her test by mail or e-mail. Reminder: Passing this test does not mean you are now a "certified" or "approved" court interpreter.

What can I do to prepare for the test?

A list of possible activities and resources has been compiled to help you identify actions you can take to help prepare for the exam. Some of the resources may help you decided whether you are ready to participate in a test of this nature. The list is attached and marked as Appendix B.

What if I do not pass the examination?

This written examination is constructed to measure entry-level knowledge of

- English general vocabulary
- common words and phrases likely to be heard in court
- the typical progression of cases through the court system, and
- provisions of a code of professional responsibility

that a minimally competent person entering the court interpreting field would need.

If you do not pass the exam, it is suggested that you resist the temptation to simply register to retake the exam. Experience shows that retaking an examination of this kind within a short time period will not substantially change the results. Instead, you are encouraged to review the section of this Overview entitled "What can I do to prepare for the test?" and Appendix B, and engage in some reading and preparatory study before retaking the examination.

The time frame within which you can register to retake the written examination varies from state to state. Check with your state's interpreting program manager, administrator, or coordinator to find out details. It is recommended to every state that no candidate should take the same test more than once in a calendar year and in no event, more than twice.

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CONSORTIUM FOR STATE COURT INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

REQUEST FOR ADA ACCOMMODATION

Complete this form only if you are requesting individual testing arrangements because you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

APPLICANT NAME:

Have you been diagnosed with a disability that is recognized by the ADA: Yes___ No___

Describe the type of disability:
_____
_____
_____
_____

I request an accommodation, which is described on the *Documentation of Accommodation*, attached hereto.

Signature	Date

Attach the Documentation of Accommodation form and submit to:

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DOCUMENTATION OF ACCOMMODATION

This section must be completed by an appropriate professional (doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or education professional) to certify that your disabling condition requires the requested exam accommodation.

If you have existing documentation of having the same or similar accommodation provided to you in another test situation, you may submit such documentation instead of having this portion of the form completed.

I HAVE KNOWN _____ SINCE _____
(APPLICANT NAME) (DATE)

AS A _____. I HAVE DIAGNOSED OR EVALUATED
(PATIENT, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP)

THE APPLICANT MYSELF AND I AM NOT RELYING UPON FACTS RELATED TO ME

BY THE APPLICANT. MY DIAGNOSIS IS _____

_____
(DESCRIBE THE MEDICAL OR OTHER CONDITION)

THE APPLICANT HAS DISCUSSED WITH ME THE NATURE OF THE TEST TO BE ADMINISTERED. IT IS MY PROFESSIONAL OPINION THAT BECAUSE OF THIS APPLICANT'S DISABILITY, HE/SHE SHOULD BE ACCOMMODATED BY PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING: (CHECK ONLY THOSE THAT APPLY)

	Large print type		Extra time (how much?)
	Separate testing area		An examination reader
	Other oral administration (describe)		Other accommodation (describe)

Signature and title of professional _____

Printed name and title_____

Date_____ Telephone Number_____

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Sections in Part I, General Language Proficiency

Sentence Completion. Items 1 through 9 consist of unfinished sentences. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that best completes the sentence.

Example: A person who feels persecuted in his/her home country may apply for political

A. appellation
B. appraisal
C. asylum
D. ascendance

(C is the best answer)

Synonyms in Context. Items 10 through 17 consist of sentences that contain an underlined word or phrase. The candidate is instructed to choose from a list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase.

Example: It was done pursuant to the proceedings of the court.

A. in accordance with
B. in addition to
C. in conjunction with
D. in spite of

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Synonyms. Items 18 through 38 consist of words or phrases. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that has the same meaning or closest to the same meaning as the word or phrase provided.

Example 1: Scaffold

A. platform
B. table
C. prop
D. curtain

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: Hubris

A. exaggerated pride
B. steadfast loyalty
C. extreme shyness
D. committed fidelity

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Antonyms. Items 39 through 50 consist of words or phrases. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that is opposite in meaning to the word or phrase provided.

Example: Excessive

A. stingy
B. large
C. robust
D. restricted

(D is the correct answer, opposite in meaning)

Idioms. Items 51 through 75 consist of sentences that contain an underlined idiomatic expression. The candidate is instructed to select from the list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined idiom.

Example 1: Do you need to make a pit stop before we get there?

A. get some money
B. go to the bathroom
C. empty the trash
D. make a phone call

(B is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: His career as an attorney is all washed up.

A. off to a late start
B. off to a good start
C. completely over
D. very profitable

(C is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Sections in Part II, Court-Related Terms & Usage, and
Ethics & Professional Conduct
(*The legal terms found in items 76 through 125
are taken largely from criminal court case types.)

Sentence Completion. Items 76-111 consist of unfinished sentences that are likely to be heard in the court environment. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that most appropriately completes the sentence.

Example 1: A case decided without prejudice means that
A. there is no right to a new trial
B. there is an automatic appeal of the case
C. there is a right to a new trial
D. there are no racial overtones in the case
(C is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Example 2: A defendant is required to give up certain constitutional rights
A. after being found guilty at trial
B. before entering a plea of guilty
C. only if represented by a public defender
D. only after probation is granted
(B is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Court-Related Questions. Items 112 through 121 consist of questions on court-related topics. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

Example: Which of the following would be a concurrent sentence?
A. two years for burglary, two years for robbery: two years in jail
B. two years for theft, two years for assault: four years in jail
C. four years for rape, three years for a second rape: seven years in jail
D. four years for rape, two years for assault: two years in jail
(A is the best answer)

Sequence. Items 122 through 125 consist of questions about the proper sequence of events in court-related situations. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that correctly describes the order in which the events should occur.

Example: Which of the following is a correct sequence of event?

A. Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
B. Jury Sworn, Jury Verdict, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation
C. Jury Deliberation, Jury Sworn, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
D. Jury Sworn, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Verdict

(D is the correct sequence of events)

Professional Conduct Questions. Items 126 and 127 consist of questions about the appropriate course of professional conduct an interpreter should take. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the <u>best</u> answer.

Example: Which of the following is most important for you to do when you are interpreting at the witness stand?

A. keep your eyes on the jury
B. keep your dictionary and note pad at hand
C. keep eye contact with the witness at all times
D. keep the judge informed of contradictory testimony

(B is the best answer)

Scenarios. Items 128 through 135 consist of brief scenarios describing situations an interpreter might encounter while interpreting in the courts that would pose ethical or professional problems. The candidate is instructed to select from a list of four alternatives the <u>best</u> solution or course of action.

Example: An expert witness is giving testimony regarding blood alcohol content while you are interpreting for the defendant. The testimony is very complex, and even though you can interpret it at the same level, you sense that the defendant does not understand such technical language. What is the best thing for you to do in this situation?

A. advise the judge that the defendant does not understand
B. interpret at the same level as the witness
C. ask the judge for permission to explain for the witness
D. summarize the testimony for the defendant in language he can understand

(B is the best solution)

Appendix B

PREPARING FOR THE TEST

If you are not familiar with taking written, multiple-choice tests, you may find it beneficial to:

1. Review instructions and suggestions on taking multiple-choice tests such as:
    a. "Information about the Written Examination," Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (http://www.ncsconline.org/d_research/Consort-interp/fcice_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf) on page 12.
2. Study preparation material developed for similar exams, or even take the exams
    a. TOEFL: TOEFL Sample Test, 6th Edition (www.ets.org/stoefl.html). There are many other publications available as well.

With respect to Part I, General Language Proficiency, one needs to have a very broad command of the English language. That is not something that is quickly or easily acquired. However, some of the following activities might be helpful in expanding one's knowledge of the English language and preparing for the test:

1. Take upper-level English courses at a college or university.
2. Read widely such items as books and professional journals in many fields, American literature, and editorials and articles in major newspapers.
3. Brush up on English vocabulary and lexical concepts (go back to the basics and review antonyms, synonyms, and idioms).
4. Review sample tests from other interpreter certification programs:
    a. California: Request a "practice written examination." See http://www.prometric.com/California/CACourtInt.htm
    b. Administrative Office of the United States Courts: For a description of the written portion of the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE), go to (http://www.ncsconline.org/d_research/Consort-interp/fcice_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf. A sample test can be found in the Examinee Handbook.
5. Consult other resources, such as:
    a. The Idiom Connection, available online at: www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/6720.
    b. The ESL Idiom Page, (Dennis Oliver), available online at: www.eslcafe.com/idioms.
    c. The Synonyms Page, available online at: www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/synonyms.htm.
    d. SAT and GRE workbooks.
    e. Vocabulary-building books found in the reference section of libraries and bookstores.

With respect to Part II, Court-Related Terms & Usage, and Ethics & Professional Conduct, the following activities would be helpful in expanding or acquiring the substantive knowledge pertinent to these fields:

Court-Related Terms & Usage

1. Read news items related to legal matters, law enforcement, and the courts in major newspapers, consulting a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
2. Visit courthouses and observe court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family matters.
3. Take college/university courses in criminal justice and court administration.
4. Read any standard introductory textbook on the criminal justice system.
5. Read publications about the administration of justice such as the following documents issued by the American Bar Association (www.abanet.org/abastore), which are available for $2.50 each:
    a. Law & the Courts, Volume I, *The Role of the Courts,* 2000.
    b. Law & the Courts, Volume II, *Court Procedures,* 1998.
    c. Law & the Courts, Volume III, *Juries*, 2001.
6. Study legal terms from the following sources:
    a. Black's Law Dictionary
    b. Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology (a publication of the Consortium that is available at http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res_CtInte_EnglishLegalGlossaryPub.pdf).

Ethics & Professional Conduct

1. Become familiar your state's Code of Professional Responsibility [or Conduct] for Court Interpreters and its Rules of Court pertaining to court interpreting, if any.
2. Study the model code of professional responsibility, which is available at http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res_CtInte_ModelGuideChapter9Pub.pdf.
3. Join and participate actively in a professional association such as the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (www.najit.org) or the American Translators Association (www.atanet.org), studying their respective codes of ethics.
4. Read at least one of the classic texts in the field:
    a. Berk-Seligson, Susan (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
    b. De Jongh, E.M. (1992). *An Introduction to Court Interpreting: Theory and Practice.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
    c. Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

d. Gonzalez, R.D., Vasquez, V.F., and Mikkelson, H. (1991). *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice.* Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
e. Hewitt, William E. (1995). *Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts.* Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts (available online [see #2 above for web address]).
f. Mikkelson, H. (2000). *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.