



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF



WASLI
WORLD ASSOCIATION OF
SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

International Sign Interpreter Recognition Interim Policy and Guidelines

Approved Date: 13 March 2015
WFD Board and WASLI Board
www.wfdeaf.org / www.wasli.org

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1. Preamble

This document proposes an interim system that will allow World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)¹ to provide opportunities for interpreters to become recognised through a screening and accreditation process and ready to work in international events. Recognising the limitations of the current situation, the International Sign Task Group (ISTG), working under the auspices of WFD/WASLI have developed this proposal. At the same time, it is important to start somewhere and the process proposed here will give opportunities for WFD/WASLI and potential registrant interpreters to develop within an interim framework, until something more substantial can replace it, a system which will need to be funded in order to develop a coherent and sustainable accreditation system.

Deaf people are increasingly engaging at an international level and require access to proceedings equally to their non-signing counterparts. In many countries, the certification/accreditation/registration of national sign language interpreters, who work between the national spoken and signed languages, is available and professionally administered. Equally, there are countries where sign language interpreters may not be available or no routes to formal recognition exist. Deaf people from all countries will want to engage in international events and it may only be possible through an International Sign interpreter. These interpreters are able to provide interpretation into a non-standardised contact language (International Sign, otherwise known as IS), which can be understood by delegates from a range of countries.

Currently, there is no route to formal recognition to become an IS interpreter. Still, IS interpreters have been available and carefully selected over the years from a pool of experienced professionals, both deaf and hearing. It is acknowledged that, while deaf people are increasingly engaging in international events, there are no available training courses or assessments for new interpreters and there is a shortage of available interpreters for this type of work.

2. Definition of IS

International Sign (IS) 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 19th century in Europe. Today, though it varies greatly from one context to another, IS has begun to become somewhat more standardized when used in a formal context, through frequent international meetings of the World Federation of the Deaf, Deaflympics, the UN conferences, UN Committee sessions related to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 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.

¹ While this proposal is for the attention of WFD and WASLI, we are aware that there are other stakeholders who are actively engaged in the employment of IS/English interpreters. European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (efsl) are interested organisations and there may be existing or emerging organisations in other continental regions. Equally, the European Parliament is a space where the need of IS/English interpreters are essential, especially in the context of the growing number of Deaf MEPs, and the United Nations routinely host events which are attended by deaf people. Equally, other continental regions are regular employers of IS interpreters for international conferences held by them.

3. Definition of an IS interpreter

An IS interpreter is an interpreter fluent in at least one national sign language (and usually two or three), who is also fluent in at least one spoken/written English (and usually two or three), and who interprets, usually simultaneously, in meetings where deaf people from different countries do not share a common national sign language. It is possible the deaf audience will have varying experience of International Sign.

IS interpreters are often required to interpret in international fora, for example the World Federation of the Deaf Congresses and Conferences, and WFD Regional Secretariat Conferences, Deaflympics other regional deaf sports events, UN meetings (especially those related to the CRPD), the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf, EUD seminars and meetings, and European Commission funded research project meetings and conferences. In most of these venues, the IS interpreter will be interpreting between English and IS, 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 IS interpreter may interpret directly from a signed language into IS.

IS interpreters can be either deaf or hearing. When they are deaf, they often have a hearing “feed” interpreter who works into their own national sign language: see following figure for a diagram.

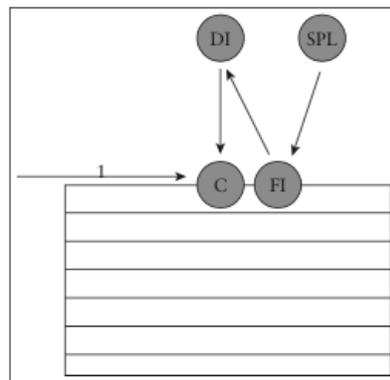


FIGURE 4. A Deaf interpreter works in a Deaf-hearing interpreting team with a “feed interpreter.” The feed interpreter interprets from the spoken language presentation into a signed language so that the Deaf interpreter can further translate this information to the audience members/clients.

(from Adam et al 2014:12)

Alternatively, the deaf IS interpreter who has access to quality real-time captioning, or a prepared text, may interpret directly from a written language into IS. As the number of interpreters who are themselves deaf and have become accredited or recognised as sign language interpreters in their own countries has grown, it has been observed that deaf interpreters have a particular skill in finding the most iconic and transparent gestural interpretations in international settings where IS is used.

Particularly when an international meeting is webcast, IS interpreters who are native life-long users of sign language, whether hearing or deaf, constitute an appropriate “public face” of IS as it continues to evolve.

4. IS interpreter skills and competencies

It is intended that this recognition process will reflect the skill set and competencies of people who currently work as IS interpreters, which is reflected by the following points:

Language skills, fluency in:

- International Sign: use of iconic lexicons, syntactic space, non-manual grammatical features (such as personification and role-shifting), etc.
- English
- At least two (and preferably more) spoken/written languages (preferably, one being English)
- At least two (and preferably more) sign languages
 - IS is based on the concept that it is derivation and a mix of various sign languages. The more sign languages and sign lexicon the interpreter knows, the more choices the interpreter has to arrive at the most iconic sign and the more potential to reach an audience with diverse signing backgrounds.

Interpreting skills & experience:

- Ability to use professional and reflective skills to work in and adjust to multilingual and multicultural settings
- Professional, flexible and open attitude and special sensitivity to different cultures
- Ability to co-work in teams of sign and spoken language interpreters, regardless of linguistic or cultural background and profile
- Ability and experience in working with assistive technology, such as microphones, headsets, etc.
- Wide ranging experience in working for various clients in international settings

Knowledge:

- Extensive general world knowledge
- Familiar with the history and international structure of deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. WFD, EUD, WASLI, EFSLI, Deaflympics.
- Knowledge of the international institutions related and in cooperation with the international deaf and interpreter organizations, e.g. UN, International Disability Alliance, European Commission, European Parliament, European Disability Forum, as well as knowledge of international geography, history, cultures and social affairs.
- national countries, their culture, politics and history

Qualifications:

- Registration/accreditation/certification or recognition with a national body: where available in the interpreter's own country, registration with professional registration body of sign language interpreters where possible.
- Ideally a degree from college or university: preferably a degree in interpreting and/or translation studies, preferably a degree in sign language interpreting.
- Membership of national and international professional interpreter organisations, e.g. the interpreter's national sign language interpreter's organisation, WASLI, EFSLI, AIIC.
- Membership of regional, national and international deaf organisations, e.g. the interpreter's national deaf organisation, WFD, EUD.

5. Deaf and Hearing IS Interpreters

Both deaf and hearing interpreters can have the skills to provide an interpretation in IS but the way they work will differ depending on how they prefer to access the source. Deaf interpreters work will differ because of how they access the source, which may be read from an autocue/teleprompter or via a national sign language interpreter. Deaf IS interpreters have the advantage of working bidirectionally: working from an autocue source into IS and from a deaf presenter signing in IS into a national sign language which is voiced over into English.

Most interpreters work best when they work into their first or best working language, therefore deaf interpreters are more likely to be working from English to IS and hearing interpreters from IS to English. In the formation of IS interpreting teams in conferences (for example), the roles are divided to ensure the best skills are used appropriately, which ensures the quality of interpretation is on par with how Deaf and hearing people use the language.

An IS interpreter may not always be the interpreter 'on the stage', they may work in front of the target group or work as a 'feed' interpreter. The 'feed' interpreter will need to interpret from the source into the national sign language, which is 'fed' to the working interpreter, who interprets from the national sign language into IS. On occasion, the Deaf interpreter may work from IS into a national sign language, which is fed to the hearing interpreter working from the national sign language into spoken English.

This recognition scheme for IS interpreters will be inclusive of both deaf and hearing candidates and it is expected they will be able to function as working interpreters, as well as feeding interpreters.

6. Contexts where IS interpreters work

The following is a list of situations or settings where IS/English interpreters have already been employed:

- WFD and WASLI congresses
- WFD Regional Secretariats conferences
- Deaflympics
- EUD and efsli seminars and conferences and events
- UN (CRPD CoSP in NY, CRPD reviews in Geneva)
- UNICEF
- Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
- International Disability Alliance
- European Commission meetings and conferences
- European Parliament events
- Council of Europe
- International conferences in deaf studies, sign language, linguistics and interpreting research
- Ad hoc international conferences
- Press conferences
- Training events
- Research project meetings and conferences

Other places where IS/English interpreters *could* also feasibly work include:

- European Courts

7. Challenges of IS Interpreting

An interpreter working with IS has the same challenges as spoken language interpreters, as well as other additional challenges that are unique to the setting where IS interpreting takes place. No one is a native IS user, so IS interpreters are working into a lingua franca to which some of the audience has very limited exposure. IS interpreters must be very clear to include the various levels of exposure to IS that is represented by any specific deaf audience.

In many languages, complex meanings can be represented by specific lexicons and syntactic structures, and it is the IS interpreter's challenge to represent these concepts in a visual form. The IS interpreter must have a singular linguistic ability to identify the 'core' meaning and represent the message visually by using iconically identifiable signs properly arranged in syntactic and topographical spaces. It may be the case that the source message is unclear or the 'core' message is not realised until the end of paragraph, so an IS interpreter must have an excellent working memory and a long time-lag.

When working from IS into a spoken language, the rendition should represent the proper register of the source and provide an interpretation that is equivalent to other speakers on the topic. An IS interpreter would need to be familiar with the language used in international events and provide a rendition that allows deaf and hearing contributors to develop diplomatic, academic and collaborative relationships. Equally important, native users of English must adjust their lexical choices to suit a more international 'ear' as participants with English as their second, third, or fourth language will be part of the audience.

Skilled use of technology is essential as IS interpreting may take place in large conference style venues. There may be problems to hear, see or understand the source message and the use of technology could remedy the problems. In modern times, conferences are displayed on a screen in the venue, televised or streamed to an online player; the interpreter should provide the expertise to ensure the set up meets the needs of the audience (size of the interpreter on the screen, the quality of the picture, the location of the interpreter, the colour of the screen behind the interpreter, etc.).

In most situations IS interpreters will work in a team in most situations. IS interpreters typically work in the context of a larger team of interpreters who interpret between the various languages of the conference. It sometimes happens that the IS interpreter will rely on an interpretation from the source into English. A deaf interpreter may rely on a feed in a sign language they know before interpreting into IS. As style, quality and clarity of IS can vary from person to person, a team may be required to comprehend IS and provide an accurate and culturally appropriate interpretation into English.

An interpreter may perceive working with IS to be an impossible task, and in many cases it may well be. It takes a skilled and resourceful IS interpreter to interpret and to make the interpretation into IS work for the target audience.

8. Recognition of IS Interpreters

There is currently no objective professionally administered assessment of the competence of IS interpreters, and no formal or official register of such individuals. successfully covered Congresses of the World Federation of the Deaf, for example, since 1987. Today, as increasingly more deaf sign language users from different parts of the world are becoming involved in international affairs, and with the increasing demand from UN agencies, there is an increasing demand for IS interpretation.

To date, organisations such as the WFD and WASLI have used their longstanding expertise as users and providers of interpreting services recommend IS interpreters on the basis of their reputation, skills, knowledge and experience. A confidential list of 'approved' competent interpreters was created by WFD and EUD and provided to UN institutions. However, as demand for IS interpreters continues to grow, there is a need to expand the current pool of IS interpreters available for work and for a robust mechanism to ensure there is a standardisation of quality standards, which will result in user confidence in the provision of IS interpreting service. Such a process requires an investment of resources, not only of expertise, time and money, in order that robust research can be carried out to identify competencies, the required training and the development of a valid and reliable accreditation process.

Such a process would be lengthy and would require WFD/WASLI to develop the resources and processes to meet standards set by a professional interpreting body. This eventual goal, however, does not serve the immediate need where for the rare experienced IS. Instead, the ISTG recommends that WFD/WASLI to develop an interim measure that will allow new applications to be accredited by WFD/WASLI. As an example, in Australia, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) was established to recognise interpreters from 'emerging language communities', including deaf people who migrate to Australia. The NAATI system is an interim measure and yet respected development in the country. ISTG has taken the NAATI model and adapted it for WFD/WASLI's purposes for IS interpreters.

8.1 Proposed interim measure as a model for an interim accreditation of IS interpreters:

- Adaptation of policy used in NAATI system to recognise interpreters from 'emerging language communities' in Australia (due to new migration patterns, refugees, etc.).
- Typically interpreters in Australia must complete a NAATI approved course, or take a NAATI test to achieve accreditation, i.e., their 'license to practice'.
- However, when there is need to recognise skills of an interpreter to give them legitimate status, but there is not yet a formal training program or a NAATI test offered in that language, then NAATI will give 'recognition status' to that interpreter as an interim measure until such a time that a formal program or test is made available in that language.
- This recognition policy has recently been adapted to apply to deaf interpreters working in Australia (see http://www.naati.com.au/deaf_interpreter_recognition.html), in order to give status to those people that are already working in the Deaf Community with various deaf clients in different capacities.
- Suggestion: that a similar model be used to recognise IS interpreters as an interim measure, so that there is clear process to establish initial 'register' of IS interpreters, while further work is carried out to develop recommendations regarding IS interpreter training and accreditation system.
- Proposal: Interpreter recognition awarded for five (5) years to individuals that apply, and this situation is reviewed at end of that period. If a new accreditation system is not yet established at that time, then the recognition can be extended. This creates a potential 'continuing professional development' programme for people to maintain recognition, with evidence to be submitted in 5-year cycles.

9. Eligibility for IS interpreter recognition

9.1 Stage 1

The first stage will involve providing approval to a group of experienced IS interpreters. The eligible interpreters will be the cohort of interpreters that have already been approved by WFD and EUD for the purposes of working at the UN, and other IS interpreters that have been working regularly in a range of international settings as outlined above. This group of interpreters have already demonstrated their competence and experience, and thus will form the first group of 'recognised' interpreters through a process of application for approval from the WFD and WASLI (see Application Process Stage 1).

From this cohort, sub-groups will be formed to make up expert groups for the following purposes:

- IS interpreter training
- IS interpreter mentoring
- Application vetting and approval
- Applicant competence assessment

These expert groups will also co-opt deaf clients and non-deaf, non-sign language interpreters, to assess competence and experience from the perspective of the deaf and 'hearing' clients.

9.2 Stage 2

The second stage will involve calling for new applications from people interested in joining the register (see Application Process Stage 2). Eligibility for the new IS interpreter recognition has been developed with reference to the nearest comparable system – that of AICC Conference Interpreters – who are required to submit evidence of their language proficiency, interpreting experience and be sponsored by other AICC members.

In the context of IS interpreting, and to account for Deaf Community endorsement of interpreter skills, recognition will be granted to interpreters that can demonstrate 150 days of IS interpreting work for hearing interpreters and 75 days of work for deaf interpreters, as well as providing supporting references from existing WFD/WASLI recognised IS interpreters, and national and/or international Deaf Community organisation representatives.

- a) New applicants *must* demonstrate the following *essential* skills and competencies:
 - i. Proficiency in IS
 - ii. Proficiency in English (with waivers for those IS interpreters who are fluent in a needed signed language or spoken language and can understand the English via relay interpreters)
 - iii. Proficiency in a national sign language and national spoken/written language
 - iv. Five (5) years experience of interpreting for conferences at national level in the national sign and spoken languages
 - v. Three (3) years experience of IS interpreting at international or regional events
 - vi. Skills in co-working/ team working with other interpreters

- b) Furthermore, candidates may also demonstrate the following *desirable* skills and competencies:
 - i. Proficiency in another national sign language
 - ii. Proficiency in another spoken/written language

c) Candidates must also provide evidence of the following:

- i. Training/certification/qualifications as a national sign language interpreter²
- ii. Attendance at IS interpreter training³
- iii. Evidence of voluntary and paid IS interpreting work experience
- iv. Supporting references and recommendations from recognised IS interpreters and Deaf Community representatives

Application process: Stage 1

Candidates will be required to submit a portfolio of evidence that includes:

<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Assessment criteria</i>
Application form	Identification & Experience
2 x passport photos	Identification
2 x letters from other WASLI/ WFD recognised IS interpreter vouching for experience and competence and addressing the points in 9.2(a) above	Competence & Experience
2 x letters from deaf consumers who have seen work in conference context vouching for competence and addressing the points in 9.2(a) above	Competence
Letter from national Deaf Association and/or Interpreter representative body vouching for experience and competence	Competence & Experience

The WFD Secretariat will issue call for applications to the people on the existing approved list. The application form (see Appendix A) and supporting letters will be submitted to the WFD Secretariat by the deadline advertised, who will be responsible to administer the application process. This will be a one time application process at a time in 2015 to be decided by WFD and WASLI.

The application assessment panel will comprise of a maximum of six (6) people, including a WFD board member, a WASLI board member, an EUD board member, an experienced interpreter educator, an expert from the spoken language field, and a deaf community leader that regularly uses IS interpreters. The assessment will be conducted using a scoring rubric (see Appendix B).

The application will cost **€300**.

Successful applicants will receive confirmation by letter from WFD within eight (8) weeks of application submission.

On completion of the assessment process, successful applicants will receive:

1. A laminated ID card with their name and photograph showing their IS interpreter recognition status, valid for five (5) years
2. A certificate of accreditation, valid for five (5) years
3. Their name and contact details will be added to a directory that will be featured on the WFD and WASLI webpages.

² This is to be determined on a case-by-case basis for each country. For countries where there is no existing formal interpreter education, training or certification, WFD and WASLI will provide mentoring opportunities so interested interpreters can volunteer at WFD and WASLI conferences, congresses, and events and work with more experienced interpreters to nurture their potential. On completion of a sufficient number of mentored hours (number to be determined) and an evaluation by 2 members of the approved WFD/WASLI interpreting list, the interpreter may be recognized as a 'pre-candidate'.

³ Only attendance at training that is attached to WFD/WASLI conferences/congresses (by certified trainers) is considered as acceptable training. The certified trainers will be a sub-group of the current list of WASLI/WFD approved IS interpreters.

Application process: Stage 2

Candidates will be required to submit a portfolio of evidence that includes:

<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Assessment criteria</i>
Application form	Identification & Experience
2 x passport photos	Identification
Copies of certificates of general educational qualifications (school certificates, college or university diplomas/ degrees)	Competence
Copies of certificates of national interpreting qualifications/ training/ certification	Competence
Copy of certificate of attendance at IS interpreter training event (or 200 word justification about why training has not been attended)	Competence
2 x letters from deaf consumers who have seen work in conference context vouching for competence and addressing the points in 9.2(a) above	Competence & Experience
2 x letters from other WASLI/ WFD recognised IS interpreter vouching for experience and competence and addressing the points in 9.2(a) above	Competence & Experience
Letter from national Deaf Association and/or Interpreter representative body vouching for experience and competence (which will be considered on a case by case basis as some good IS interpreters from less developed countries may not have had the same opportunities as others)	Competence & Experience
1 x video sample of English to IS interpreting work*	Competence
1 x video sample of IS to English interpreting work*	Competence
Logbook of contracted IS interpreting bookings (150/ 75 days)	Experience

*Exact nature of sample work to be determined

The WFD Secretariat will issue call for applications to the people on the existing approved list. The application form (see Appendix C) and supporting documentation, logbook (see Appendix D) and video clips will be submitted to the WFD Secretariat by the deadline advertised, who will be responsible to administer the application process.

Applications will be invited once per year.

The application assessment panel will comprise of a a maximum of eight (8) people, including a WFD board member, a WASLI board member, an EUD board member, an experienced interpreter educator, an expert from the spoken language field, a deaf community leader that regularly uses IS interpreters and two representatives from the stage 1 approved cohort of IS interpreters. The assessment will be conducted using a scoring rubric (see Appendix B).

The application will cost **€550**.

Successful applicants will receive confirmation by letter from WFD within eight (8) weeks of application submission.

On completion of the assessment process, successful applicants will receive:

1. A laminated ID card with their name and photograph showing their IS interpreter accreditation status, valid for three (3) years
2. A certificate of accreditation, valid for three (3) years
3. Their name and contact details will be added to a directory that will be featured on the WFD and WASLI webpages.

*In due course, WFD and WASLI will develop a continuing professional development system for recognised/ accredited interpreters to renew and maintain their certificate by demonstrating on-going experience and competence.

10. Acknowledgements

This document has been put together by the joint WFD-WASLI Task Group on International Sign and the Process for Hiring. The task group was comprised of the following people:

- Jemina Napier, Scotland: co-leader (2014-2015)
- John Walker, England: co-leader (2014)
- Robert Adam, England: co-leader (2015)
- Liz Scott Gibson, Scotland
- Bill Moody, USA
- Carol-lee Aquiline, USA
- Juancito Druetta, Argentina
- Maya De Wit, The Netherlands

Appendix A - APPLICATION FORM: REGISTRATION

Part 1: Personal details	
Title	
Given names	
Family name	
Date of birth	
Country of birth	
Country of residence	
Passport or ID number	
Postal address	
Home phone number	
Mobile number	
Email	
Part 2: Application information	
Language direction: IS to English	
Language direction: IS to English	
Language direction: both	
Part 4: Documentation	
Are you on the current WFD/ EUD approved list?	Yes No > Recognition cannot be granted
Have you included with this application:	
2 x passport photos	Yes No
2 x letters from other WASLI/ WFD recognised IS interpreter vouching for experience and competence	Yes No
2 x letters from deaf consumers who have seen work in conference context vouching for competence	Yes No
Letter from national Deaf Association and/or Interpreter representative body vouching for experience and competence	Yes No
Application fee of €300	Yes No

Appendix B - SCORING FORM & RUBRIC (ACCREDITATION)

Name	
Application date	
Deaf/ hearing	
<u>Country</u>	
<u>No. of hours logged</u>	

	Yes	No
<i>Is applicant eligible?</i>		
<i>All necessary documentation included?</i>		

<i>Further Criteria</i>	<i>Score (*)</i>	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Quality of interpreting evidence</i>						
<i>Evaluations from experiences IS interpreters</i>						
<i>Evaluations from deaf consumers</i>						
<i>Letter of endorsement from National Deaf Association</i>						

*1 = poor, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4= very good, 5 = excellent

Applicant name:

Scoring rubric needed here			

Score:

Additional comments:

Appendix C - APPLICATION FORM: ACCREDITATION

Part 1: Personal details	
Title	
Given names	
Family name	
Date of birth	
Country of birth	
Country of residence	
Passport or ID number	
Postal address	
Home phone number	
Mobile number	
Email	
Part 2: Application information	
Language direction: IS to English	
Language direction: IS to English	
Language direction: both	
Part 3: Training	
Have you completed training?	Yes No
Name of the organisation that delivered the training program	
Name of training program	
How long was the program?	Hours or Days
Program attendance dates	DD/MM/YY – DD/ MM/YY
Part 4: Documentation	
Have you included with this application:	
2 x passport photos	Yes No
2 x letters from other WASLI/ WFD recognised IS interpreter vouching for experience and competence	Yes No
2 x letters from deaf consumers who have seen work in conference context vouching for competence	Yes No
Letter from national Deaf Association and/or Interpreter representative body vouching for experience and competence	Yes No
Copy of degree certificate	Yes No
Copy of national interpreter qualification/accreditation/ recognition	Yes No

Copy of IS interpreter training certificate	Yes	No
1 x video sample of English to IS interpreting work	Yes	No
1 x video sample of IS to English interpreting work	Yes	No
300 word statement reflecting on strengths and weakness in IS interpreting	Yes	No
Logbook of contracted IS interpreting bookings (150/ 75 days)	Yes	No
Application fee of €300	Yes	No
Assessment fee of €250	Yes	No

