



SOUTH AFRICAN TRANSLATORS' INSTITUTE

INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUAL ACCREDITATION

Background

A system of accreditation was introduced by the South African Translators' Institute in 1990 in an effort to improve the standing of language practitioners in the community and to assure clients of a certain level of competence in the language practitioner they employ. The system began with translation and has been expanded as required.

Accreditation is available only to members of the Institute and can be applied for after three months of membership. If membership of the Institute lapses, accreditation lapses as well. Persons applying for accreditation thus implicitly agree to remain members of the Institute. Accreditation is currently available for translation, for purposes of becoming a sworn translator, for language editing, for interpreting and for terminology.

As preparation for the full accreditation exam or in order to assess their readiness for accreditation, members may undertake a **practice test**. This entails the translation or editing of a single text, which is then marked and returned to the candidate. Further details are available in a separate pamphlet. The practice test is not compulsory except in the case of sworn translation, but all candidates are strongly advised to write the test before attempting an exam.

Student members may not write a practice test or exam.

The following requirements must be met to undertake a practice test or an accreditation examination:

- A post-secondary language practice qualification* aligned with the Higher Education Qualifications Framework **PLUS** evidence of two years' language practice work in the relevant discipline (with professional references) (candidates must submit copies of their academic qualifications and academic record)

OR

Evidence of at least five years' language practice work in the relevant discipline (with professional references)

OR

Current accreditation by SATI

OR

Membership of or current accreditation by a FIT member association acceptable to the SATI Council

* A language practice qualification is a qualification to prepare for applied language work such as translation, interpreting, text editing, terminology, lexicography and language planning; it does not include pure language studies or language teaching qualifications.

- Candidates must watch the presentation on the accreditation system that is available on the SATI website before they will be allowed to write the test or exam.
- Candidates must sign a copy of the code of ethics each time they take an exam.
- Candidates for sworn translation exams must own a copy of the SATI manual on sworn translation.

Translation accreditation is available in a range of official and foreign languages. Members wishing to apply for translation accreditation should contact the accreditation officer to check that their language combination is available.

The accreditation examination is a written examination in which three questions out of approximately eight, covering a variety of fields, have to be completed. One question (a general text) is compulsory. The main objective of the examination is to test the final translation product that the candidate can present and candidates are therefore allowed 24 hours to complete the exam. Candidates are free to use all and any sources that they may have available. They may not, however, consult another person. The use of translation memories is not allowed.

Marking of the examination scripts is done along the lines of a scheme initially introduced by the American Translators Association. This means that errors are classified as either major or minor errors. Two or more major errors in one text, or one major error and seven minor errors in one text, means that one fails the examination as a whole. A limited number of minor errors are allowed. Major and minor errors are defined as follows:

- **Major errors:** *Gross mistranslation, in which the meaning of the original word or phrase is lost altogether; omission of vital words or other information; insertion of information not contained in the original; inclusion of alternate translations, where the translator should have made a choice; and any important failure in target-language grammar.*
- **Minor errors:** *Mistranslation that distorts somewhat, but does not wholly falsify, the intent of the original; omission of words that contribute only slightly to meaning; presentation of alternate translations where the terms offered are synonymous or nearly so; and 'inelegance' in target-language grammar.*

Accreditation for purposes of becoming a sworn translator was introduced by the Institute in order to provide for the standardisation of the examination required as part of the procedure for becoming a sworn translator. The sworn translator's examination is a written examination in which various texts, all of which are compulsory, must be translated. The procedure is the same as for general translation accreditation, except that marking includes consideration of the conventions pertaining particularly to sworn translations. Candidates must have written a sworn translation practice test before they may apply to write the examination. Further information on the procedure for being sworn in after passing the examination is available in a separate pamphlet; the sworn translation manual details the conventions related to sworn translation.

Once the examination script has been received by the accreditation officer, it is submitted to two markers, who mark it independently and anonymously. The identity of the candidate also remains secret. If both examiners pass the candidate, she/he passes; if both fail the candidate, she/he fails. The papers are also moderated by the accreditation officer. In the event of one examiner passing and the other failing a candidate, the script is submitted to a third examiner, whose decision is final.

Accreditation for language editors is run along similar lines to accreditation for translators. Six texts on a variety of subjects are provided for editing. A choice of texts may be given within the various questions.

Corrections are done on the texts themselves in hard copy. The editing examination paper is not available electronically. Candidates are free to choose a style of editing: either using any accepted proofreading symbols, or "school-teacher style", i.e. writing in the correct form. The examiners will assess the editing in terms of errors spotted and suitability of corrections provided. The examiners are highly experienced language editors and will consider a range of possible answers in any given situation.

Examination scripts will be sent to an invigilator and marked on a double-blind basis in the same way as for translation accreditation (see details above). This examination is currently available in English and Afrikaans.

Invigilation: Members must provide the name of a responsible person to act as invigilator for the written examination. Invigilators need not sit with candidates while they write their exam. The examination paper will be sent to them and they are responsible for giving the candidate the sealed exam on the day of writing, making sure the completed exam is returned to them within 24 hours and then sending all the exam documents back to SATI, including the duly completed statement by both the candidate and the invigilator attesting to compliance with the exam conditions. Candidates may not have the examination paper in their possession for more than 24 hours. The examination script and original paper must be returned within four weeks of being posted to the invigilator.

Note: If any exam conditions are not complied with, the exam will be declared null and void, the exam fee will be forfeited and the candidate will have to wait 12 months before they can apply to write the exam again.

Accreditation for interpreting is generally carried out once a year in one or two centres in the country, but is dependent on an adequate number of applications having been received to make an examination at a particular venue economically viable. Currently accreditation is only offered for simultaneous interpreting; other modes are planned to be added in due course. Candidates are examined in the language combination(s) of their choice, with the accreditation certificate reflecting the relevant language(s) and mode. The accreditation exam comprises a simulated interpreting assignment using voice recordings and whispered interpreting equipment. The exam is recorded and independently and anonymously assessed by two markers appointed by SATI.

Accreditation for Sign Language interpreting is also available.

Terminology accreditation involves the compilation of a mini bilingual, bi-directional technical dictionary in the subject field of candidates' choice, e.g. natural sciences, biological sciences, human sciences, social sciences, commercial sciences, engineering, technology, sport and recreation. Documentation in the subject field will be provided and candidates will have to excerpt the terms from this. The mini dictionary should include appropriate front matter with indications on how the dictionary was compiled and problems encountered while compiling it, and also back matter (i.e. bibliography, names of subject specialists, linguists consulted, etc.). An indication of how the dictionary user should use the dictionary should also be given.

Appeals

There is an appeal procedure that enables candidates who genuinely feel they should have passed the accreditation exam to have their paper reviewed. Appeals must be lodged within eight weeks of the date of issue of the exam results. Further details are available in a separate pamphlet.

Waiting periods after failing

The following waiting periods apply before candidates may try again after failing an accreditation exam or a translation or editing practice test:

- The period of time that a candidate must wait after failing any exam is one year.
- The period of time that a candidate must wait after failing a practice test is six or 12 months, depending on the number of major/minor errors in the script (see the pamphlet on the practice test for details).
- If a candidate fails three consecutive practice tests, they have to wait two years before being allowed to attempt the test again.

General

The current cost (2016) for the various types of accreditation is as follows:

- Translation, sworn translation and terminology: R935 per language combination
- Language editing: R935 per language
- Interpreting: Available on request (usually also R935 per language combination)
- Practice test: R385
- Appeal: R385

Fees are subject to change and should be confirmed when applying for accreditation.

Members wishing to apply for accreditation should download the relevant application form from the Members section of the SATI website. Candidates will be informed of results as soon as they become available and the names of newly accredited members will be published in the Institute's *Bulletin*. A certificate will be issued to indicate the form of accreditation obtained.

Contact the accreditation officer at exams@translators.org.za. Alternatively contact the SATI office on 011 803 2681.