



WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF



**WASLI**

World Association of  
Sign Language Interpreters

# WFD-WASLI INTERNATIONAL SIGN INTERPRETER ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK



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## 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 of national federations 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 a 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. Established in 2005, 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 40 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

This document is an extension of the [WFD-WASLI International Sign Interpreter Recognition Interim Policy and Guidelines](#) and it aims to introduce readers to the WFD-WASLI International Sign Interpreter Accreditation and its implementation and monitoring process.

Over the years, deaf people are increasingly engaged 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 has grown over time. Despite this, there has been no formal recognition system available for credentialing practitioners. To address this, WFD and WASLI initiated an interim accreditation system of which by end of December 2015, 20 individuals were added to the initial register after being 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 English, 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 situations or settings where International Sign interpreters *have already* been employed:

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

Other places where International Sign interpreters *could* also feasibly work include:

- European Courts

In most of these venues, the International Sign interpreter will be interpreting between English 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 fulfil the following:

- ❖ 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**’)

Accreditees are practitioners who possess the following:

### 3.1a: Essential skills

- ❖ Proficiency in International Sign
- ❖ Proficiency in English
- ❖ Proficiency in national sign language and national spoken and/or written language
- ❖ Five years of experience in interpreting for conferences at national level in the national sign and spoken languages
- ❖ Three years of experience in International Sign interpreting at international or regional events
- ❖ Skills in co-working or team working with other practitioners

**3.1b: Desirable skills**

- ❖ Proficiency in another national sign language
- ❖ Proficiency in another spoken/written language

**3.3c: 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, EUD, WASLI, EFSLI, and Deaflympics
- ❖ Knowledge of the international institutions related and in cooperation with the international deaf and sign language interpreter organisations, e.g. UN, International Disability Alliance, European Commission, European Parliament, European Disability Forum, as well as knowledge of international geography, history, cultures, social affairs
- ❖ Knowledge of national countries, their culture, politics and history

**3.4d: Qualifications**

- ❖ Formal recognition with professional registration body of sign language interpreters
- ❖ 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, WASLI, EFSLI, AIIC\*.
- ❖ Membership of regional, national and international deaf organisations, e.g. the interpreter's national deaf organisation, WFD, EUD

\*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.

**4. CODE OF CONDUCT**

The WFD-WASLI requires that the Accreditees are members of their national sign language interpreter associations, where they are in existence. In that membership, the Accreditees are governed by a Code of Conduct<sup>1</sup> that ensures at least the following:

- ❖ **Professional Accountability** ensuring confidentiality, impartiality and integrity of service.
- ❖ **Professional Competence** ensuring qualifications of practice, faithfulness of interpretation, and ongoing professional development.
- ❖ **Non-Discrimination** ensuring openness to communication preferences of consumers and co-interpreting with Deaf Interpreters.
- ❖ **Integrity in Professional Relationships** ensuring appropriate boundaries, respect for fellow Accreditees and consumers, and support for the Accreditation and its Accreditees.
- ❖ **Integrity in Business Relationships** ensuring conduct that honours and portrays accurate representation of the Accreditation.

When working at international events, Accreditees shall observe the ethical principles of their national code of conduct appropriately within the contexts in which they work. This refers to respectful interactions, professionalism (dress and demeanour), accepting work for which is within one's abilities, preparing for the work, problem-solving appropriately within teams and with consumers, and ensuring the work is of the highest calibre.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the AVLIC Code of Professional Conduct (2000)

## 5. STAGES OF THE ACCREDITATION

|                                    | STAGE 1:<br>INITIAL REGISTER OF WFD-WASLI<br>ACCREDITEES   | STAGE 2:<br>REGISTER OF WFD-WASLI ACCREDITEES  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>WHO</b>                         | Invited practitioners who have had experience either working with the WFD and EUD at the UN, or in various international settings. | Practitioners who are interested in joining the list of WFD-WASLI Accreditees.   |
| <b>REQUIREMENTS</b>                | Refer to <a href="#">Appendix A</a>  | Refer to <a href="#">Appendix C</a>  |
| <b>ASSESSMENT</b>                  | Scoring Rubric (see <a href="#">Appendix B</a> ).  | Meaning Based Interpreting Rubric (see <a href="#">Appendix D</a> ). A minimum score of 12 points is needed for the Accreditation.             |
| <b>PROCESSING FEE*</b>             | €300   | <u>Reduced Fee**</u> €150<br>(Applicants from developing countries):<br><u>Regular Fee</u><br>(Applicants from non-developing countries): €550 |
| <b>ACCREDITATION VALIDITY</b>      | 5 years  | 5 years  |
| <b>APPLICATION TYPE AND PERIOD</b> | August 2015<br>By invitation only  | Once a year starting September 2016<br>Open to all   |

*\*The processing fee is payable upon submission of the application for the Accreditation. All processing fees are non-refundable. Successful applicants will receive confirmation by letter from the WFD 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 the [WFD-WASLI International Sign Interpreter Accreditation Approved List of Developing Countries](#).*

## 6. ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The current Accreditation Advisory Committee consists of individuals, approved by both the WFD and WASLI Boards, with expertise and experience representing the following field or/and organisation:

- ❖ World Association of Sign Language Interpreters
- ❖ World Federation of the Deaf
- ❖ Spoken Language Educator
- ❖ WFD-WASLI Accredited Hearing Interpreters
- ❖ WFD-WASLI Accredited Deaf Interpreters
- ❖ WFD Staff Member

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

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

- ❖ Do a 24 hours per year activities 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 [accreditation@wfd.fi](mailto:accreditation@wfd.fi) 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.

## 8. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

If you think an Accreditree has not followed the [Code of Conduct](#) you should make a complaint in writing or International Sign video to [accreditation@wfd.fi](mailto:accreditation@wfd.fi) with the following details:

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

The WFD-WASLI will only accept 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 Accreditree. 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 Accreditrees.

## 11. CONTACT US

For matters relating to the Accreditation, contact Nafisah Rantasalmi at [accreditation@wfd.fi](mailto:accreditation@wfd.fi)

### **World Federation of the Deaf**

P.O. Box 65  
FIN-00401  
Helsinki, Finland  
[www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org)

### **World Association of Sign Language Interpreters**

7/211 Wellington Street  
Collingwood Victoria 3066  
Australia  
[www.wasli.org](http://www.wasli.org)

## 12.APPENDIX A: STAGE 1 REQUIREMENTS

Applicants in Stage 1 must demonstrate the following essential skills and competencies:

| ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ❖                                 | Proficiency in International Sign  |
| ❖                                 | Proficiency in English   |
| ❖                                 | Proficiency in a national sign language and national spoken/written language                             |
| ❖                                 | Five (5) years of experience in interpreting at national level in the national sign and spoken languages |
| ❖                                 | Three (3) years of experience in International Sign interpreting at international or regional events     |
| ❖                                 | Skills in co-working/ team working with other interpreters   |

Applicants in Stage 1 are required to submit a portfolio of evidence that includes:

| EVIDENCE   | ASSESSMENT CRITERIA  |
|--|--|
| Application form   | Identification and Experience  |
| Two (2) passport photos  | Identification   |
| Two (2) letters of recommendation from practitioners who have been employed by either WASLI or WFD.                                  | The letters shall include description of your experience and competence and addressing the qualities in point <a href="#">3.1a</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="#">3.1a</a> . |
| 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 addressing the qualities in point <a href="#">3.1a</a> .  |

### 13.APPENDIX B: ASSESSMENT FOR STAGE 1

#### SCORING RUBRIC

|  | Strongly disagree -<br>1 | Disagree – 2 | Neutral – 3 | Agree – 4 | Strongly Agree - 5 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Proficiency equivalent in International Sign   |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| Proficiency equivalent in English  |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| Proficiency in a national signed language & a national spoken/written language                         |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| Five (5) years' experience of interpreting at national level in the national sign and spoken languages |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| Three (3) years' experience of IS interpreting at international or regional events                     |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| Skills in co-working/ team working with other interpreters   |                          |              |             |           |                    |
| <b>TOTAL SCORES</b>  |                          |              |             |           |                    |

## 14. APPENDIX C: STAGE 2 REQUIREMENTS

Applicants in Stage 2 must demonstrate the following essential skills and competencies:

| ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES   | DESIRABLE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Proficiency in International Sign</li> <li>❖ Proficiency in English</li> <li>❖ Proficiency in a national sign language and national spoken/written language</li> <li>❖ Five (5) years of experience in interpreting at national level in the national sign and spoken languages</li> <li>❖ Three (3) years of experience in International Sign interpreting at international or regional events</li> <li>❖ Ability to work in team environments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Proficiency in another national sign language</li> <li>❖ Proficiency in another spoken/written language</li> </ul> |

Applicants in Stage 2 are required to submit a portfolio of evidence that includes:

| PORTFOLIO OF DOCUMENTS   |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Application form.</li> <li>2. Curriculum Vitae.</li> <li>3. Letter of Interest (<b>written and in International Sign</b>).</li> <li>4. One (1) soft copy of passport photo.</li> <li>5. Copies of certificates of general educational qualifications (college or university diplomas or degrees).</li> <li>6. Copies of national interpreter qualifications (training, accreditation or recognition)*</li> <li>7. Copy of certificate of attendance at IS interpreter training event <u>or</u> 200-word justification (<b>written and in International Sign</b>) about why training has not been attended.</li> <li>8. Two (2) x letters of recommendation from deaf consumers who have experience working with your IS interpreting.</li> <li>9. Two (2) x letters of recommendation from practitioners who have been employed by either WASLI or WFD.</li> <li>10. A letter of recommendation from national deaf associations or interpreting agencies (i.e. associations, representative bodies, private companies).</li> <li>11. 300-word statement reflecting on strengths and weakness in IS interpreting (<b>written and in International Sign</b>).</li> <li>12. One (1) video sample for Interpretation Task 1 (English to International Sign) – for both hearing and deaf practitioners**</li> <li>13. One (1) video sample for Interpretation Task 2 (International Sign to English) – for hearing practitioners only**</li> <li>14. Logbook of contracted International Sign interpreting bookings. 900 hours for hearing practitioners and 450 hours for deaf practitioners.</li> </ol> |

\* We acknowledge that opportunities vary from country to county. As such, applicants who are unable to submit this document will be considered on a case by case basis.

\*\*Exact nature of sample work to be determined

## 15.APPENDIX D: STAGE 2 ASSESSMENT

### MEANING BASED INTERPRETING RUBRIC<sup>2</sup>

Debra Russell, Sheila Johnston, and Christopher Stone

|  | Proficient – 4  | Competent – 3  | Developing – 2   | Beginning -1  |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Effective Meaning based interpreting</b>                    | Interpreting is meaning-based.  | Interpreting is primarily meaning-based.   | Interpreting is consistently influenced by the source language.  | Interpreting is heavily influenced by the source language.  |
|  | Little or no source language influence.   | Some source language influence that does not significantly skew the message.   | Source language enough that it skews the message.  | Several main topics are missing, and very little detail is included.  |
|  | Includes all main topics and most details from source text.   | Main topics are included with some level of detail.  | Some main topics are missing. Inadequate level of detail.  | Message is significantly skewed and/or incomplete.  |
| <b>Salient Linguistic Features of Grammar and Language Use</b> | Interpreting is culturally and linguistically highly appropriate.   | Interpreting is culturally and linguistically appropriate.   | Interpreting is somewhat culturally and linguistically appropriate.  | Interpreting is culturally or linguistically inappropriate.   |
|  | Articulation is clear.  | Articulation is mostly clear.  | Articulation is unclear at times.  | Articulation is often unclear.  |
|  | Target language demonstrates cohesion.  | Target language is usually cohesive.   | Target language cohesion inconsistent.   | Target language lacks cohesion.   |
|  | Target language includes appropriate topic boundaries.  | Target language includes consistent topic boundaries.  | Target language topic boundaries are inconsistent.   | Target language topic boundaries are insufficient.  |
|  | Target language contains correct grammatical structure throughout.  | Target language contains few minor grammatical errors.   | Target language contains numerous grammatical errors.  | Target language contains serious and frequent grammatical errors.   |
| <b>Goals, Affect, Style, Register</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 affect, register.                                       | Vocabulary choices and inflection do not convey participant's goals.  |
|  | Participant's affect, register and style of the source are incorporated throughout.   | Participant's affect, register and style are mostly incorporated throughout.   | Participant's affect, register and style of the source text, or are inconsistently incorporated.                               | Participant's affect, register and style of the source text, or are not incorporated.                               |
| <b>Situational Appropriateness</b>                             | Demonstrates masterful ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the target language.                         | Demonstrates proficient ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the target language.                         | Inconsistently demonstrates the ability to achieve the purpose of the interpretation in the target language.                   | Is not able to demonstrate the ability to achieve the intended purpose of the interpretation.                       |
|  | Vocabulary choice is skillful and apt.  | 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 target language and participants. |
|  | Cultural references, discourse and register are completely appropriate for the target language domain and the participants. | Cultural references, discourse and register are consistently appropriate for the target language domain and the participants | Cultural references, discourse and register are inconsistently appropriate for the target language domain and the participants | Cultural references, discourse and register are inappropriate for the target language domain.                       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORES</b>  |   |  |  |   |

The minimum score required to be accredited is 12.

<sup>2</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.