

Certification Exams

As stated in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) there is currently no universal form of certification required of interpreters and translators in the United States. However there are a variety of different tests that can be taken to demonstrate proficiency which may be helpful in gaining employment. It is important to note that these tests are not considered a credential, but successful completion indicates that a person has a significant level of skill in the field. The general information regarding the translation and interpretation exams currently available and listed below has been taken directly from each exam provider's website.

Translation Examinations

American Translators Association (ATA)

The American Translators Association (ATA) has established a certification program that allows translators to demonstrate that they meet certain standards of the translation profession. Translators who pass the examination are certified by the ATA in a specific language pair and direction (from or into English).

Prior professional experience or completion of an ATA-approved program is required before an applicant may register for the ATA exam. The Specialized Certificate in Translation and the Professional Certificate in Translation and Interpretation at UC San Diego Extension are ATA-approved programs.

For more information:

- [Guide to the ATA Certification Program](#)
- [Practice Test](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Eligibility Requirements](#)

U.S. Department of State

The Translating Division of the Office of Language Services (LS) provides translation services to the Department of State, the White House, and other U.S. Government agencies. Much of this work is handled by permanent staff, but we also have an extensive roster of contract translators. LS contracts for translation and related services in virtually every language used in international diplomacy. Contractors must demonstrate a high degree of translating proficiency as well as professionalism, reliability and versatility.

Translations assigned to contractors cover a wide range of styles and subjects. Typical examples would include laws; treaties and international agreements on technical, scientific, military, economic, and cultural subjects; training manuals; court documents; political speeches and position

papers; slide presentations; and official correspondence between government leaders.

Hence, suitability of style and fidelity to nuance must accompany a high degree of factual and conceptual accuracy in the target language rendition. High quality word-processed output is usually required.

Other work assigned to contractors includes on-site support for meetings or conferences, summarizing documents, reviewing translations, and ascertaining the substantive conformity of texts written in two or more languages (comparisons).

Completion of a translation program is not a requirement in the LS application process however it is recommended.

For more information:

- [General Information](#)

Interpretation Examinations

State and Municipal Courts

The primary function of a state certified court interpreter is to interpret for defendants and witnesses in criminal, civil, and juvenile proceedings. Assignments may include in-court proceedings, such as arraignments, preliminary hearings, and sentencing, along with out-of-court proceedings, such as jail interviews and depositions.

Success as a court interpreter requires an understanding of both legal terminology and

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colloquial language and the knowledge, skills and abilities essential for the profession.

Only interpreters who pass the Court Interpreter Certification Examination and submit an application to the Judicial Council are referred to as certified court interpreters. Currently there are three types of State-Certified Interpreters: [Administrative Hearing](#), [Medical](#), and [Court](#).

The certification examination consists of written and oral components. In the computer-administered, English-only written portion, candidates are tested on their knowledge of English language grammar and vocabulary, court-related terms and usage, and ethics and professional conduct. Candidates who pass the written component may go on to take the oral component, which tests skills in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and in sight translation. Completion of an interpretation program is not a requirement for the exam application process however it is recommended.

For more information:

- [General Information](#)
- [Exam Information](#)

Federal Courts

Only interpreters who pass the [Spanish-English Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination](#) are certified to interpret in federal courts.

The certification examination consists of written and oral components. In the written portion, candidates are tested on their job-relevant language ability in English and Spanish through their comprehension of written text, knowledge of vocabulary, and grammatically correct expressions, and their ability to select the appropriate target language rendering of source language text. Candidates who pass the written component may go on to take the oral component which tests interpretation skills in simultaneous interpretation, consecutive interpretation, and sight translation.

Completion of an interpretation program is not a requirement for the exam application process however it is recommended.

For more information:

- [Examinee Handbook](#)
- [Practice Oral Examination](#)

U.S. Department of State

The Interpreting Division of Language Services (LS) provides staff and contract conference interpreters for the Department of State, the White House, and the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. From public policy to diplomacy, from current events to scientific and military topics, the daily activity of the conference interpreter requires a well-rounded and up-to-date repository of general knowledge. LS also provides liaison/escort interpreters, seminar interpreters, and English Language Officers to accompany U.S. government-sponsored visitors from overseas on public diplomacy programs around the nation.

The U.S. Department of State has a test for prospective interpreters. The test is given only to those candidates whose applications and telephone screening indicate that they meet the necessary requirements for successful evaluation.

Seminar and Escort level candidates will also be asked standardized questions dealing with aspects of US history, society, and culture as well as their ability to handle on-the-job situations when accompanying international visitors.

Completion of an interpretation program is not a requirement for the exam application process however it is recommended.

For more information:

- [General Information](#)
- [Interpretation Examination](#)

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Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)

Completion of a registered [medical interpreter educational program](#) is required before an applicant may register for the exam. The Professional Certificate in Translation and Interpretation at UC San Diego Extension is fulfills the medical interpreter educational program requirement to register for the CCHI exam.

The test blueprint below reflects the intent of the knowledge, skills, and abilities tested in the 2-part written and oral examination.

Part 1 – Written Exam

- Manage the healthcare encounter
- Understand Healthcare Terminology
- Interact with Other Healthcare Professionals
- Prepare for an Interpreting Encounter
- Cultural Responsiveness

Part II – Oral Exam

- Interpret Consecutively
- Interpret Simultaneously
- Sight Translate/Translate Healthcare Documents

For more information:

- [Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreter](#)
- [Certification Examination Handbook](#)

National Board for Certification of Medical Interpreters (NBCMI)

Completion of a registered [medical interpreter educational program](#) is required before an applicant may register for the exam. The Professional Certificate in Translation and Interpretation at UC San Diego Extension is fulfills the medical interpreter educational program requirement to register for the NBCMI exam.

The test outline below reflects the intent of the knowledge, skills, and abilities tested in the 2-part written and oral examination.

Part I – Written Exam

- Medical Terminology (largest section) – not translation of terms, but understanding of terminology- in English
- Roles of the Medical Interpreter
- Medical Interpreter Ethics
- Cultural Competence
- Medical Specialties
- Interpreter Standards of Practice (IMIA, CHIA, NCIHC)
- Legislation and Regulations (HIPAA, CLAS)

Part II – Oral Exam

- Linguistic proficiency in both working languages
- Consecutive Interpreting skills in context
- Sight Translation skills from English into other language
- Knowledge of Medical Terminology and Specialties within context in both languages
- Cultural Competence

For more information:

- [National Board for Certification of Medical Interpreters](#)
- [General Information](#)
- [General Preparation](#)
- [Written Exam Information](#)
- [Oral Exam Information](#)