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Interpreting — General requirements and recommendations — Part 2: Interpreters

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

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ISO 18841-2 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

ISO 18841 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Interpreting — General requirements and recommendations*:

- *Part 1: Overview, terms and definitions*
- *Part 2: Interpreters*
- *Part 3: Interpreting service providers (ISPs)*

Introduction

This International Standard responds to the urgent need to lay down clear requirements for the provision of quality interpreting. It offers guidance for the delivery of spoken or signed communication across languages in all interpreting specialisations, among them business, court, community, conference, media, medical, military and technical interpreting, among other specialisations.

Interpreters render spoken or signed communication across languages. Interpreting differs from translation, the rendering of written content into another written language.

Collectively, the three parts of this International Standard address the main participants involved in the delivery of quality interpreting.

This International Standard includes minimum requirements to be met by all interpreters and ISPs claiming conformity or compliance to the standard. It also provides recommendations of good practice for provisions that are not suitable to be set as requirements.

This International Standard will also help interpreters and those who work with them to define performance quality, set professional requirements and establish optimum working conditions for interpreters, thereby increasing awareness and recognition of the profession as a whole.

In this International Standard, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

Interpreting — General requirements and recommendations — Part 2: Interpreters

1 Scope

This part of ISO 18841 establishes requirements for the provision of interpreting services. Additionally it provides recommendations of good practice.

This part of ISO 18841 contains requirements and recommendations for interpreters, whether or not the interpreter is also an Interpreter Service Provider (ISP).

NOTE The terms referred to herein can be found in Part 1 of ISO 18841.

2 Basic requirements for interpreters

2.1 Professional interpreting requirement

This International Standard provides an overview of the basic elements of professional interpreting.

This International Standard addresses interpreting as a profession, not as an informal practice. Professional interpreting shall not be performed by any individuals who do not meet the requirements specified in this standard.

2.2 Documented adherence to professional ethics

2.2.1 General professional ethics

The interpreter shall maintain on file a document, producing it on request, stating his or her adherence to a general and/or a specialisation-specific interpreter's code of ethics and/or standards of practice published by a professional association or group of interpreters in the area of practice or by an international organisation or government body which provides interpreting services.

Where no such code exists in the area of practice, the interpreter shall select in its place a relevant international or trans-national standard applicable to the interpreter's practice. In all cases, the selected code(s) listed in the relevant document signed by the interpreter shall either be general and intended for all interpreting specialisations or shall address any or all areas of the interpreter's current practice.

2.2.2 Ethics pertaining to specialised areas of practice

The interpreter who works very frequently in a specific, established interpreting specialisation, such as conference, community, court or medical interpreting, shall keep on file and produce on request at least one code of interpreter ethics specific to that area of specialisation where one exists that is published by a recognized professional interpreter association or relevant professional body or an international organisation or government body which provides interpreting services.

2.3 Accepting assignments

2.3.1 Assignments and interpreter qualifications

The interpreter shall on request provide evidence that he or she possesses the qualifications specified in 3.2 of this International Standard.

2.3.2 Verification of adequate working conditions

2.3.2.1 Equipment and general concerns

Before accepting an interpreting assignment, the interpreter should ascertain whether there exists a formal agreement governing the terms of employment and working conditions concluded between the ISP and representatives of the interpreters it employs, and that this agreement (or a relevant workplace agreement) specifies that the requirements in the list below are met. In the absence of such an agreement, the interpreter should ask for a written confirmation that the requester or ISP can and will provide or address the following:

- a) any necessary interpreting equipment;
- b) one or more team interpreters, if needed;
- c) working conditions needed for the performance of the assignment, including adequate sound, visibility and comfort; and
- d) any relevant documents or texts to be addressed during the assignment that can be sent to the interpreter in advance.

2.3.2.2 Breaks for the interpreter

In addition, the interpreter shall verify in advance in writing whether adequate breaks will be provided for assignments.

When performing consecutive interpreting for longer than two hours, the interpreter shall request a break as required whenever the interpreter is too fatigued to continue interpreting accurately.

2.3.2.3 Team interpreting

When performing simultaneous interpreting for longer than 30 minutes, the interpreter shall request that another interpreter be provided.

The interpreter shall also verify in writing in advance that another interpreter is to be provided for:

- a) Simultaneous interpreting assignments lasting longer than 45 minutes.
- b) Distance consecutive interpreting assignments lasting longer than 15 minutes.
- c) Distance simultaneous mode interpreting assignments lasting longer than 15 minutes.

3 Qualifications

3.1 General requirements concerning qualifications

The interpreter shall document and keep on file evidence of his or her interpreting qualifications.

3.2 Minimum qualifications for interpreters

The interpreter shall produce on request documentation that attests to one of the following:

- a) Bachelor or Masters degree in interpreting; or
 - b) Recognized degree of an accredited institution of higher education, AND:
 - i) 180 contact hours or two years of documented training/education in interpreting theory and practice.
- AND**
- ii) 100 days of documented professional interpreting experience **OR**
 - iii) Documentation of an accredited and valid interpreter competence test that is equivalent to a final exam for any Bachelor's or Master's degree in interpreting from an accredited institution of higher education and that is administered by a government, inter-governmental or international organisation or a nonprofit professional body free of potential conflict of interest.

3.3 Requirements concerning interpreter credentials

3.3.1 Representation of credentials

In countries where interpreting credentials are available, the interpreter shall keep on file and produce on request the evidence of any interpreting credentials that he or she lays claim to, including but not limited to:

- a) certification;
- b) licensing;
- c) membership in relevant professional interpreter associations;
- d) credentialing by ISPs or government bodies;
- e) documented results of interpreting skills tests; and/or
- f) any other credentials which the interpreter claims to possess.

3.3.2 Evidence related to criminal investigations

When required for particular assignments, the interpreter shall keep on file and provide evidence and/or comply with all relevant national or professional regulations concerning criminal background checks.

In some countries it is the requester who may perform an investigation to make sure that the interpreter complies with all relevant national or professional regulations concerning criminal background.

4 Requirements concerning execution of assignments

4.1 Evidence of general performance

On request, and where confidentiality is not at risk, the interpreter shall provide to the ISP or requester who requests it documentation of his or her timely, professional and appropriate execution of assignments through the provision of as many letters of recommendation attesting to such performance as the ISP or requester shall ask the interpreter to provide as far as these letters are available. If such letters are not available, the interpreter should provide personal and contact data of persons that can confirm that the interpreter has delivered these services.

4.2 Notes

The interpreter shall be prepared to provide, and shall provide on request, a signed and dated statement to confirm that the interpreter:

- a) destroys all notes taken during an interpreting assignment or gives them to the service user or requester when so required, with the exception of new terminology to be studied or required information such as court case numbers, the work schedule, hours worked or other information required by the ISP.
- b) does not take notes or deliver notes to the ISP or requester about the assignment, even if so requested, if doing so would violate interpreter confidentiality, service user confidentiality, contractual requirements and/or interpreting ethics adhered to by the interpreter as documented in section 2.2.1 and/or 2.2.2; and
- c) provides all necessary note-taking equipment for the assignment.

4.3 Modes

The two modes typically used by interpreters are consecutive and simultaneous. The need for these modes for a particular assignment can vary by specialisation and by setting. In addition to and/or in combination with these modes, sight translation may also be used in certain settings.

At a minimum the interpreter shall verify in writing in advance:

- a) the relevant mode(s) required for the assignment;
- b) the approximate length of time for which each mode will be needed;
- c) whether the appropriate equipment and working conditions needed to interpret in the requested mode(s) can be provided.

If the requester is not familiar with interpreting services, the interpreter shall guide the requester regarding modes and schedules.

5 Contractual requirements

The interpreter shall have a system in place to organize interpreting assignments according to best practices and professional workplace conduct appropriate to the setting and specialisation.