



Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.

June 9, 2010

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf National Interpreter Certification (NIC) Information Brief

The National Interpreter Certification (NIC) examination was developed according to the Uniform Guidelines, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) Standards, and the "Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests" of the American Psychological Association (APA), American Association for Educational Research (AERA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures are employment validation guidelines issued in 1978 by four US governmental agencies (the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Labor, the Department of Justice, and the US Civil Service Commission [now called the Office of Personnel Management]) for enforcement of Titles VII and IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 and 1991, and executive order 11246.

The NIC certification process begins with a multiple-choice knowledge examination. Candidates who pass the knowledge examination may then take the interview and performance examinations. Both the interview and performance examinations are scenario-based assessments using video to deliver and record the assessment.

Note: the NIC Interview and Performance Exam is a single exam that is given in one sitting and includes two sections: an interview portion covering ethical decision-making and a performance portion that demonstrates the interpreter's skills in both voice-to-sign and sign-to-voice interpreting. All candidates respond to five scenarios in the Interview section and five scenarios in the Performance section. All candidates are expected to take and pass all three examinations to obtain certification with RID.

Knowledge Examination

This test consists of a 150-item examination, with the blueprint developed from a role delineation study conducted in 2001-2002. The passing standard study for this examination was undertaken in April 2002. This exam is scored based on the number of items correct. The examination scores are reported on a scale of 200 to 800.

-more-

333 Commerce St., Alexandria, VA 22314 ■ 703.838.0030 V ■ 703.838.0459 TTY ■ 703.838.0454 Fax ■ www.rid.org

Interview Examination

This examination is designed to evaluate how well a candidate would be able to think through a variety of ethical situations that interpreters experience and to show that he or she can undertake important reasoning and problem solving about the situation. Candidates respond to five scenarios and are rated by two persons representing two constituencies (i.e., Deaf consumer and hearing interpreter). Each scenario is weighted equally. Each rater scores the candidate on three criteria:

1. Identification of the problem or conflict
2. Construction of a decision or solution
3. Consequences of a decision or conflict

All three assessment scales are scored on 4-point rubric by the two raters and each assessment scale is weighted equally toward the final score. For each rater, each of the rater's three scale scores for a candidate are added and averaged across the two raters. The scores on the five scenarios are then added and averaged for each candidate.

The interviews are rated by two persons - a hearing interpreter rater and a Deaf consumer rater. Both ratings must pass for a clear pass or both fail for a clear fail. In cases where the two scores represent a pass and fail (e.g., the interpreter score is a fail and the Deaf score is a pass), the results are provided to a third rater (a second hearing interpreter) for scoring.

Performance Examination

The performance examination is designed to assess candidates on their capabilities in interpreting under a variety of real world situations (e.g., job interviews, government/public meetings, staff meetings, social services, K-12 education,) for a variety of persons (e.g., ethnicity, economic status, English as a second language, code switching, variation in communication, age). Additionally, the examination requires candidates to be able to interpret voice to sign, sign to voice, and interactive (ASL, contact signing). The scenarios presented are designed to be situations that would reasonably be experienced by the vast majority of candidates.

Candidates respond to five scenarios. Candidate responses are rated by three persons representing three constituencies (i.e., Deaf consumer, hearing/non-interpreter, and hearing interpreter). Each scenario is weighted differentially based on weights supplied during the scenario development process by subject matter experts. This means that some scales count more than others do in the final reported score. In addition, a strong performance on one scale can compensate for a weak performance on another scale.

-more-

Each rater scores the candidate on eight criteria scales for both ASL and/or spoken English proficiency. These criteria are:

1. Articulation - the production quality of signing and speech.
2. Affect - the extent to which the interpretation accurately conveys speaker's affect (e.g., use of intonation, rhythm and stress, sign size, and non-manual behaviors).
3. Grammatical structure - the degree to which the information in an interpretation is grammatically acceptable in the target language and also assesses the degree to which the interpretation uses a variety of syntactic constructions, rather than relying on one or few, and uses appropriate phrasing techniques.
4. Intent - the extent to which the goal(s) of the source language is represented in the target language.
5. Content - the accurate and consistent interpretation of equivalent information from the source language to the target language.
6. Constructed action/dialogue - the identification of who is acting and their actions or who is speaking and their speech.
7. Language match –refers to how well the candidate's use of language matches the consumer's language complexity, grammar, lexical choices, etc.
8. Use of space - is a general category of devices that are used to demonstrate physical and/or grammatical relationships.

All eight assessment scales are scored on 5-point rubric by three scorers and each assessment scale is weighted toward the final score. Scores are summed and averaged across all three raters.

Again, performance is rated by three raters – the hearing interpreter rater, a Deaf consumer rater, and a hearing/non-interpreter rater. The Deaf and hearing scores ratings are averaged and compared to the interpreter's ratings. Both ratings must pass for a clear pass or both fail for a clear fail. In cases where the two scores represent a pass and fail (e.g., the interpreter score is a fail and the average Deaf/hearing score is a pass), the results are provided to a fourth rater (a second hearing interpreter) for scoring.

Combining the Three Examination Scores

In order to use the three assessment tools developed as the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) Program, a matrix of performance is used to establish relative mastery of the field. The three examinations (knowledge, interview, and performance) contribute equally to the certification decision.

-more-

All candidates must pass the knowledge examination, and there is no distinction made between high and low passing performance on this examination. Scores on the interview and performance examinations are used to distinguish candidates with an NIC, NIC Advanced, and NIC Master level performance. The definitions of the levels appear in the following table.

		Interview	
		<i>Moderate</i>	<i>High</i>
Performance	<i>Moderate</i>	NIC	NIC
	<i>High</i>	NIC Advanced	NIC Master

All three exams contribute equally to the decision regarding a level of certification. This means that each level is two-thirds skill (and one-third knowledge). There is no operational total score used to make the NIC classifications at any level. The NIC uses a multiple-hurdle assessment, not compensatory. This means that candidates must pass each of the three exams to receive certification. A high score on one exam will not compensate for a low score on another. The knowledge examination uses multiple-choice items, and it is considered a knowledge test. The Performance and Interview exams are considered skill assessments.

Raters

The raters of the Performance and Interview examination successfully completed a two-day rater training workshop in which the developers of the two examinations presented the potential raters with:

1. the rationale for both examinations,
2. the process by which both examinations were developed,
3. the types of prompts used on the examinations,
4. the scoring rubrics to be used in the ratings, and finally
5. the exemplars of responses at each of the rating levels.

The raters practiced rating exam responses until they demonstrated sufficient understanding of the application of the rubric anchors. The workshop concluded with the prospective raters being tested on their understanding of the application of the two sets of rubric anchors. Prospective raters who demonstrated sufficient agreement with the examination responses selected by the workshop trainers were offered the opportunity to serve as NIC Performance and Interview raters. Ratings occur independently of each other. The composition of the rater teams changes with each candidate and assessment.