



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

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**REPORT:**

**“NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC  
CERTIFICATION OPTIONS FOR  
TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS”**

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## BACKGROUND

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In the United States there are over 1600 translation and/or interpretation credentialing programs for individuals and over 200 accreditation programs for schools, institutions, businesses and service providers.

The following terms represent the basic credentialing methods used:

Accreditation: a process by which an entity grants public recognition to an organization such as a school, institute, college, program, facility, or company that has met predetermined standards.

Certification: a voluntary process by which an organization grants recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualification standards.

Certification can be divided into the following subcategories:

- Full-scale professional certification
- Knowledge-based certification
- Curriculum-based certification
- Certification of attendance or participation

Credentialing possibilities for translators and interpreters include: certification granted by the government, certification by professional and/or commercial organizations, and certification by an academic institution.

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## PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION OPTIONS

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### AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION (ATA)

The American Translators Association (ATA) was founded in 1959. To date it is the largest professional association of translators (and interpreters) in the U.S. with over 9,000 members in over 60 countries. ATA's primary goals include fostering and supporting the professional development of translators and interpreters and promoting translation and interpreting professions.

The ATA offers a professional certification in translation only. Credentialing is currently available in the following language combinations using English as the source language: Chinese, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Individuals interested in becoming certified through the ATA must take the ATA certification examination.

To be eligible for the ATA certification exam candidates must:

- Demonstrate past experience as a translator and /or post secondary education.
- Sign a statement that they have read and understand the ATA code of professional conduct and business practices and pledge to abide by it.
- Fulfill the following continuing education requirements:
  1. Complete an ethics workshop or course within the first three-year period after certification, and
  2. Complete at least 20 hours of continuing education credits through coursework, seminars, and conferences during the aforementioned three-year period.

The certification exam is a three-hour, open-book, proctored exam in a specific language pair (one specific source language to one specific target language). The exam presents three passages of approximately 225-275 words. One of the required passages is general in nature. The candidate must also choose between one passage from the domain of science/technology/medicine and one from the domain of law/business/finance. All passages must meet ATA certification standards for a grade of "Pass."

The ATA does not presently offer certification for interpreters, however there is a division of the ATA which is dedicated to interpreters. This division seeks to share resources and tips among its members and produces a directory of working (member) interpreters, nationwide.

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIARY INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS (NAJIT)**

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) is a professional organization which seeks to be a leader in promoting quality interpretation and translation services in the judicial system.

The functions of NAJIT are:

- To promote professional standards of performance and integrity.
- To achieve wider recognition for the profession of judiciary interpretation and translation.
- To advocate training and certification of interpreters through competent and reliable methodologies.
- To advance the highest quality services.
- To encourage greater interchange among active judiciary interpreters and translators.
- To make the public and the judicial community aware of the unique role and function of interpreters and translators in the legal system.

NAJIT awards a certification, the Nationally Certified Judiciary Interpreter and Translator (NCJIT) credential. Achieving the NCJIT credential exhibits an individual's commitment to upholding the highest standards in the profession. The NCJIT credential is awarded to those individuals who pass a rigorous examination of overall language skills and the common body of knowledge relevant to the judiciary and related areas, and who have shown an understanding of and willingness to comply with a professional Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities.

The NCJIT exam is the only nationwide certification exam developed exclusively by judiciary interpreters and translators. Its purpose is to create a uniform standard for interpreters and translators working in a wide variety of legal settings, both civil and penal, throughout the United States. It is the first exam that tests both interpreting and translation skills in a legal context. It is the only examination that confers a credential offered by the profession, which belongs to the individual regardless of employment status or geographic location. The examination is presently available in Spanish only.

The NCJIT examination consists of a written component and an oral component. The written portion includes sections which test the following areas:

- Antonyms
- Synonyms
- Analogies
- Grammar & Syntax
- Reading Comprehension
- Idioms and Proverbs
- Ethics
- Written Translation Passages

Candidates must pass the written examination before they are eligible to take the oral exam. Upon notification of a passing score on the written examination, candidates are eligible to register for the oral component.

The oral component includes the following areas of testing:

- Sight Translation (English-Spanish):
- Sight Translation (Spanish-English)  
(Sight Translation Sources: legal documents, insurance forms, letters, confessions, transcriptions, arrest forms)
- Consecutive Interpretation (Questions: English/ Answers: Spanish):  
(Consecutive Interpretation Sources: civil, financial, medical, criminal)
- Simultaneous Interpretation (English-Spanish)
- Simultaneous Interpretation (Spanish-English)  
(Simultaneous Interpretation Sources: medical, legal, financial)

Upon successfully completing both the written and oral examinations, a candidate has earned the NCJIT. In order to maintain the certification, individuals are required to accumulate 30 Continuing Education Credits every three years.

## **THE TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS GUILD (TTIG)**

The Translators and Interpreters Guild (TTIG) is an organization comprised of independent translators and interpreters. Membership is open to freelance and in-house translators and interpreters. As TTIG is a union, annual dues are required to support benefits and advocacy efforts. TTIG's mission is to raise the standard of living for translators and interpreters by focusing on a few basic issues:

- Assistance in locating work,
- Lobbying for favorable legislation,
- Mentoring beginners in the field,
- Improving pay,

- Improving benefits, and
- Improving working conditions.

The Translators and Interpreters Guild offers a certification to its members who join the TRS (Translators Referral Service) and/or RSI (Referral Service for Interpreters). To obtain certification, an individual must first join the TTIG and pay all required dues. Separate applications are necessary if an individual wishes to join the TRS or RSI. Memberships to one or both of these services allow the translator/interpreter to receive work referrals from the TTIG. Each application includes peer and client references in each language identified, proof of college degree or equivalent, and a history of work and education in the field. Sample translations must be submitted (and approved for accuracy) for participation in the TRS and work experience verification is required for participation in the RSI.



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## ACADEMIC CERTIFICATION OPTIONS

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### AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

American University's Department of Language & Foreign Studies offers both Graduate and Undergraduate Level Certificate Programs in Translation for Spanish, French and Russian. Both programs consist of 15 credit hours (5 courses, 3 credits per course), which are typically spanned out over the course of one academic year.

The Certificate in Translation is open to all qualified American University students, full-time or part time, both undergraduate and graduate. Non-degree students may also earn certificates. As a prerequisite to the program, students are required to have completed, at minimum, three years of collegiate level language courses, or equivalent. The cost of enrollment is presently \$989.00 per credit hour.

### CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Catholic University of America (CUA) offers foreign language acquisition, composition, theory, and literature courses for the following languages: Spanish, French, German and Italian.

Additionally, CUA offers two undergraduate level courses in translation, for the Spanish language only. The first course, Translation I, provides an overview of traditional and innovative strategies for written and sight translation of various texts, and basic concepts of translation theory. The course focuses on texts for translation, which deal with contemporary economic, political, social, environmental, and cultural considerations. Prerequisites to this course include lower level Spanish language acquisition and composition courses. The second course, Translation II, introduces more difficult and complex translation projects, which may involve trade or technical language with emphasis on translation needs in the professional sector. Translation I is a prerequisite for this course.

Both Translation I and Translation II are offered in conjunction with CUA's Spanish major/degree program. Neither course is offered as a separate certificate program.

### HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Howard University offers a Simultaneous Interpretation (SI) Certificate Program. The SI Certificate Program is a joint mission of Howard University's Continuing Education Office of International Programs (OIP) and the Simultaneous Interpretation Unit of the Howard University Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. The program is the first Certificate Program to be offered at an academic institution in the United States.

Prior to acceptance into the course, students are required to pass an informal assessment of their language capabilities in the foreign language. All assessments are administered by Howard University (Department of Modern Languages and Literatures) faculty. Students who do not pass the assessment are not allowed to register for this course, and it is suggested that they take additional language acquisition courses prior to attempting re-enrollment.

### Simultaneous Interpretation Certificate Program:

The 12-week program consists of three modules: *Escort Interpretation*, *Consecutive Interpretation*, and *Simultaneous Interpretation*.

Weeks one and two cover Escort Interpretation wherein students learn how language is used in accompanying foreign individuals around the United States.

Weeks three and four cover Consecutive Interpretation wherein students learn how to take notes during a speech and then provide interpretations based on these notes at intervals throughout the speech.

Weeks five through twelve focus on Simultaneous Interpretation wherein students learn to provide interpretations of what is being said by a speaker at the same time that the speaker is speaking.

Course materials cover a variety of related topics, such as international affairs, business, and various technical fields. Field trips to the United Nations and the World Bank are also arranged.

Participation in the 12 week course costs each student \$4,350.00, plus an additional \$50.00 for course materials. At the end of the course, each student is awarded a certificate of completion.

## **TRINITY UNIVERSITY**

Trinity University does not offer a degree/certificate program in translation or interpretation. General language acquisition courses are available in Spanish only, within the Department of Language and Cultural Studies. Upon completion of a degree or major program within the Department of Language and Cultural Studies a student may elect to take the Certificate of Proficiency Examination (this certificate is a test of one's language proficiency level and does **not** specifically screen the students' ability to translate or interpret). The Certificate of Proficiency is often useful for students who are planning careers that require adequate knowledge of Spanish. The certificate is awarded after the student has successfully completed the required courses and passed a written and oral examination.

Additionally, Trinity University offers the continuing education course "Applied Spanish in Medicine." This Spanish course is designed for medical professionals who would like to learn and/or practice medical terminology. The curriculum of this course includes a focus on

vocabulary related to health problems and the anatomy of the human body, cultural contexts of hospitals and clinics, and urban vs. rural medical care. “Applied Spanish in Medicine” consists of 14 sessions which are typically offered in the evenings. The cost of enrollment is \$250.00 per student.

**OTHER LOCAL UNIVERSITIES:**

Other local universities, such as George Washington, Georgetown University, University of Maryland, Gallaudet University, University of the District of Columbia, and the University of Maryland, do not offer certification courses in translation or interpretation for spoken languages. However, all listed local universities offer courses in foreign language acquisition.

## **TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION CERTIFICATION/DEGREE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES**

In the United States the following colleges/universities offer programs which specialize in Translation and/or Interpretation:

***Arizona State University***  
Certificate in Translation  
Department of Languages and Literatures  
Tempe, Arizona  
Arizona State University  
PO Box 870202  
Tempe, AZ 85287-0202  
**languages@asu.edu**

***Bellevue Community College***  
Translation and Interpretation Certificate Programs  
3000 Landerholm Circle, S.E.  
Bellevue, WA 98007-6484  
**ajayasun@bcc.ctc.edu**

***University of Binghamton***  
Translation Research and Instruction Program (TRIP)  
Certificate of Translation (Graduate Program)  
Library Tower 1302  
P.O. Box 6000  
Binghamton, NY 13902  
Phone: 607 777-6765  
**trip@binghamton.edu**

Four masters programs have formal translation tracks: the MA in Comparative Literature; the MA in Romance Languages, the MA in Social Sciences, and the MAT in Education. The graduate certificate program may be combined with any doctoral or master's degree program or taken as a separate track.

***Brigham Young University***  
BA in Spanish Translation  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
4048 JKHB  
PO Box 26119  
Provo, UT 84602-6119  
Phone: (801) 422-2837

***Florida International University***  
Department of Modern Languages  
Certificate in Legal Translation & Court Interpreting

Practica in Medical Interpreting  
Certificate in Translation Studies  
University Park Campus  
Miami, FL 33199  
Phone: (305) 348-2851  
FAX: (305) 348-1085

***Georgia State University***  
Translation Certification Program  
Department of Modern and Classical Languages  
Georgia State University  
University Plaza  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3083  
[nearly@mindspring.com](mailto:nearly@mindspring.com)

***University of Hawaii***  
Center for Interpretation and Translation Studies (CITS)  
University of Hawaii, at Manoa  
**1890 East-West Road**  
**Moore Hall**  
**Honolulu, HI 96822**  
[cits@hawaii.edu](mailto:cits@hawaii.edu)

***Indiana University***  
Translation Studies  
Department of Comparative Literature  
Ballantine Hall 914  
1020 E. Kirkwood Avenue  
Bloomington, IN 47405-7103  
Phone: (812) 855-7070  
Fax: (812) 855-2688

***Kent State University***  
Institute for Applied Linguistics (IAL)  
Bachelor of Science in Translation, Master of Arts in Translation  
Kent State University  
109 Satterfield Hall  
Kent, OH 44242-0001

***The University of Minnesota***  
Program in Translation and Interpreting  
196 Klaeber Court  
320 16th Avenue, S.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Phone: (612) 624-4055  
Fax: (612) 624-4579  
[pti@tc.umn.edu](mailto:pti@tc.umn.edu)

***University of North Carolina Charlotte***  
Masters Degree in Spanish Translation  
9201 University City Blvd  
Charlotte, NC 28223-0001  
Phone: (704) 687-2000

***Monterey Institute of International Studies***  
Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation  
425 Van Buren Street  
Monterey, CA 93940  
[gsti@miis.edu](mailto:gsti@miis.edu)

***University of Nebraska Kearney***  
BA in French Translation and Interpretation  
BA in Spanish Translation and Interpretation  
BA in German Translation and Interpretation  
905 West 25th Street  
Kearney, NE 68849  
Phone: (308) 865-8441  
[admissionsug@unk.edu](mailto:admissionsug@unk.edu)

***Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology***  
Certificate in Technical Translation in German  
5500 Wabash Avenue  
Terre Haute, IN 47803  
Phone: (812) 877-1511

***San Diego State University***  
Certificate in Spanish-English Translation Studies (non-degree)  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
San Diego, CA 92182-7003  
Phone: (619)594-6588  
[swaisman@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:swaisman@mail.sdsu.edu)

***The University of Texas at Dallas***  
Center for Translation Studies  
Box 830688 Mail Station MC35  
Richardson, Texas 75083-0688  
Phone: (972) 883-2092

Fax: (972) 883-6303  
[schulte@utdallas.edu](mailto:schulte@utdallas.edu)

***University of California Los Angeles***  
Programs in Translation and Interpretation  
(Spanish/English, Korean/English, Chinese/English)  
College of Letters and Science  
5310 Rolfe Hall, Box 951532  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1551  
Phone: (310) 825-9082  
[interpretation@uclaextension.edu](mailto:interpretation@uclaextension.edu)

***University of Texas El Paso***  
Certification in Translation  
The University of Texas at El Paso  
Department of Languages and Linguistics  
Liberal Arts, Room 137  
500 W. University Avenue  
El Paso, Texas 79968-0531  
Phone: (915) 747-5767  
Fax: (915) 747-5292  
[lgsling@utep.edu](mailto:lgsling@utep.edu)

***University of Wisconsin Milwaukee***  
Graduate Certificate in Translation  
Curtin Hall  
PO Box 413  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
[velguth@uwm.edu](mailto:velguth@uwm.edu)

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“Continuing Education.” National Virtual Translation Center.  
<<http://www.nvtc.gov/contEducation.html>>

”Department of Language and Cultural Studies.” Trinity College, Washington DC.  
<<http://www.trinitydc.edu/academics/catalog/programs/language.html#description>>

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<<http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/cas/lfs/index2.html>>

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“Office of Continuing Education.” Howard University.  
<<http://www.coned.howard.edu/Office%20of%20International%20%20Programs/default.asp>>

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