

# Developing NZSL Interpreting standards Project Report

Mireille Vale

Rachel McKee

Deaf Studies Research Unit, Victoria University of Wellington

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## NZSL videos

NZSL Interpreter Competencies: Introduction and Summary Table	<a href="https://vimeo.com/461647136/6e552511a3">https://vimeo.com/461647136/6e552511a3</a>
Competency descriptions	<a href="https://vimeo.com/462302135/18c2aa3139">https://vimeo.com/462302135/18c2aa3139</a>
Legal Specialism competencies	<a href="https://vimeo.com/462478318/cf08072b1c">https://vimeo.com/462478318/cf08072b1c</a>
Project Report: Executive Summary	<a href="https://vimeo.com/462880882/f2b331cb94">https://vimeo.com/462880882/f2b331cb94</a>

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## Executive summary

This report outlines the development of standards and competencies for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters in general community and specialist legal settings.

The project brief was to describe the skills, knowledge and attributes required of NZSL interpreters in these settings at an advanced standard. Competency descriptions are an early step towards a possible future interpreter registration system, which would assess interpreters' performance against these competencies. NZSL interpreter competencies should draw on international evidence-based research and existing models of professional standards, and take into account the New Zealand context. Ideally, a competency framework will be compatible with the standards and accreditation requirements that will be recommended for public service interpreters as part of ongoing work in 2020 under the Language Assistance Services project.

The project included:

- A literature review of documented interpreter competencies in New Zealand and overseas, including three major accreditation frameworks in Australia (NAATI), the UK (National Occupational Standards) and the USA (RID / Centre for the Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation) and associated Best Practice guidelines and course curricula.
- Interviews with members of a Reference Group to offer their perspectives on interpreter competencies and standards. The Reference Group included consumer and expert members: representatives from Deaf Aotearoa, interpreting agencies, the NZSL Interpreter training programme at AUT, interpreters with expertise in legal settings, trilingual interpreters, Māori Deaf community members, and Deaf interpreters.
- Consultation with the Language Assistance Service Standards workstream manager and with a NAATI Auslan examiner and NAATI assessment developer.
- A consultation workshop with members of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand
- Feedback on a draft (with NZSL summary videos) via a survey distributed widely to interpreters and the Deaf community. 22 responses were received, in addition to Reference Group feedback.

The review identified the recently revised NAATI Descriptors for Interpreting as the most applicable model for NZSL interpreter competencies. The NAATI Descriptors are based on a thorough analysis of the interpreting task, an extensive review of existing literature, consultation with Auslan and spoken language interpreters and interpreter trainers, and evidence of test validity. The NAATI framework includes different certification levels, including a provisional level, and accreditation in specialist areas. In New Zealand, NAATI accreditation is already the official standard for spoken language court interpreting and for Ezispeak, the public sector telephone interpreting service provider. It is expected that this standard will be extended to all spoken language interpreters and translators in New Zealand public services under the Language Assistance Services project.

Permission was given by the NAATI CEO to adapt the NAATI Descriptors and the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes document. We adjusted these documents to reflect New Zealand-specific context (e.g. including Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori, New Zealand legislation, and typical NZ work settings). We also cross-referenced the eight competency areas in the NAATI Descriptors with the UK and US frameworks, and asked the Reference Group to comment on any gaps. Reference Group members stressed that it was important to describe different competency levels to help clients and agencies select interpreters suited for specific assignments and to provide a progression path for interpreters.

The NZSL interpreter competency standards describe two different competency levels and a legal interpreting specialism.

1. The first level describes the standards that need to be met to **enter the profession**. This is parallel to NAATI's 'provisional' level, with some adjustments due to differences in qualification and language fluency prerequisites. In New Zealand, we envisage that graduates from the AUT BA programme in NZSL interpreting will meet the competency standards at this level, since the programme offers comprehensive coverage of the required knowledge and skills. Maintaining the BA course as a prerequisite for entering the profession aligns New Zealand with international best practice.
2. The second level describes the expected standard for NZSL interpreters in general community settings with **significant work experience after graduation**, which will be roughly equivalent to NAATI's 'certified' level. To reach this competency level, an interpreter will need several years of supervised work experience in the community with regular professional development and opportunities to receive feedback. There was also support for providing formal postgraduate study programmes and internships for new graduate interpreters to achieve this level.
3. The legal competencies describe the **specialist knowledge and high competency levels required to interpret in courts or tribunals**. To achieve this level, several more years of professional development, observation and supervision in legal settings will be needed.

In feedback from the Reference Group and the survey, stakeholders agreed that the competencies are comprehensive and at appropriate levels. Some suggested changes have been incorporated to put more emphasis on particular skills and attributes. Other suggestions related to specialist competencies outside of the scope of this project (e.g. International Sign or specialist skills for mental health settings). Most comments focused on what the three categories should be named. It is yet to be determined how the competency standards will relate to NZSL interpreter registration and therefore we have used temporary descriptive labels:

1. 'Interpreter (qualified – entry in to the profession – general community settings);
2. 'Certified' interpreter (qualified and experienced – general community and conference settings);
3. 'Legal specialism'

New Zealand is likely to have limited capacity for testing of NZSL interpreters due to the small scale of the NZSL interpreting workforce and available personnel. We therefore envisage that if a registration system is established in New Zealand, this will focus on the 'Certified' level. The AUT Bachelors in NZSL-English Interpreting can continue to provide an entry level standard without further testing or assessment at entry level.

Although the legal competency descriptions accurately reflect the demands of court interpreting, work assignments in legal settings are irregular and regionally spread, and opportunities for observation may be scarce. It is therefore unlikely that individual interpreters will be able to specialise and only work in legal settings, and that a sufficient pool of specialist interpreters could be established to service all court settings. It would be more feasible to set the 'certified' level as the minimum standard in legal settings, with preference given to interpreters who also meet the legal specialist competencies.

Similar issues of irregular, regionally spread work apply to other specialist settings such as mental health. Rather than setting specific registration requirements for these settings, competencies could be described in Best Practice papers together with guidelines for other professionals on how to work with interpreters and Deaf clients.

Although the focus of this project has been on interpreters working between NZSL and English, the same competencies are applicable to a large extent to interpreters working between NZSL and Te Reo Māori. However, whereas the AUT programme assesses interpreting between English and NZSL, interpreting into or from Te Reo Māori is not assessed at this point. Feedback from trilingual interpreters indicated that existing university-based assessments of Te Reo Māori skills may not reflect actual language practices in the settings where trilingual interpreters work. They suggest that competencies might be best acquired through mentoring, supervision and community relationships in addition to formal training.

The competencies may also be applicable to some aspects of the work of Deaf interpreters (although this was not within the scope of this project); for example, working between two sign languages or between written English and NZSL. Potentially, the same competency areas can also be adapted to cover 'intralingual' modifications (e.g. working with atypical sign language users, using visual vernacular and other communication modifications). The revised NAATI framework allows for this in their Deaf interpreter certification for Auslan. However, establishing and sustaining training and standards for Deaf interpreters in New Zealand will be challenging because of the small numbers of potential practitioners. Further work is needed to determine areas of most demand for Deaf interpreters and possible professional pathways.

## 1 Introduction

In early 2020, the Office for Disability Issues commissioned a project to develop a set of interpreter standards and competencies for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters.

This project is set in the context of wider developments relating to interpreting provision in New Zealand.

- One of these developments is a review of the Language Assistance Services (LAS) programme by the Department of Internal Affairs and MBIE. This programme aims to improve the quality, consistency and coordination of interpreting and translation services, and to provide equitable access to public services for those with limited English language proficiency. The LAS programme includes the development of professional standards and an associated certification framework for interpreters and translators working across government.

Although at the time of writing this report, the LAS programme has been put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been confirmed that spoken language interpreters employed in the public sector will be required to achieve NAATI certification. NAATI is a longstanding national certifying authority for translators and interpreters in Australia. For some languages, interpreters and translators in New Zealand have already been able to achieve and maintain NAATI certification, but it is now proposed that this will be the required standard.

- At the same time, the Office for Disability Issues and the NZSL Board have investigated options for advancing standards of NZSL interpreters. This ongoing work has included a report (Fitzgerald, 2017) describing the current NZSL interpreter workforce and reviewing overseas standards frameworks with the aim of outlining options for the New Zealand context. The report found that there was great variation in skill levels of NZSL interpreters after graduation from the AUT sign language interpreting BA programme (or its predecessor, a Diploma). Although the AUT programme provides a foundation for entering the profession and guarantees a minimum standard of competency, further work is needed to improve the overall quality and consistency of interpreting services to ensure that Deaf NZSL users gain equitable access to all domains of life.

Fitzgerald (2017) found that there was widespread support for some form of interpreter registration, which would include formal measurements of interpreter competencies at an advanced postgraduate standard. An early step towards a registration system is to identify these **competencies** (the skills, knowledge and attributes that interpreters require to perform their role) and **standards** (the performance quality expected).

To develop a set of NZSL interpreter competencies, we can draw on a number of existing descriptions both in New Zealand and internationally. The main areas of competency required of interpreters are already well-known. The aim of the current project is to ensure that NZSL interpreter competencies:

- take into account the New Zealand context – e.g. identifying typical settings for NZSL interpreters and specific linguistic and cultural skills including Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori
- ensure parity with spoken language interpreter standards. NZSL interpreters work in many of the same public service settings that will be subject to the LAS

recommendations, and it would be beneficial to have a common understanding in the sector of expected standards of service.

- draw on international evidence-based research on sign language interpreter competencies.

This report outlines the scope and method of the project, reviews relevant literature and summarises comments from a reference group of stakeholders. The NZSL interpreter competencies are presented as an appendix.

## 2 Scope

The expected outcome of the current project is a comprehensive set of technical and professional competencies required **of NZSL-English** interpreters to work effectively in **general community and legal** contexts. The competencies will assume that practitioners have already demonstrated entry level competencies by completing an academic sign language interpreter qualification.

Competency statements will include suggested levels of performance (**standards**) that align with international benchmarks for professional practice in sign language interpreting.

It is acknowledged that there is a need for competency descriptions to cover subjects outside of this scope. These include:

- **Specialist areas**, including medical, mental health and compulsory education. According to the Fitzgerald report (Fitzgerald, 2017), *“Most Deaf and interpreter participants argued that, while specialisms are needed, it is most important to get realistic and efficient standards in place for generalists first.”* Current infrastructure and supply of interpreters make it unlikely that specialist qualifications for these domains of work would be implemented in the foreseeable future. Only the legal context has been included as a specialist setting, on the basis that the NZSL Act (New Zealand Government, 2006) provides for creating regulations to set competency standards for NZSL interpretation in legal proceedings.
- **Te Reo Māori / trilingual interpreters**. Currently there are fewer than five qualified NZSL interpreters with the necessary language proficiency to work between NZSL, Te Reo and English. Interpreting between Te Reo and NZSL is required in settings where Te Reo is spoken, such as powhiri (within Māori hui or public events), tangihanga, or education contexts. However, competency in Te Reo – NZSL interpreting is not assessed within the AUT bachelor’s degree, nor by any other mechanism at present.
- **Deaf interpreters**. Deaf people with informally recognized interpreting skills work with hearing interpreters in some situations. However, demand is unquantified and practice is ad hoc because there are no training or employment protocols for Deaf people working in interpreting roles. The main call for Deaf interpreters occurs with individuals who lack fluency in NZSL, have ‘fund of information’ deficits (Pollard & Barnett, 2009), and/or are in complex situations such as mental health or court proceedings. There is no established tradition of deaf-blind interpreting provided by Deaf people, as exists in other countries (e.g. Australia, USA). Establishing and sustaining training and standards for Deaf interpreters is challenged by the small scale and lack of expert practitioner role-models.

An advocacy organization, 'Deaf Interpreters New Zealand' is working towards the development of a pathway, in collaboration with SLIANZ and the AUT interpreting program.

- **Alternative pathways to enter the profession.** The AUT BA programme offers a common competency foundation on which to base expected competencies for interpreters with several years of experience after graduation. Internationally, the trend has been to recommend entry to a register through a recognised course of tertiary study rather than a test-based assessment.

Although these areas are out of scope, they have been included in the literature review and reference group interviews to provide a starting point for future work.

The question of how NZSL interpreters' performance against standards might be assessed or evaluated will also need to be addressed in subsequent investigations, expanding on the review of NZSL interpreting standards reported in Fitzgerald (2017).

### 3 Definitions

**Competencies** are the applied skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviours and attributes required to perform a role or task.

**Standards** describe the performance quality required for each competency at various level of service

The terms 'competency' and 'standards' have been used in different contexts where it is important to determine if someone can perform a task or a role. For example, competencies are documented in:

- Role descriptions – for the purpose of recruitment or service description
- Training – for the purpose of creating course curricula and describing the expected skills and knowledge (learning outcomes) on successful completion of a course
- Assessment criteria – for the purpose of tests or other evidence in the context of accreditation or certification schemes.

The ability to perform a task or role successfully may require a mixture of learned skills, knowledge or behaviours and innate abilities or attributes. Depending on the purpose of competency descriptions, there may be more emphasis on one aspect; for example, knowledge criteria will be explicitly stated in learning outcomes for an interpreting course, but skills and attributes will be more prominent in a role description.

The current project will describe competency standards for qualified and experienced interpreters. The competency descriptions will focus on the interpreter's ability to apply skills and knowledge acquired through interpreter training. Since it is not yet known how competencies will be assessed, the competency descriptions will include broad measurement criteria for expected performance levels, but further work will be required to create marking schemes or other assessment protocols.



## 4 Method

- We carried out a **literature review** of documented interpreter competencies and accreditation guidelines. The review focused on well-established certification frameworks and interpreter training programmes.

### *New Zealand*

- AUT BA in NZSL-English interpreting – learning outcomes and marking schemes
- NZQA translation and interpreting units (now expired)

### *Overseas*

- NAATI certification for interpreters (Australia and NZ) – including Auslan interpreters
- National Occupational Standards for interpreters (UK)
- RID certification for ASL interpreters (USA)

Best Practice Papers, interpreter course curricula, competency descriptions and guidelines for interpreting in specialist areas (e.g. legal, medical) were also included in the literature review.

- A **Reference Group** was consulted (through individual and small group interviews) for their perspectives on the need for / nature of interpreter competencies and to advise on any relevant considerations of the models identified through the literature review.

The Reference Group included representatives from:

- Deaf Aotearoa board
  - interpreting agencies (iSign, Connect, WordsWorth, Interpreting New Zealand)
  - the NZSL interpreter training programme at AUT
  - interpreters with expertise in legal (mainly court) settings
  - trilingual interpreters
  - Māori Deaf community members
  - Deaf interpreters
- We also **consulted** with:
    - Language Assistance Services (LAS) Standards Workstream project manager
    - NZQA Qualifications Services
    - NAATI Auslan examiner and NAATI assessment developer
- A draft of the NZSL interpreter competencies was distributed to the Reference Group and through an online survey for **wider feedback**. The survey was distributed through SLIANZ (the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand), Deaf Aotearoa, and NZSL-related Facebook groups (Deaf Action, NZSL-Tangata Turi). An online presentation and workshop was held with SLIANZ members.

## 5 Literature review

In this review we describe a number of existing competency frameworks for interpreting in New Zealand and overseas, summarise their main features, identify gaps and evaluate their applicability to the current context.

### 5.1 Training and qualification of NZSL interpreters

#### 5.1.1 BA in New Zealand Sign Language – English interpreting

The BA Major in New Zealand Sign Language – English Interpreting at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is the current accepted proficiency level for entering the profession.

This is a three-year full-time programme of study. Graduate outcomes include language- and interpreting-specific skills as well as more generic attributes such as communication, problem-solving and research skills.

Since the programme takes candidates without prior NZSL skills, much of the first two years is dedicated to developing receptive and expressive fluency in NZSL and studying the Deaf community and culture, as well as developing academic competencies. Interpreting theory and practice is the focus of the latter half of the second year and the entire third year, including an extensive interpreting practicum.

As the current standard for entering the profession, the BA level qualification compares favourably with the overseas frameworks that were reviewed. For example, to be eligible for NAATI Provisional certification, an interpreter needs to have undertaken training at Diploma level (equivalent to Level 5 in the Australian and New Zealand Qualification Frameworks, or a minimum of 40 hours of interpreter training), compared to the BA at Level 7). The course programme covers the vast majority of the minimum threshold competencies required for practice, recommended by a consortium of interpreter trainers in Europe (efsl, 2013), and provides a good theoretical grounding across key interpreting competency areas including language, culture, interpreting theory and interpreting practice (see [Table 1a](#)) *AUT BA NZSL/English Interpreting programme papers*).

Recommended optional papers provide an introduction to Te Reo Māori and to legal and health settings. Students are encouraged to take the health papers in preference to the legal papers because health-related interpreting assignments are more likely to be part of an early interpreting career than legal assignments. Neither the health nor the legal papers specifically address NZSL-English interpreting in these settings; to help interpreters achieve competency in these settings, mentoring, observations and supervised work experience would be required alongside formal study.

### 5.1.2 NZQA translation / interpreting units (expired)

In the 1990s, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was tasked to develop frameworks defining key competencies across a comprehensive range of occupational and training domains, including translation and interpreting. Competencies were described in a set of Unit Standards, broken down into sub-elements and performance criteria, by which competencies could be assessed. The Translation and Interpreting Unit Standards were written in collaboration with an expert group of senior practitioners, trainers and providers from the spoken and signed language interpreting and translation sectors. The framework also specified a moderation system, although this was never activated. It was intended that Unit Standards would be implemented in the curricula and assessment of academic and community-based training programmes, resulting in NZQA accredited qualifications. However, due to the small scale of the training (and employment) sector for translation and interpreting in New Zealand at the time (e.g., a single training programme for NZSL interpreting, which remains the case today), and the compliance costs for an organisation to adopt the NZQA framework and its moderation processes, the Unit Standards for translation and interpreting were never implemented in the sector. Furthermore, the lack of government regulation for the employment of translators and interpreters meant there was little motivation and infrastructure to implement competency standards in a formalised way. In the spoken language translation and interpretation field, NAATI accreditation remained the (de facto) standard, while the Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting remained the standard for NZSL interpreters. Recent consultation with NZQA confirms that this pattern played out in numerous occupational domains, for which Unit Standards frameworks were written but not activated. Nevertheless, the NZQA Unit Standards for Translation and Interpreting provide a useful description of key competencies and performance criteria for practitioners in the field, much of which remains relevant.

*Table 1b) NZQA Translation and Interpreting shows the relevant interpreting and Translation Unit Standards.*

The Units relating to interpreting in community settings, preparing for an assignment, demonstrating knowledge of ethics and role, and applying management practice to service provision were set at level 6 of the NZQA Framework (equivalent to Advanced Diploma level). All other units were set at level 7 (equivalent to BA level). The Unit Standards separate conference settings from community settings. Specialist Unit Standards included legal and healthcare interpreting. Of particular note is the NZSL-specific Unit 12469 which set out standards for interpreting and translating (simultaneously) for the media. This area of interpreting is becoming ever more relevant and the competencies required, including management of technical equipment and adaptation of the environment, should be reflected in any competency framework for NZSL interpreters.

Most of the competencies outlined in the Unit Standards are directly comparable with the learning outcomes of the AUT Bachelor's degree. An exception is a unit dealing with interpreting business management and administration; these issues are addressed in the AUT programme and through professional development after graduation, but are not assessed against performance criteria.

## 5.2 Overseas competency and accreditation frameworks

### 5.2.1 NAATI (Australia / NZ)

#### 5.2.1.1 Competencies

NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd.) is an Australian non-profit, government-owned organisation that certifies both spoken and sign language interpreters and translators and accredits organisations to carry out assessments. From January 2018, a revised certification framework for interpreters came into effect after an extensive review of existing NAATI processes and success rates (Hale et al., 2012). The new certification system includes education / training prerequisites and a requirement for ongoing professional development in order to re-certify.

As part of the review, NAATI carried out a task analysis to specify the *knowledge, skills and attributes* (KSA) required by interpreters, with the aim of ensuring that the certification scheme was valid and reliable (Foote, 2016). The analysis included the findings of parallel work on translator KSA and an extensive review of existing published documents in Australia and elsewhere concerning interpreter competency (including sign language interpreting-related articles such as Bontempo & Napier, 2007). Eight competency areas were identified consistently in the literature and the associated knowledge, skills and attributes were mapped (see [Table 1c](#) *NAATI Knowledge, Skills and Attributes*).

The individual competencies are described in detail in the discussion paper (Foote, 2016): for example, the *language* competency includes knowledge of register and style, vocabulary, syntax and grammatical structures, discourse and rhetorical devices, word and language use appropriate to audience and context, pragmatics, language varieties and accents. The competency descriptions also indicate where competencies overlap or intersect with other competency areas and how the knowledge is applied in practice.

#### 5.2.1.2 Assessment and standards

In the new NAATI Certification framework, the **knowledge** aspects of competency are mainly assessed through education and training being set as a prerequisite for certification. NAATI has endorsed a number of academic programmes at Diploma level or higher; an alternative is to undertake non-endorsed training, provide evidence of English competency, and sit screening tests to show that the candidate meets ethical and intercultural competency standards.

Foote (2016) suggests that **attributes** are difficult to assess through a test or exam, but can be included through re-certification requirements (e.g. evidence of ongoing professional development).

The NAATI Certification test is used to assess **the practical skills** components of the competencies. Descriptors for certification (<https://www.naati.com.au/media/2473/descriptors-for-interpreting.pdf>) are presented as a matrix listing minimum standards of performance across the eight competency areas for two main categories: *Certified* and *Recognised Practising Interpreter*. The Recognised Practising category applies to interpreters working between English and a language for which NAATI does not offer certification testing (for example, some smaller Pacific Island languages).

The Certified category includes:

- Certified Provisional Interpreter

- Certified Interpreter
- Certified Specialist Interpreter (Health or Legal)
- Certified Conference Interpreter

As well as outlining the standards of performance expected of each category against the eight competencies, the Descriptors also describe typical domains, situations, and interpreting modes. This latter part of the Descriptors has some variations for signed language interpreters; for example, while Certified Provisional interpreters for spoken languages typically work in the consecutive mode only, signed language Provisional Interpreters may work in simultaneous mode (for both monologues and dialogues).

**Certified Provisional Interpreters** are required to have completed training at diploma level or level 5 of the Australian Qualifications Framework, which is equivalent to the New Zealand Qualifications Framework levels (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.). As a comparison, the AUT BA programme in interpreting is at levels 5-7 in this framework. The certification test for Auslan-English interpreters includes three elements: two simultaneous interpreting face-to-face dialogues and one simultaneous monologue interpretation into Auslan. Certified Provisional interpreters are deemed competent to work in certain limited settings and to a lower competency level.

**Certified Interpreters** are required to have completed training at advanced diploma level or higher (Australian Qualification Framework level 6). The Certified Interpreter test consists of five tasks:

- two Simultaneous Interpreting face-to-face dialogue tasks;
- one Sight Translation into Auslan task (related to the second face to face dialogue task);
- one Simultaneous Interpreting – Monologue into Auslan task;
- one Simultaneous Interpreting – Monologue into English task.

The tasks will involve situations from different domains, including at least one from the health domain and one from the legal domain.

**Medical and legal certification** requires a higher level of competency as well as specialist knowledge and practice acquired through a Bachelor's degree or higher qualification (AQF level 7) including specialised units. Tests for these certifications are still in development and may not be available for all languages. An Auslan legal test is being adapted to include knowledge and skills specific to sign language interpreters, e.g. positioning yourself for good lines of sight and working with clients who use atypical sign communication.

**Certified Conference interpreter** is the highest level of certification and requires a qualification at master's degree level or above (AQF level 9 or comparable), or evidence of at least three years' conference interpreting work.

Although legal, medical, and conference interpreting are described as specialist levels, there are situation types within these domains that are considered to be within the competencies of generic certified, practising, and provisional interpreters.

#### *5.2.1.3 Applicability to New Zealand*

As a model for NZSL Competencies, the NAATI Descriptors and the detailed Knowledge, Skills and Attributes descriptions in Foote (2016) meet our criteria of compatibility with spoken language interpreter standards, and using international evidence-based research.

- Leeson & Venturi (2017) recommended NAATI’s review (then still in progress) as “the most current and comprehensive review of processes available, underpinned by empirical research by established experts in the field ... [and built] on international best practice ...”. The revised competency framework specifically includes sign language interpreters (Auslan) and there is ongoing consultation with Auslan interpreter trainers and assessors.
- NAATI is an established certification body of long standing. NAATI accreditation / certification has already been used as a professional standard for spoken language interpreters and translators in New Zealand (e.g., for court interpreting, for full membership of NZSTI and for EziSpeak, the NZ public sector telephone interpreting service provider that has succeeded Language Line). The Language Assistance Services Standards project recommend that this standard will be extended to all public service spoken language interpreters in New Zealand.

The format of the NAATI competencies would also work well as a model. Showing skills-based competency statements in a table allows people to draw comparisons between interpreters at different levels (something that was noted as important by the reference group), while a longer description of knowledge, skills and attributes provides the required detail. The three levels that are most applicable to the current project are Provisional interpreter (as a parallel to an NZSL interpreter graduate with the AUT BA level course), Certified interpreter, and Legal interpreter. Some adaptations to expected performance levels may be required to account for differences between qualification pathways and typical work domains in Australia and New Zealand.

From a first examination, the eight competency areas provide sufficient coverage of essential interpreter skills and knowledge. Cross-referencing with competency descriptions from the other frameworks in this literature review will allow us to fill gaps. The Descriptors in the table are generic so that they can apply to different working languages and cultures. However, it is possible to expand on the more detailed competency area descriptions to include New Zealand and NZSL-specific content.

Since this review is not directly concerned with assessment of interpreter competency or registration procedures, we have not included testing instruments and marking schemes. However, it is worth noting that Auslan tests and marking schemes are being developed and evaluated in close collaboration with tests for spoken languages. This offers opportunities to draw on NAATI’s expertise if these instruments were to be adapted to NZSL in future. We should note, however, that New Zealand is likely to have limited capacity for testing and ongoing re-certification of NZSL interpreters. In relation to Ireland, Leeson & Venturi (2017) noted a similar concern about cost and scalability of the NAATI registration system (including assessments and revalidation), in a country with a similar number of sign language interpreters to New Zealand.

## 5.2.2 National Occupational Standards (UK)

### 5.2.2.1 Competencies

The National Occupational Standards in Interpreting are the foundation for training and registration systems for both spoken and signed language interpreters in the UK. Originally

created in 2001, the National Occupational Standards were revised in 2006 and again in 2017.

The current suite of interpreting-specific standards consists of 9 units:

CFAINT01	Assess your ability to undertake interpreting assignments
CFAINT02	Prepare for interpreting assignments
CFAINT03	Interpret one-way as a professional interpreter
CFAINT04	Interpret two-way as a professional interpreter
CFAINT05	Evaluate and develop your professional practice as an interpreter
CFAINT06	Produce sight translations within interpreting assignments
CFAINT07	Produce immediate translations within interpreting assignments
CFAINT08	Work with other interpreters
CFAINT09	Undertake remote interpreting assignments

Core competencies in the 2017 version are mostly identical to those in the 2006 framework, but some units have been grouped together. For example, previous parallel units for ‘professional interpreters’ and ‘advanced interpreters’ have been combined. Trainee interpreter standards have been removed completely. Unit CFAINT09 *Undertake remote interpreting assignments* is a new addition. A previous unit “Act as a mentor to trainee and colleague interpreters” has also been removed.

Within each unit, reference is made to related standards in other areas, for example language standards and business practice standards.

Each unit outlines performance criteria as well as knowledge and understanding criteria.

The current suite of standards is due to be reviewed in 2022.

#### *5.2.2.2 Assessment and standards*

There are separate voluntary registration bodies for spoken and sign language interpreters in the UK. The National Register for Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) has its origins in an Independent Registration Panel set up by a previous organisation which remains responsible for sign language-related qualifications and interpreter examinations (now called Signature). The NRCPD is pursuing statutory registration for sign language interpreters and other communication professionals (interpreters for deafblind people, lipspeakers, notetakers, sign language interpreters, sign language translators and speech to text reporters).

Another voluntary self-regulatory body for sign language interpreters, RBSLI, was set up in 2015 with the aim of providing registration solely for qualified sign language interpreters and translators (as opposed to the NRCPD’s regulation of other professionals and inclusion of regulated trainee sign language interpreters). Both NRCPD and RBSLI are in favour of statutory regulation. Both bodies use the National Occupational Standards as a baseline for registration.

Entry to either register is through achieving an approved qualification that has been mapped against the National Occupational Standards. Both vocational and academic programmes exist. The vocational Level 6 NVQ Diploma consists of candidates submitting a portfolio of both theoretical and practical assessments. A Level 6 vocational qualification is roughly equivalent to an academic qualification at the level of a Bachelor's degree, B(hons) degree or a graduate diploma. Nearly all currently approved academic interpreting programmes are at Postgraduate Diploma or Master's level.

Sign language competency can be evidenced either as part of language papers/modules included in an approved interpreting qualification, or through a separate language qualification at level 6. The expected proficiency level in all working languages is at level C1 ('Advanced') of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

No post-qualification testing is required, but there is a continuous professional development requirement to maintain registration, in addition to following the Code of Conduct/Ethics, having a standard disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service and having valid professional indemnity insurance.

There are no different levels of registration or specialist requirements for legal settings, although it is recommended that interpreters undertake specialist training and observation of court settings before undertaking court work (ASLI, 2015).

#### *5.2.2.3 Applicability to New Zealand*

- As with NAATI, the UK standards are applicable to both spoken and sign language interpreters and to multiple languages.
- Having an independent standards setting body which is independent from (voluntary) registration and qualification bodies is potentially a useful model.
- Entry to a register through completing a qualification, rather than through a separate test post-qualification, is also a possibility to consider. However, training routes in the UK differ substantially from those in New Zealand: there are multiple institutions offering courses; there are both vocational and academic pathways; and the approved training programmes are all at postgraduate level. These (usually part-time) postgraduate courses take students who have already achieved a high level of language competency (at level C2 or C1 of the CEFR).
- The 2006 document (CiLT - The National Centre for Languages, 2006) includes not only the Occupational Standards themselves, but also gives guidance on how these units apply to job roles, how qualifications are mapped against the standards, and how particular competencies can be assessed in the workplace or through simulation.
- The National Occupational Standards for Interpreting describe standards for aspects of practice such as assessing your own competency before accepting an assignment, preparing for an assignment, and planning for / undertaking professional development. While these are useful competencies, these expected professional behaviours are already included in the SLIANZ Code of Ethics / Code of Conduct. They are ways that an interpreter can ensure that they have met the required standard of performance and maintain that standard; but they are not in themselves measures of an interpreter's ability to interpret competently.



### 5.2.3 RID (USA)

#### 5.2.3.1 *Competencies*

The most long-standing sign language interpreter registration system internationally is the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in the United States. In 2015, a separate testing body was established, the Center for Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation (CASLI).

The RID carried out a Role Delineation Study in 2002, which has formed the basis for a list of tasks, knowledge and skill statements required for an interpreter to pass the National Interpreter Certification exam.

A total of 10 tasks are outlined:

1. Assess each interpreting situation to determine if qualified for the assignment
2. Prepare for assignment by determining logistics and purpose of interaction for all parties involved
3. Maintain competence in the field of interpreting (e.g., attending workshops and classes, reading professional literature, working with a mentor)
4. Apply the Code of Professional Conduct for the interpreting profession
5. Provide interpreting services that reflect awareness and sensitivity to culturally and ethnically diverse groups
6. Facilitate the flow of communication during the interpreting process
7. Apply the appropriate communicative mode and language register
8. Construct equivalent discourse in the target language while monitoring message comprehension and feedback to modify interpretation accordingly.
9.
  - a. Use ASL proficiently within expressive interpreting tasks, including choice of sign vocabulary, use of sign modification to show variation in meaning and grammatical function, and appropriate use of space, facial expression, and body movement.
  - b. Comprehend ASL proficiently during the interpreting task, including sign vocabulary choice and sign modification to show variation in meaning and grammatical functions.
10.
  - a. Use English proficiently to construct an equivalent message in the target language, including appropriate vocabulary choice, tone, grammar, and syntax, with appropriate use of register, pausing, rhythm, intonation, pitch, and other supra-segmental features.
  - b. Comprehend English proficiently to construct an equivalent message in the target language, including appropriate vocabulary choice, tone, grammar, syntax, appropriate use of register, pausing, rhythm, intonation, pitch, and other supra-segmental features.

The knowledge and skills required to perform each of these tasks are outlined in great detail in the document, especially the language components of tasks 9 and 10. For example, 21 skills are provided for task 9 A (use ASL). There is some overlap in the knowledge components for various tasks.

#### *5.2.3.2 Assessment and standards*

There have been many changes to certifications available over the years. Currently, the only certifications available are the National Interpreter Certification (NIC), Provisional Deaf Interpreter Credential, and Certified Deaf Interpreter. The NIC is a generic certification and does not have different levels of achievement.

Assessment consists of a multiple-choice Knowledge Exam and a video-based Interview and Performance exam. To be eligible for the Interview and Performance exam, candidates must first have passed the Knowledge Exam and meet the minimum educational requirement of a bachelor degree (in any major, i.e. not necessarily interpreting-specific training).

Maintenance of certification requires continued membership of the RID, compliance with the RID Code of Professional Conduct, and evidence of continuing professional development in the form of 'CEUs' (Continuing Education Units) awarded by academic study, PD events, or independent study.

#### *5.2.3.3 Applicability to New Zealand*

- The RID had 15,500 registered interpreters in 2018 (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), 2018). A system at this scale has to account for a wide variety of interpreter training routes. This may be one of the reasons for the very detailed competency descriptions. Since New Zealand only has one training programme, this level of detail in the competencies may not be required.
- The RID sign language competencies have a number of criteria that are not directly assessed in other certification systems, but rather set as prerequisites. In New Zealand, the Sign Language Proficiency Interview would be one possible way to assess language criteria separately from interpreting competency assessments.
- Other RID criteria, such as 'maintain competence in the field of interpreting' are also handled differently in other certification systems. Typically, attending professional development, mentoring etc. are included as requirements for maintaining registration / certification rather than a competency standard.
- Certification in specialist domains such as legal and medical settings is not currently available in the RID system. However, working groups under the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres have created competency descriptions for interpreters in these settings (CATIE Centre College of St. Catherine and NCIEC, 2008; NCIEC, 2012). A competency description for Deaf Interpreters was also created (National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres (NCIEC), 2010). This model of describing competencies and best practice without necessarily implementing registration requirements is potentially useful to New Zealand (see section 5.3).

## 5.3 Specialist competencies

### 5.3.1 Legal interpreting

Although the right to an interpreter in court is common worldwide, regulations around interpreter competency vary widely (Mikkelson, 2016). In two of the registration frameworks in this literature review (NAATI and RID), specialist credentials for legal interpreters are available or have been available in the past. NAATI's legal interpreter certification has been available for some languages since 2016 through a knowledge test and practical tests in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. These tests are currently being adapted to be suitable for Auslan interpreters (NAATI Auslan Examiner, personal communication). The RID's Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) was offered from 1998 to 2016 and is currently under moratorium (not offered), but interpreters who passed the knowledge and practice tests in the past are still recognised. In practice, there are constraints on available training, the availability of test instruments in many minority languages, and opportunities for interpreters to specialise in this area given the infrequency of court work. Even when specialist accreditation is available, the number of interpreters with this accreditation may therefore remain too low to restrict working in legal settings only to specialists. The literature shows that a more common approach has been to set a minimum requirement of generalist qualified or registered status (to ensure some standard of competency) and then to describe the specific competencies required as best practice, alongside other recommendations for court interpreting.

An extensive description of legal interpreter competencies can be found in the best practice guidelines produced by the Working Group of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres in the USA (NCIEC, 2012) and the UK's Association of Sign Language Interpreters' adaptation of these guidelines (ASLI, 2015). The guidelines assume that interpreters have a foundation as a generalist interpreter practitioner, including having acquired the relevant theory and knowledge, language skills, interpreting skills, human relations skills and professionalism.

The remaining specialist competencies are organised into five domains:

- Court and legal systems knowledge
- General legal theory
- Court and legal interpreter protocol
- Interpreting knowledge and skills (applied to the court and legal setting)
- Professional development

NAATI's framework lists the specialist accreditation competencies alongside general interpreting competencies, but applied to working in legal settings. This includes:

- highly competent language use
- understanding specialised terminology
- having extensive knowledge of the legal domain
- understanding the interpreter's role in legal settings (e.g. as officers of the court)

- full and detailed knowledge and understanding of the interaction of culture and language
- knowledge and understanding of the relevant codes of ethics and professional standards in the legal domain

In New Zealand, the NZSL Act ( 2006) provides for the use of NZSL in legal proceedings and empowers the making of regulations to set competency standards for the interpretation in legal proceedings of New Zealand Sign Language.

The review of the NZSL Act in 2011 noted that “The Ministry of Justice, having specified interpreter standards to be used in the courts and tribunals for which it is responsible, sees no need to formalise these by regulation. The review endorses this position. Regulations can be inflexible and have limited responsiveness. Other options, such as departmental directions, seem to be more appropriate in this situation.” (Office for Disability Issues, 2011).

In terms of departmental direction, guidelines issued by the Ministry of Justice in 2006 (now no longer available in a published form) defined competency of NZSL interpreters as:

- holding a Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting or equivalent overseas qualification
- having at least two years of professional experience
- being a full member of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand.

The AUT BA programme includes two optional papers covering legal studies and legal interpreting. However, students are usually encouraged to take the medical papers instead because they are more likely to be relevant in the interpreter’s early career (AUT Programme coordinator, personal communication). The legal papers are not specific to NZSL interpreting. Some of the content is therefore less relevant (e.g. comparisons with overseas legal systems) and specific practical points for NZSL interpreters may not be covered in detail (e.g. positioning for clear lines of sight).

The current Guidelines for Interpreters (Ministry of Justice, n.d.) do not make specific reference to qualification levels or membership of professional organisations. The Guidelines do outline competency standards, including expectations for accuracy as well as ethical conduct and professional conduct.

The specific competency standards listed are to:

- speak clearly, and loud enough to be heard in the hearing room.
- interpret in the first and second grammatical person - that is, using “I” or “you”, except when summarising legal argument or exchanges between parties.
- not alter, add, or omit anything when interpreting - the interpretation should be precise including, as far as possible, translating offensive language such as derogatory terms and swear words.
- ask for a statement to be repeated, rephrased, or explained if it is unclear.
- immediately acknowledge mistakes by informing the court and parties. The interpreter can ask for a pause, and inform the court when they are ready to continue.

- immediately inform the court or tribunal if the interpreter and the person who requires the interpreter need to have a conversation for the sake of clarifying something.
- immediately inform the court or tribunal if a statement or question cannot be accurately interpreted because of cultural or linguistic differences between the 2 languages. If possible, the interpreter should help the lawyer, representative, party, or presiding officer to re-phrase the statement or question so it can be accurately interpreted.
- decline to interpret in a case, or ask to be replaced if the case has begun, if they feel their interpreting skills are not adequate for it.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice gives guidance to interpreters regarding impartiality, declaring conflicts of interest, confidentiality, information acquired while working not to be used for personal gain, not accepting gifts or gratuities, appropriate dress standard, and punctuality.

### 5.3.2 Medical interpreting

Healthcare settings are amongst the most common situations where interpreters are required. A high level of interpreter competency and specialist knowledge are required in healthcare settings (especially mental health) due to the potentially serious consequences of miscommunication. However, as with other specialist areas, there are practical constraints on achieving and enforcing certification standards.

Specialist medical interpreter certification is not included in the RID or UK systems (a spoken language interpreter medical certification system exists in the USA through the International Medical Interpreting Association, but this does not extend to ASL). The NAATI certification system does include a set of competencies for specialist health interpreters, at a competency level parallel to that of specialist legal interpreters. Certification requires interpreters to have undertaken a course of training in health interpreting including a mental health component, and then to successfully complete a knowledge test and a set of interpreting tests. However, it is likely that tests will only be available for a limited number of languages. The knowledge test is currently being adapted to be used for Auslan interpreters, but the practical Auslan tests have not yet been developed and not many candidates are expected to apply for this certification at this point (NAATI Auslan Examiner, personal communication).

The AUT BA programme includes two papers covering medical studies and medical interpreting. These papers provide a foundation of knowledge about the New Zealand healthcare system, anatomy and physiology, common conditions, terminology and language practices, and ethical and cross-cultural considerations in medical settings. The papers are not specific to NZSL interpreting.

Healthcare interpreting competencies for ASL interpreters are described in Best Practice guidelines (CATIE Centre College of St. Catherine and NCIEC, 2008), covering such competencies as: the interpreter's language and interpreting proficiency, understanding of the health care system and different health care approaches, understanding the role of the

interpreter and others in the health care team, self-care, ethical decision making, technology, preparation and research, communication advocacy, leadership and professional development.

There are also a number of guidelines for sign language interpreters in mental health settings, and for professionals working with interpreters in these settings: see e.g. Bevan (2015); Hlavac (2017).

### 5.3.3 Educational interpreting

Interpreters in primary and secondary education settings require specialist competencies. In mainstream settings, interpreters may be the only language model readily available to the child and they will interpret conversation between the child and their peers as well as interpreting subject matter and classroom instructions. Educational interpreters should therefore have a high level of fluency in signed, spoken and written language; familiarity with child/young adult language use; familiarity with pedagogy and child development; and be able to work effectively as part of the wider educational team.

Unfortunately, in many countries, educational interpreting has been under-resourced. Support staff such as Teacher Aides often become responsible for interpreting in the classroom alongside other duties such as note-taking and other learner support. Support staff roles often have low pay rates and insecure contracts, and do not incentivise undergoing interpreter training or improving standards of sign language proficiency.

The three countries with certification systems in this literature review all acknowledge this situation to some extent.

In the UK, historically there has been a distinct role of Communication Support Workers (CSW) who are responsible for a wider range of learner support in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Specialist CSW training courses have existed since the 1980s and currently the awarding body Signature provides this course and recommended standards. A CSW Code of Practice and employer guide (Adept, 2014) recommends that CSWs working with British Sign Language users achieve at least a Level 3 BSL qualification, and note that the role does not replace that of BSL/English interpreters. Some individuals hold dual qualifications both as interpreters and CSWs.

In the US, the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Assessment (EIPA) has been developed both as a diagnostic tool for the interpreter and as a tool for setting certification standards. The EIPA consists of a written test and performance tests, including tests for ASL competency but also for other communication modes such as Manually Coded English (Cued Speech). Different states have implemented different minimum EIPA scores as the standard.

Educational interpreter guidelines in Australia (ASLIA, 2011) recommended that interpreters should ideally be at the NAATI 'professional' level (now 'certified interpreter'), or otherwise be 'paraprofessional' interpreters (now 'provisional interpreters') who were working towards professional accreditation through training or professional development.

#### 5.3.4 Deaf Interpreters

The designation ‘Deaf interpreter’ (DI) has been used to describe Deaf people working in a range of settings, clients, languages and interpreting / translation / language brokering modes. Examples of typical work situations for DI include:

- interpreting between two sign languages – e.g. for a Deaf migrant who uses a different sign language; or at an international conference
- interpreting from and into International Sign – e.g. at an international event or conference
- interpreting into the national sign language for media or television
- interpreting (relay) for a Deafblind client
- interpreting for a client with ‘non-standard’ signing (sometimes referred to as ‘minimal language skills’, ‘semilingual’, or ‘high visual orientation’) or clients with ‘fund of information’ deficits (Pollard & Barnett, 2009) – e.g. in legal, health, or mental health settings
- translating from written language into sign language – e.g. prepared translation of consultation documents, websites etc.; sight translation

In many of these situations, the DI works together with a non-Deaf sign language interpreter to ‘relay’ the information, while in other situations the DI works independently.

In the past 10 – 15 years, there has been increasing demand for Deaf interpreters to be given similar recognised professional status to hearing sign language interpreters, and to have access to training and professional development opportunities.

A working document by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres in the United States (National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres (NCIEC), 2010) states that Deaf people may have foundational competencies through their personal experience and sign language proficiency. In addition, Deaf Interpreters need to develop both generalist and specialist competencies, many of which will overlap with non-Deaf interpreter competencies. These include:

- Theory and knowledge competencies: academic foundation and world knowledge essential to effective interpretation
- Human relations competencies: interpersonal competencies fostering effective communication and productive collaboration with colleagues, consumers, and employers
- Language, cultural and communication competencies: required levels of fluency in languages in which the interpreter works; other communication modes.
- Interpreting skills competencies: effective interpretation of a range of subject matter in a variety of settings
- Professionalism competencies: professional standards and practices.
- Setting-specific knowledge (e.g. health or legal settings)

In the United States, RID / CASLI have provided certification leading to Certified Deaf Interpreter status since 1998. Certification requires proof of deafness, 40 hours of prior training, a knowledge exam and a performance exam. The performance exam has been

unavailable in recent years, during which time a Provisional Deaf Interpreter Credential was put into place. Provisional candidates submit evidence of practice and references instead of the performance exam. From late 2020, a prerequisite for certification will be to have an associates' degree (roughly equivalent to level 6 in the NZ Qualifications Framework).

While originally, the RID was the only framework that provided Deaf interpreter certification, there are now also some provisions in both the NAATI and UK frameworks. The way DI competencies are described and assessed in these frameworks varies due to differences in focus on particular settings and roles.

The National Occupational Standards for Interpreting in the UK are not language-specific. Language competency is assessed separately from interpreting competency. Signature, the awarding body for sign language, Deaf and Deafblind-related qualifications in the UK, has developed a qualification which (since 2020) includes both sign language interpreting and translation, and has four streams:

- spoken <> signed interpreting
- signed <> signed interpreting
- relay interpreting
- written <> signed translation

There is no one overall qualification for all the varied roles that have been labelled as 'Deaf Interpreter'. Depending on which stream they take, DI can qualify with a particular language pair (e.g. BSL/ASL or BSL/English) or, in the case of relay interpreting, intralingual modification skills.

Although training and certification for DI in Australia has been largely ad hoc, there have been a number of pilot programmes to integrate DI training with Auslan interpreter training and certification. The first pilot test allowed DI to achieve paraprofessional (entry level) status in the NAATI framework at the time. The pilot programme focused on specific DI competencies based on a needs analysis of various potential client groups (Bontempo, Goswell, Levitzke-Gray, Napier, & Warby, 2014). The main client groups were nonstandard sign language users and deaf people using a foreign signed language. Remaining potential client groups (i.e., deaf-blind, International Sign, familiar FSL users, and broadcast translation audiences) were deemed to require separate specialized training and assessment for suitability. The pilot test led to six DI achieving Paraprofessional Deaf Interpreter status in 2017 (Lai, 2018).

The revised NAATI competency standards framework includes a test instrument to assess Deaf Interpreters against the standards leading to Provisional status. Since the competency descriptors in the NAATI framework are not language-specific, no separate DI competencies are provided. However, tests assess not only English – Auslan interpreting and sight translation, but also working between English and 'non-conventional sign language'.

Deaf Interpreters can also apply for 'Recognised Practising interpreter' status.



Bontempo et al. (2014) expressed some cautions around including DI certification and testing in the NAATI framework. One of their main concerns was that DI certification sets up an expectation that employment will be available for DI, when in fact employment opportunities are limited. They recommended additional research to understand the marketplace for DI, and to identify the main client groups and gaps that need to be filled in terms of training and testing. These recommendations are also relevant for the New Zealand situation.

### 5.3.5 Trilingual interpreters

All certification frameworks in this literature review assume that interpreting takes place between a language pair – either a spoken and a signed language, or two sign languages. In the NAATI and UK National Occupational Standards, the spoken language is left unspecified, whereas in the RID description, specific criteria for English proficiency are given. To a large extent, the same competency standards can also be applied to interpreters working between a sign language and another spoken language. In practice, however, certification prerequisites, approved training programmes and test instruments are mainly focused on English as the spoken language. For example, the AUT BA programme assesses interpreting between English and NZSL, whereas interpreting into or from Te Reo Māori is not assessed at this point.

Existing university-based assessments for non-English spoken languages may not reflect actual language practices in the settings where trilingual interpreters work, nor perhaps specific local knowledge required. Developing valid trilingual test instruments is an challenging process and tests are difficult to standardise, needing further adaptations to be suitable to local communities (Dueñas González, Gatto, & Bichsel, 2010).

Working in multilingual contexts also requires specific competencies that go beyond interpreting between two languages. Trilingual interpreters not only need advanced intercultural and linguistic skills in each of their working languages, but they may also need to negotiate their roles, relationships and responsibilities in the setting in ways that might not correspond with prevalent interpreter role descriptions (McKee & Awheto, 2010).

In the US, a task force was established in 2011 to increase the number of competent trilingual ASL/Spanish/English interpreters, an area of high demand given the large number of native Spanish speakers in the US. The task force has established a directory of interpreters working in Spanish-influenced settings and has initiated training and educational resources. The task force recommends that trilingual interpreters achieve ASL-English certification through a formal training programme, potentially take formal courses in their other spoken language, and develop specialist trilingual interpreting competencies through mentoring, supervision and community relationships. (National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centres (NCIEC), n.d.). Comments made by Reference Group members support the importance of mentoring and partnership / connections with local Māori and Deaf communities for trilingual interpreters' professional development.

## 5.4 Outcome of literature review

The review identified the NAATI framework as the most applicable model for NZSL interpreter competencies. The NAATI Descriptors for Interpreting and Knowledge, Skills and Attributes analysis meet the criteria we had set; i.e.

- drawing on international evidence-based research
- compatible with NZ spoken language interpreter standards

Different certification levels in the NAATI framework provide an opportunity to describe not only the competency standards of experienced interpreters, but also what can be expected of newly graduated interpreters entering the profession. The NAATI framework also includes legal specialist competencies and models for possible other specialist competencies in the future. The table format of the Descriptors offers a succinct way to compare different levels of competency, while the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes document provides further detail.

We sought permission from the NAATI CEO to adapt the NAATI Descriptors and Knowledge, Skills and Attributes document, to reflect New Zealand-specific context. After permission was granted, we used the eight competency areas in the NAATI Descriptors as a basis for our consultation with the Reference Group. We also cross-referenced these competency areas with the other frameworks in the literature review to identify any gaps.

## 6 Further analysis and feedback

Interviews with reference group members were held to ask for their perspectives on NZSL interpreters' core competencies, skill levels, criteria used to determine competency, and ways of improving interpreter skills to achieve the required level.

The interviews showed that there was overall agreement on core attributes, skills and knowledge. To a large extent, these core competencies were already covered in the NAATI descriptions. Those reference group members who were familiar with the NAATI framework agreed that the NAATI descriptors were mostly accurate and comprehensive.

A common theme was that different levels of competency needed to be included in a framework, to help clients and agencies select interpreters suited for specific assignments and to provide a progression path for interpreters. We therefore decided to include entry level competencies (modelled on NAATI's 'provisional' level), as a comparison with the standards expected of interpreters with more practical work experience.

Key differentiating factors between these levels were found to be:

- language fluency
- interpersonal skills
- personal attributes such as confidence, flexibility and resilience

It was suggested that at least two years of regular (if not full-time) practice, alongside supervision and professional development opportunities, would be necessary for an interpreter to achieve the competencies at this more experienced level. Interpreters with

experience in the legal field recommended a further three years at least (i.e. minimum of 5 years post-graduation) before an interpreter could achieve the legal specialist competencies.

Further information from the interviews provided insight into New Zealand-specific knowledge and typical work domains for NZSL interpreters. This information was used to adapt the NAATI competency descriptions and to ensure that the standards were appropriate to the New Zealand context. In particular, we included Te Reo Māori and tikanga Māori skills and knowledge, New Zealand institutions and examples of typical settings, the SLIANZ Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, and New Zealand legislation including Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Where possible, the competency descriptions have been written so that they can also be applied to the work of trilingual interpreters and Deaf interpreters; for example, the source and target language are not specified in the descriptors.

Further feedback on the draft NZSL interpreter competencies was received from the Reference Group, a SLIANZ consultation workshop, and 22 respondents to a survey.

These stakeholders agreed that the NZSL interpreter competencies are comprehensive and at appropriate levels. Some comments described the legal interpreting competencies as an accurate reflection of the difficulty of court work, but too advanced to be a realistic certification level required. Legal certification may not be feasible without parallel development of specialist training.

Some comments recommended that particular skills and attributes were emphasised more. These suggestions have been incorporated into the final competency descriptions.

Other comments related to specialist competencies such as International Sign, specialist settings such as mental health settings, or other roles such as Deaf Interpreters. Since these areas are outside of the scope of this project, they have not been included.

Most comments focused on what the three categories should be named. The initial suggested labels ‘qualified’, ‘qualified and experienced’, and ‘legal interpreter’ were confusing to many. Since it is yet to be determined how the competency standards will relate to NZSL interpreter registration, we have used the following descriptive labels as a temporary solution:

1. ‘Interpreter (qualified – entry in to the profession – general community settings);
2. ‘Certified’ interpreter (qualified and experienced – general community and conference/platform settings);
3. ‘Legal specialism’

Most stakeholders were of the opinion that interpreters need to develop their skills and knowledge to reach the expected ‘certified’ competency level through a number of different ways. There was most support for supervision and training / professional development, but there was also support for further formal study, internships, observation, continued contact with the Deaf community and opportunities to team with more experienced interpreters.

The finalised set of NZSL interpreter competency descriptions are shown in [Appendix 2: Competency standards for NZSL-English interpreting](#)

## 7 Implementation of competency framework

Feedback has indicated that NZSL interpreter competency descriptions are a welcome and potentially useful development, providing a foundation for assessing competency against more detailed criteria than the current crude measure of numbers of years of experience after graduation. However, their usefulness is limited without a standards monitoring framework or registration system.

Questions of how such a framework can be implemented are outside of the scope of this project, but inevitably both the reference group and wider feedback have brought up issues around implementation.

Concerns have been raised around the cost and scalability of NAATI's testing and re-certification process given the small numbers of candidate interpreters and available personnel to develop, administer and assess tests.

The small scale of the NZSL interpreting workforce also limits the practicality of establishing specialist certification (e.g. for legal or mental health interpreting). It is clear that highly skilled interpreters are urgently needed in these areas. However, the irregularity and regional spread of work assignments in specialist settings make it difficult to create a sufficient pool of specialist interpreters, even if interpreters themselves were willing to work exclusively in a particular setting.

Given these concerns, we recommend the following approach:

- Focus on measuring competency at the **'Certified interpreter' level**. The AUT Bachelors in NZSL-English Interpreting can continue to provide an entry level standard without further testing or assessment at entry level.
- For **specialist areas** including legal (court interpreting), the minimum standard should be the 'Certified interpreter' level, with preference given to interpreters who also meet specialist competencies. Rather than setting specific registration requirements at these higher levels, the competency descriptions could be used to develop best practice guidelines and guide training and professional development opportunities for interpreters. Competency descriptions could also be useful as guidelines for other professionals on how to work with interpreters and Deaf clients.
- **Supervision, mentoring and teaming with more experienced** interpreters were seen as essential components of improving interpreter competency after graduation. Investing in providing this kind of support for interpreters especially in their first few years has the potential to improve NZSL interpreting quality considerably. (see also Fitzgerald, 2017). The professional association, employing agencies and public service interpreter users have a role to play in developing workforce competencies.

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## Appendix 1: Tables

### 1a ) AUT BA NZSL/English Interpreting programme papers

Year	Language	Culture	Interpreting theory	Interpreting skills	Other competencies
1:1	NZSL 510 NZSL 1	NZSL 502 Deaf community and culture 1			COMM570 Core paper: Academic communication
	MAOR500 Recommended Elective: intro to conversational Māori				
1:2	NZSL 520 NZSL 2	NZSL 602 Deaf community and culture 2			CLS504 Core paper: Knowledge and enquiry
	NZSL 600 NZSL discourse				
2:1	NZSL 610 NZSL 3		TRIN 603 Theory and practice of interpreting		
	NZSL 620 NZSL in technical domains				
	NZSL 703 Comparative analysis of English and NZSL				
2:2	NZSL 701 NZSL 4	NZSL 620 Core paper: Culture and Society	TRIN 604 Societal contexts for interpreting	NZSL 704 NZSL interpreting 1 – Dialogic interactions	
3:1			NZSL 707 NZSL interpreting practicum experience I - Observations	NZSL 705 NZSL interpreting 2 – Monologic interactions	HIST 690 Te Tiriti O Waitangi: Treaty of Waitangi
				NZSL 706 NZSL interpreting 3 – Advanced interpreting techniques	TRIN 704 Advanced health studies (recommended) or TRIN 702 Advanced legal studies
3:2		NZSL 702 Current issues in the Deaf world		NZSL 708 NZSL interpreting practicum experience II – Professional practice	
				TRIN 705 Advanced health interpreting (recommended) Or TRIN 708 Advanced legal interpreting	

1b) NZQA Translation and Interpreting Units

Interpreting	Translation
12462 Demonstrate knowledge of the ethics and role of the professional interpreter and/or translator	
12463 Prepare for an interpreting assignment	12464 Prepare for a translation assignment
	12465 Translate written or other recorded materials from one language into another language
	12466 Translate written or other recorded texts of a literary nature from one language into another language
12467 Apply management practices to the provision of interpreting and translation services	
12468 Interpret from Māori to English at ceremonial occasions	
12469 Interpret and translate for the media between English and New Zealand Sign Language	
12470 Interpret in conference settings	
12471 Interpret in community settings	
12472 Demonstrate knowledge of the theory and techniques of interpreting and/or translating	
12473 Interpret in court and legal settings	
12474 Interpret in health care settings requiring specialised knowledge	

1c) NAATI Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

(from Foote, 2016, p. 8)

	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel Reliable Willing-to-learn Objective Respectful Collaborative Self-reflective Problem-solving Confident
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skill Create and maintain a knowledge bank	
Technological Competency	Interpreting technology knowledge	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICT) skill	
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge Institution-specific knowledge		
Transfer Competency	Interpreting modes knowledge	Discourse analysis skill Discourse management skill Meaning transfer Memory skill Rhetorical skill	
	Interpreting standards knowledge	Self-assessment skill	
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of interpreting	Interpreting business skill Communication skill Interpersonal skill	
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Professional Ethics	



## Appendix 2: Competency standards for NZSL-English interpreting

This document describes the technical and professional competencies (skills, knowledge, and attributes) that NZSL-English interpreters need to work effectively in general community and legal contexts.

Competencies have been grouped into eight inter-related areas: transfer, language, intercultural, thematic, ethical, research, service provision, and technical. Each area is described in detail in this document.

The expected standards of performance for the eight competency areas are shown in a summary table. Reading down the table, the columns show the expected standards for three different categories of interpreter:

1. Interpreters **entering the workforce** after qualifying with the BA in NZSL-English interpreting or equivalent.
2. **Qualified and experienced interpreters** who are safe to work in most general community settings. These are the standards that an interpreter would be assessed against to achieve '**certified**' status if a registration system were in place. To achieve these performance standards, an interpreter will typically have had several years of experience, professional development and supervision after qualifying.
3. interpreters who are endorsed with **specialist competencies in legal settings**. It may take an already qualified and experienced interpreter several more years to undergo further professional development (including training, observations and supervision) to achieve these specialist competencies.

Specialist competencies may also be required for other settings or situations (e.g. mental health or education). This document includes only the legal context as a special setting, because the NZSL Act (2006) enables regulations to be set for competency standards for NZSL interpreters in legal proceedings.

The summary table also includes suggestions of typical domains (settings) and interpreting modes that each category of interpreter might be expected to work in.

Attributes that interpreters need to carry out their role effectively in all areas are listed in the final column in the table. Although they are difficult to measure, these attributes have been included because research<sup>1</sup> has shown that they are vital for interpreters to maintain and continue to improve their competency over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Bontempo, Karen and Jemina Napier. 2007. "Mind the Gap! A Skills Analysis of Sign Language Interpreters." *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter* 1(2):275–99.

Various overseas frameworks of interpreter competencies were reviewed in this project. The competency descriptors presented here are adapted with permission from the NAATI Certification System. NAATI<sup>2</sup> is the national certifying authority for translators and (spoken and sign language) interpreters in Australia.

Interviews with a reference group of stakeholders<sup>3</sup> provided perspectives on NZSL interpreting competencies with significant work experience after graduation. The reference group's feedback has been included in the descriptions of each competency area.

Other international interpreting standards<sup>4, 5</sup> have been cross-referenced to complement NAATI's own extensive literature review for their Knowledge, Skills and Attributes description. It should be noted that ongoing validation and review of the NAATI certification system in Australia may result in changes to their descriptors over time.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.naati.com.au/>

<sup>3</sup> The reference group included representatives from Deaf Aotearoa, interpreting agencies, the NZSL Interpreter training programme at AUT, interpreters with expertise in legal settings, trilingual interpreters, Māori Deaf community members, and Deaf interpreters. We also consulted with the Language Assistance Service Standards workstream manager and with a NAATI Auslan examiner and NAATI assessment developer.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ukstandards.org.uk>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.casli.org/national-interpreter-certification-exam-nic/nic-knowledge-exam-details/nic-role-delineation-study/>

	<b>1 Interpreter</b> <i>(qualified - entry into the profession - general community settings)</i>	<b>2 'Certified' interpreter</b> <i>(qualified and experienced – general community and conference/platform settings)</i>	<b>Legal specialism</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
<b>Transfer</b>	<p>Transfers <i>non-complex, non-specialised</i> messages from a source language into a target language using spoken or signed language to accurately reflect the meaning</p>	<p>Transfers <i>complex</i> messages (including domain-specific terms and jargon) from a source language into a target language using spoken, <i>written</i> or signed language to accurately reflect the meaning</p>	<p>Transfers <i>complex, specialised</i> messages <i>in the legal domain</i> from a source language into a target language using spoken, <i>written</i> or signed language to accurately reflect the meaning</p>	<p>These attributes are important across all competency areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reflective</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Willing to learn</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Resilient</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> <li>• Flexible (within role boundaries)</li> <li>• Reliable</li> <li>• Objective</li> <li>• Mature</li> <li>• Respectful</li> <li>• Empathetic</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<p>Comprehends and produces two languages (spoken or signed) in a variety of <i>non-complex</i> situations / contexts, appropriately using <i>non-complex and non-specialised</i> language and <i>commonly</i> used expressions</p>	<p>Comprehends and produces two languages (spoken or signed) in a variety of <i>complex</i> situations / contexts, appropriately using <i>complex</i> language and <i>commonly and uncommonly</i> used expressions, <i>including domain-specific terms and jargon</i></p>	<p>Comprehends and produces two languages (spoken or signed), appropriately using <i>specialised and complex</i> language, <i>including technical expressions and jargon used in the legal domain</i></p>	

<p><b>Intercultural</b></p>	<p>Understands how cultures and languages interact in the New Zealand context, identifies <i>significant</i> culturally-specific information in spoken or signed language; can apply this to the interpreting task</p>	<p>Understands <i>in detail</i> how cultures and languages interact in the New Zealand context, identifies <i>significant and nuanced</i> culturally-specific information in spoken, <i>written</i> or signed language; can apply this to the interpreting task <i>and account for its use</i></p>	<p>Understands <i>in detail</i> how cultures and languages interact in the New Zealand context <i>in the legal domain</i>, identifies <i>significant and nuanced</i> culturally-specific information in spoken, <i>written</i> or signed language; can apply this to the interpreting task <i>and account for its use</i></p>	
<p><b>Thematic</b></p>	<p>Knows about and understands a broad range of <i>non-complex, non-specialised</i> contexts, topics and current events  including where specialists in a domain speak or sign <i>with a non-specialist audience</i> <i>See typical domain and situation types</i></p>	<p>Knows about and understands a broad range of <i>complex</i> contexts, topics and current events  including where specialists in a domain speak or sign <i>with a non-specialist audience</i> <i>See typical domain and situation types</i></p>	<p>Knows about and understands <i>specialised legal</i> contexts, topics and relevant current events in the field <i>at an advanced level</i>;  <i>can interpret for diverse audiences, including specialists, in legal situations</i>  <i>See typical domain and situation types</i></p>	
<p><b>Ethical</b></p>	<p>Has full and detailed knowledge and understanding of the SLIANZ code of Ethics;  can apply this to situations in interpreting practice, client interactions and other professional activities</p>	<p>Has full and detailed knowledge and understanding of the SLIANZ code of Ethics;  can apply this to situations in interpreting practice, client interactions and other professional activities</p>	<p>Has full and detailed knowledge and understanding of the SLIANZ code of Ethics  <i>and the Ministry of Justice’s guidelines for interpreters</i>;  can apply this to situations in interpreting practice, client interactions and other professional activities</p>	



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Research</b></p>	<p>Can use <i>some</i> tools and methods to search for information;</p> <p>can extract and manage <i>non-complex, non-specialised</i> information from research</p> <p>and apply it to the interpreting process</p>	<p>Can use <i>a variety</i> of tools and methods to search for information</p> <p><i>including some specialist resources in a variety of domains;</i></p> <p>can extract and manage <i>complex</i> information from research</p> <p>and apply it to the interpreting process</p>	<p>Can use <i>a variety</i> of tools and methods to search for information,</p> <p><i>including highly specialised resources in the legal domain;</i></p> <p>can extract and manage <i>specialised and complex</i> information from research</p> <p>and apply it to the interpreting process</p>	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Service Provision</b></p>	<p>Operates in the interpreting industry;</p> <p>manages interactions with clients</p> <p>to provide services</p>	<p>Operates in the interpreting industry;</p> <p>manages interactions with clients <i>and other interpreters</i></p> <p>to provide services</p>	<p>Operates <i>as an integral member of the court;</i></p> <p>manages interactions with clients <i>and other interpreters</i></p> <p><i>to facilitate fair access to legal processes and services</i></p>	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Technological</b></p>	<p>Knows and can use <i>basic</i> technology required for interpreting processes</p> <p>e.g. the use of microphones</p>	<p>Knows and can use technology required for interpreting processes</p> <p>including video and onscreen interpreting, the use of microphones, and telephone interpreting</p>	<p>Knows and can use technology required for interpreting processes <i>in the legal domain</i></p> <p>including video interpreting and telephone interpreting</p>	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Typical Interpreting Modes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous (dialogue)</li> <li>• Simultaneous (monologue)</li> <li>• Consecutive (dialogue)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous (dialogue)</li> <li>• Simultaneous (monologue)</li> <li>• Consecutive (dialogue)</li> <li>• Sight translation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simultaneous (dialogue)</li> <li>• Simultaneous (monologue)</li> <li>• Consecutive (dialogue)</li> <li>• Sight translation</li> </ul>	

<p>Typical Domain and Situation Types</p>	<p>Dialogues in community interpreting settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>health</b> e.g. a general medical consultation</li> <li>• <b>legal</b> e.g. a witness describing an accident to a police officer</li> <li>• <b>community</b> e.g. registering a car at a government service desk</li> <li>• <b>education</b> e.g. a teacher-parent interview at a school</li> <li>• <b>social services</b> e.g. enquiry about parental payments at a government office</li> <li>• <b>financial</b> e.g. opening a bank account</li> <li>• <b>housing</b> e.g. a request for repair work</li> <li>• <b>business</b> e.g. customer purchasing a car</li> <li>• <b>employment</b> e.g. enquiry about jobs at an employment agency</li> <li>• <b>insurance</b> e.g. enquiry about car insurance with an insurance provider</li> <li>• <b>consumer affairs</b> e.g. complaint about a product</li> </ul>	<p>All situations listed in the first column, and dialogues, speeches and presentations in community interpreting settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>health</b> e.g. a clinician-patient consultation at a medical centre</li> <li>• <b>legal</b> e.g. a client seeking a solicitor’s advice</li> <li>• <b>community</b> e.g. a speech at a community consultation meeting</li> <li>• <b>education</b> e.g. during school lessons</li> <li>• <b>social services</b> e.g. discussion about alleged welfare fraud</li> <li>• <b>financial</b> e.g. a client applying for a loan</li> <li>• <b>housing</b> e.g. dispute at a tenancy tribunal</li> <li>• <b>business</b> e.g. at a business meeting</li> <li>• <b>employment</b> e.g. dispute about breach of employment contract</li> <li>• <b>insurance</b> e.g. making an insurance claim</li> <li>• <b>consumer affairs</b> e.g. enquiry about consumer rights</li> </ul> <p>Presentations and interaction at conferences and professional meetings. Domains may include e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>technology</b></li> <li>• <b>government policy and services</b></li> <li>• <b>media interpreting</b></li> </ul>	<p>Dialogues and presentations in courts and tribunals, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examination of witnesses</li> <li>• police summary of facts</li> <li>• sentencing</li> <li>• instructions to jury</li> <li>• victim impact statements</li> </ul> <p>including discourse between and aimed at experts in the legal field, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expert witness testimony</li> <li>• judges’ judgement</li> <li>• colloquy between judge and lawyer during court proceedings</li> <li>• discussions between legal experts</li> </ul> <p>Sub-domains can include criminal and civil court cases, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contract</li> <li>• commercial</li> <li>• consumer</li> <li>• family</li> <li>• refugee and immigration</li> <li>• personal injury</li> <li>• worker’s compensation insurance</li> <li>• real estate law</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	
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## Transfer competency

### Definition

Transfer is the core of the interpreter's role. This competency area refers to the knowledge and skills required to reproduce messages using a different language, with little or no delay, accurately reflecting the meaning of the original message. Transfer competency includes matching the register and style in which a message was delivered, and selecting a target variety or style best understood by deaf sign language users in the situation. Transfer happens in different interpreting modes (e.g. simultaneous, consecutive) and most often between spoken and signed messages, although sight translation of written texts may also be required.

### Knowledge, skills and attributes

Transfer competency involves knowledge and skills in:

- Interpreting modes
- Discourse analysis
- Discourse management
- Meaning transfer
- Memory
- Rhetorical skill
- Self assessment

Related: Language competency, Thematic competency, Attributes (especially important attributes are confidence and self-reflection).

### Interpreting modes

The interpreter understands and is able to select and apply a mode of interpreting that is appropriate to the situation.

The main interpreting modes are:

- Simultaneous: interpreting at the same time as the speaker/signer
- Consecutive: interpreting when the speaker/signer pauses or has finished
- Multi-mode: interpreting involving written text and spoken/signed text; for example, sight translation of a written document into NZSL, interpreting a frozen text being read out, or providing a written target text interpreted from a signed recording.

Which mode is appropriate may depend on the number of participants, the language profile of the participants, whether the situation is a monologue or a dialogue, and where participants are positioned.

Each mode can be applied in face-to-face or remote interpreting (i.e. when one or more participants, including the interpreter themselves, are in different locations from each other). The interpreter will be able to use the required technology to enable remote

interpreting, and will adapt the interpreting mode as required. Specific training in workplace technology and protocols may be required for interpreters working as part of the Video Interpreting Service (NZVIS). Examples of remote interpreting include meetings via video conferencing software; video conferencing in a courtroom to allow parties to appear from a prison facility; lectures as part of online education; or interpreting a telephone call.

### **Discourse analysis**

The interpreter accurately conveys the meaning intended by all participants in the setting.

This requires understanding the overall logical flow of what is being said / signed, knowledge of the setting (see ***thematic competency***), the typical discourse features of a setting (e.g. a Work and Income office, a business setting, a conference or a courtroom) and the discourse strategies and language that participants are using to achieve their goals (e.g. narrative, expository or persuasive styles).

### **Discourse management**

The interpreter facilitates communication and intervenes when communication breaks down by coordinating the interaction between participants as needed.

This may involve, for example:

- establishing protocols with participants for efficient interaction, e.g. in meetings, asking participants to raise their hand to indicate they want to speak / sign
- negotiate effective placement of the interpreter with other participants in the situation
- selecting the appropriate mode of interpreting
- in meetings, identifying when there is a change of speaker / signer
- ensuring that the participants have clear information of the role of the interpreter
- interrupting the flow of the interaction if needed to allow time for the interpreter to completely understand and interpret the message
- managing overlapping inputs
- seeking clarification and informing the other party that this is happening
- back-channelling where appropriate
- responding to asides or communication directed at the interpreter rather than the other participant(s)
- being prepared and able to react to requests which are outside the scope of the interpreter's role
- code-switching, in situations where the interpreter must transfer messages in both language directions to facilitate communication between two or more parties. Code-switching must happen promptly and without cross-language interference.

Embedded in these activities is total familiarity with the professional ethics underpinning the profession.

## Meaning transfer

The interpreter transfers the meaning of the message (factual information, concepts, and opinions) from the source language into the target language, using appropriate terminology, grammatical features, style and register (style of delivery, degree of formality, tone of the language, nuances and subtleties of meaning). The interpreter selects a target variety or style best understood by deaf sign language users in the situation. The interpreter pays attention to the flow and quality of the target language message, maintaining an appropriate pace. The meaning is transferred as completely as possible given the differences between source and target language structures, styles and cultural differences.

To achieve meaning transfer, interpreters use all of their competencies.

## Memory skill

The interpreter is able to store, retain and recall the inputs of the interaction to convert them into interpreted messages.

Different settings make different demands on the interpreter's memory, depending on the length of the utterances and whether information is interpreted at the same time as new input is received. Interpreters need to develop good memory skills and use strategies such as taking notes and using their general and subject knowledge (see **Thematic competency**) to retain information while enabling participants to maintain normal speech patterns as much as possible.

## Rhetorical skill

The interpreter conveys their messages using rhetorical and public speaking techniques appropriate to the specific setting. This can include anything from personal and private to large and public settings.

The interpreter must have appropriate productive language skills (see **Language Competency**).

The interpreter must be able to sign and speak in a way that is easily seen and heard by their audience. They must be able to:

- maintain an appropriate appearance to ensure maximum visibility and minimise distraction (including monotone clothing, make-up and grooming)
- use appropriate stance, size and pace of signing
- sustain the use of their voice for long periods
- project their voice
- use clear pronunciation / articulation and delivery
- use appropriate tone and volume

**Self-assessment skill**

The interpreter reflects on, reviews, and evaluates their own interpreting performance.

Reflection should include feedback and evaluation from others where possible, but in many situations, other participants are not in a position to evaluate the quality of the interpreting performance. Self-reflection is therefore an important part of the interpreter's skill.

The interpreter uses a range of strategies and methods to analyse the effectiveness of their interpretation and possible consequences of the actions they took. This requires knowledge of criteria and expected standards against which the interpreting performance can be measured.

## Language competency

### Definition

The Language competency area refers to in-depth knowledge of two or more languages (the interpreter's working languages) and skill in using these languages to interpret effectively.

Interpreters require a high level of language competency. By itself, proficiency in the interpreter's working languages is not sufficient. Instead, the interpreter's language competency is measured indirectly by the success of meaning transfer (see **Transfer competency**).

Interpreters have to be able to understand the intent of the source language and the way language is used to express meaning. They apply this knowledge in their own comprehension and production of their working languages to interpret effectively.

### Knowledge, skills and attributes

- Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Grammar knowledge
- Idiomatic knowledge
- Language trends knowledge

Related: **Rhetorical skill** – see Transfer competency

### Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer

The interpreter is able to immediately comprehend the source language and promptly and accurately reproduce its meaning in the target language, within the limits of the language pair.

The interpreter uses their language proficiency to prepare for interpreting assignments and sight translation.

To interpret and prepare effectively, language proficiency in spoken/signed and written modes is required. Other modes (e.g. Deafblind communication, fingerspelling) may also be required.

### Language knowledge

The interpreter has in-depth knowledge of the structure, use and variation in the languages in which they interpret. This knowledge is a foundation for the interpreter's language competency.

Language knowledge includes **Vocabulary knowledge, Grammar knowledge** and **Idiomatic knowledge**, including:

- register and style used, such as different levels of formality or informality, and use of language in different institutional settings
  - vocabulary, including idioms / cultural terms, collocations, colloquialisms, vulgar utterances, technical terms and jargon, and loan words / signs
  - syntax and grammatical structures, including the use of space and non-manual features in NZSL
  - articulation of speech and signs
  - discourse and rhetorical devices, such as time referencing, metaphor, conversational organisation
- 
- word and language usage appropriate to audience and context pragmatics, that is how utterances or signs are used to achieve particular communicative goals, e.g. to gain agreement, express disagreement or avoidance, or signal understanding
  - Standard language varieties, regional and age-related varieties and dialects
  - accents
  - contact sign language features, including the use of fingerspelling, mouthing, signing styles that follow English grammatical features, and codeswitching
  - paralinguistic features including intonation, pitch, rhythm, non-manual features, and gesture

Working in Māori settings where Te Reo Māori is predominantly used throughout the interaction (e.g. hui on a marae; tangihanga) requires interpreters to have the above language competence for Te Reo Māori as well as having Māori cultural competence. However, as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Reo Māori is also increasingly commonly used in (formal) public settings (e.g. government consultation meetings, opening and closing a conference, public celebrations and commemorations, school assemblies or graduations). All interpreters therefore need to be familiar with Māori vocabulary and phrases in common use throughout New Zealand (including greetings, place names, iwi names, prominent Māori institutional names etc.) and with the structure of common Māori discourse forms (e.g. pepeha, mihimihi, karakia, waiata).

### **Language trends knowledge**

The interpreter must keep up with changes in language usage and changes that may affect different target audiences in different ways. It also includes changes in the use of lexicon and grammar over time and between generations, which are especially rapid in NZSL.



## Intercultural competency

### Definition

Intercultural competency refers to the knowledge and skills that the interpreter needs to identify culture-specific information and appropriately reflect this in the target language. Interpreters deal with clients in a culturally appropriate manner, observing the Code of Ethics core values of respect and non-discrimination. This includes awareness of how sociocultural diversity and power relationships between majority and minority cultures can impact on the interpreting assignment.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

- Cultural, historical and political knowledge
- Sociolinguistic skill

Related: **Thematic competency; Ethical competency (core values)**

#### Cultural, historical and political knowledge

The interpreter has knowledge of current and past events, systems, geopolitical and other situations (see also **Thematic competency**) and of behaviours, norms, values, beliefs and social roles that are specific to the cultures of the source language and the target language. In Aotearoa New Zealand, basic awareness of tikanga Māori is required for all interpreters. The interpreter must also be familiar with changes and developments in culturally-specific subjects.

These knowledge areas are usually acquired through direct experience and/or studies of a culture and allow the interpreter to identify culturally-specific references in the source language and to appropriately express them in the target language.

Legislation relevant to interpreting in New Zealand society includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2008) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

#### Sociolinguistic skill

The interpreter understands how different sections of society interact and vary in their use of language.

The interpreter identifies how a culture, its customs, norms, values and beliefs are reflected and expressed in the source language, and how they can be expressed in the target language to make them appropriate for the relevant culture.

Sociolinguistic skills include:

- recognising form, function and meaning in language variations that are characteristic of social categories (e.g. age, educational background, occupation, institutional role, gender, ethnic background, class)
- recognising how multiple social characteristics may interact (intersectionality of identity)

- identifying distinctive linguistic forms from or about social groups that carry some form of meaning
- identifying cultural bias, presuppositions, references, power dynamics and stereotypes.

The interpreter has to be intimately familiar with the cultures of their clients. Although the interpreter is not a representative of any one culture, they should be sensitive to the possible impact their own social identity may have on relationships in the interpreting setting, especially with regard to power imbalances between members of a majority and a minority culture.

Where necessary, and with the consent of the participants, the interpreter is able to convey contextual norms and expectations of a setting to their clients.

## Thematic competency

### Definition

Thematic competency refers to the kind of knowledge interpreters need to understand the context and content of the interpreting assignment. This includes general knowledge and knowledge about current events as well as knowledge about the subject matter they are interpreting and about the setting, audience, and participants in the assignment.

Thematic competency is mostly developed by preparation before an assignment. This may involve reading materials and briefing notes provided or carrying out other research (see **Research competency**). For many assignments, the amount of information available to prepare with is very limited. In those situations, interpreters rely on their prior knowledge of the subject matter, institutional procedures and likely scenarios to anticipate issues that may come up.

Some interpreters may have particular expertise in some areas, (e.g. law or health) through formal study or significant experience. How much prior knowledge is required depends on the nature of the interpreting assignment, the mode of interpreting, and whether it will be possible to stop the participants to ask for clarification.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

- General knowledge
- Current events knowledge
- Subject-matter specific knowledge
- Setting-specific knowledge

Related: **Language Competency; Intercultural Competency; Research Competency**

#### General knowledge

The interpreter has a high level of general knowledge in a variety of subject areas.

In any interpreting situation, participants may refer to topics that are not directly related to the specific context. A high level of general knowledge helps the interpreter to understand these references and interpret their meaning.

#### Current events knowledge

The interpreter keeps up to date with current events, including local, national and international news, and events relevant to the communities in which the interpreter works.

#### Subject-matter specific knowledge

The interpreter has knowledge about the professional fields in which they interpret, including common topics and language use typical of the subject.

Interpreters cannot be expected to be experts in all subjects for which they interpret, but they should build their knowledge around a broad range of subjects and prepare appropriately for assignments where the subject matter is known.

### **Setting-specific knowledge**

The interpreter has knowledge of the specific institutional setting of the interpreting assignment.

NZSL interpreters typically work in a broad range of settings, including health and counselling, social services, legal and police settings, financial and business affairs, education, employment, religious services, conferences, public speeches and lectures, public events and celebrations, general social life, professional meetings, media, and theatre. These institutional settings vary widely in their structure, roles and hierarchies, practices, protocols, terminology and communication dynamics. Interpreters must have a good understanding of these factors to interpret effectively.

## Ethical competency

### Definition

As professionals, interpreters are expected to behave ethically while they are interpreting, in interactions with clients and in their communities, and in other professional activities. Guidelines for ethical behaviour are provided in the Sign Language Interpreters' Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. NZSL interpreters need to know and understand these Codes in detail and be able to apply this knowledge to their decision-making in real-life situations, even under challenging circumstances.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

Ethical competency is embedded in all other competencies.

### Code of Ethics

The SLIANZ Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct can be found on:

<https://slianz.org.nz/working-with-interpreters/code-of-ethics-code-of-conduct/>

Core Values are:

- Respect: for consumers and other professionals, including being responsive to the diversity of language styles and preferences of Deaf consumers
- Integrity: honesty, consistency and trustworthiness
- Non-discrimination: fair, equal treatment of all consumers and a non-judgmental attitude in providing service.

The Code of Ethics describes these General Principles:

- Professional Conduct
- Confidentiality
- Competence
- Accuracy
- Impartiality
- Clarity of Role Boundaries
- Professional Development

NZSL Interpreters who are not members of SLIANZ can instead choose to become members of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) and follow the NZSTI Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. With some minor wording and ordering differences, the two professional organisations' Codes are equivalent.

## Research competency

### Definition

Research competency refers to the interpreter's ability to use different tools and methods to identify relevant information and terms in preparation for an interpreting assignment, and to maintain and develop professional skills (for example, understanding academic research on interpreting).

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

- Information gathering tools and methods
- Terminology and information research skills
- Create and maintain a knowledge bank

Related: **Technological Competency, Thematic Competency, Transfer Competency**

### Information gathering tools and methods

The interpreter is familiar with a range of tools and methods to gather information, and understands their strengths and limitations. The interpreter selects the most appropriate tools and methods to gather information relevant to a specific assignment.

Tools and methods include: online searches, social media, consultations with experts in a particular field or professional colleagues, consulting public information and academic texts about the subject, reading and analysing preparation materials and briefing notes provided by clients, checking preferred terminology with clients, using dictionaries and other specialist language resources (e.g. technical glossaries)

### Terminology and information research skills

The interpreter carries out research to prepare for an interpreting assignment and to maintain and develop their professional skills.

Research skills include knowing how to extract and process relevant information for a given task (e.g. themes, terms, phrases, recorded audio and video information), and knowing how to evaluate the reliability of information and sources. Technological skills are also needed to use online sources of information (see **Technological competency**).

Before an assignment, the interpreter uses efficient strategies to search for terms, expressions, or information about a specific area. This helps them to understand the subject area, to choose appropriate terms and expressions in the source and target languages, and to decide on strategies to deal with situations where no technical NZSL terms exist in the subject area (e.g. negotiate temporary coinages with the Deaf client) (see **Thematic competency** and **Transfer competency**).

After an assignment, the interpreter evaluates their performance and follows up on gaps in their knowledge and areas for improvement. This may include technical or culture-specific situations and themes.

The interpreter stays up to date with research regarding interpreters' professional practice and role and is able to apply research findings in their work.

### **Create and maintain a knowledge bank**

The interpreter researches, collects, and stores information and terminology in a form that can be accessed quickly when needed.

This includes organising and updating information and terms into 'banks', e.g. collections of files, notebooks, spreadsheets, databases, glossaries, or reference lists. Existing digital resources can also be used, for example online dictionaries and community glossaries (e.g. <https://nzsl.nz>, <https://nzslshare.nz> )

## Service provision competency

### Definition

This competency covers the knowledge and skills needed to provide interpreting services to clients and to maintain good business relationships with clients and others in the interpreting industry.

Interpreters need business, communication, and interpersonal skills and knowledge to handle the entire interpreting assignment and administration. This covers everything from first contact with a possible client or agency, quoting, preparing, carrying out the interpreting assignment, completing it and following up.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

- Knowledge of the business of interpreting
- Interpreting business skill
- Communication skill
- Interpersonal skill

Related: **Attributes, Intercultural competency, Ethical competency, Technological competency**

#### Knowledge of the business of interpreting

The interpreter understands how the NZSL interpreting services industry operates and is aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities.

The interpreter needs knowledge of the interpreting industry and administrative processes, including processes used by agencies, employers, and direct clients. This includes knowing how the interpreter will quote for an assignment, how they will receive preparation material or briefing, confirmation of details for the interpreting assignment, signoff, invoicing and feedback after an assignment. Throughout these processes, the interpreter needs to relate effectively to all other participants and carry out their services to the expected standard.

The interpreter needs to be aware of the safety and organisational guidelines and legal requirements in which the service is provided. This includes personal safety requirements when carrying out interpreting assignments, and knowing what support is available for their physical, emotional and personal wellbeing and how they can access this support.

Relevant legislation in New Zealand includes:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Fair Trading Act 1986
- Consumer Guarantees Act 1993
- Privacy Act 2020
- Any subsequent amendments of these Acts.



### **Interpreting business skill**

The interpreter follows regulatory, legal and ethical requirements in managing administrative processes such as record keeping, as well as maintaining a professional online profile, marketing, negotiation, networking, time management, contract management, and determining the value of the services provided.

### **Communication skill**

The interpreter communicates clearly with clients (agencies or direct end users), colleagues and others to provide their interpreting service.

Language proficiency in the interpreter's working languages (see **Language Competency**) is required not only to interpret, but also for communication about the service provision. Interpreters need to have communication skills to:

- understand and clarify the briefing for assignments from clients or agencies
- negotiate the assignment with any parties involved to determine scheduling of assignments, working conditions and contracts
- discuss arrangements for teamed assignments with colleague interpreters
- discuss and ask for feedback on the interpreting process, outcomes and potential difficulties
- convey the decision to accept or decline an assignment in a professional and timely manner
- use client-provided information and establish its key features
- justify their interpreting choices and decisions
- introduce themselves
- explain their role as an interpreter.

Interpreters need to be able to use the appropriate communication tools to provide their service, for example email, text messaging / SMS, video messaging and videoconferencing apps, and booking applications (see **Technological Competency**).

### **Interpersonal skill**

The interpreter has interpersonal skills required to:

- relate to people from a range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and at different levels in organisational hierarchies
- where necessary, work effectively as part of a team of interpreters
- maintain ethical practice in the face of opposition, conflict, professional challenges and limited resources.

## Technological competency

### Definition

This competency refers to the skills and knowledge about information and communication technology (ICT) that the interpreter needs to prepare for and provide interpreting services. This includes equipment and hardware, internet-based resources, and software.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

- Interpreting technology knowledge
- Interpreting through communication media
- Information and Communication Technology (ITC) skill

Related: **Transfer competency, Research competency, Service provision competency**

### Interpreting technology knowledge

The Interpreter has knowledge of information and communication technology and equipment that is relevant for their work, such as software, hardware, the Internet, audio and video equipment; and their suitability, possible uses and limitations in different interpreting settings.

### Interpreting through communication media

The interpreter knows how to use the required technology and makes adjustments to interpret through communication media.

Interpreting through communication media is now a standard form of work for many interpreters. This covers working through videoconference software, telephone interpreting, video remote interpreting, on- screen interpreting, use of portable video and audio equipment (e.g. microphones, video cameras), and emerging areas of interpreting in multimedia contexts. This also refers to the increasing use of technology by the participants in interpreted situations, such as the use of PowerPoint and audio-visual aids in spoken or signed presentations, and remote participation by one or more participants, e.g. via Skype or Zoom or livestream.

The interpreter needs to prepare for using the necessary technology and equipment, including (where appropriate) setting up and checking the equipment before the interpreting assignment begins, monitoring audibility and visibility with participants, and trouble-shooting when there is a technical problem; or asking for assistance from the relevant person/s in the setting.

The interpreter may need to make adjustments to the way they interpret to maximise visibility, audibility, and effective interaction between participants (see **Transfer competency**).

**ICT skill**

The interpreter uses information and communication technology and manages electronic data in providing interpreting services.

This includes using technology (Internet, software and hardware) to help prepare for interpreting assignments and carry out follow-up evaluation and research (see **Research competency**), and to communicate with clients, employers, agencies, colleagues and others before and after the interpreting assignment (see **Service provision**).

## Legal specialist competencies

### Definition

*Note: these draft legal competency descriptions are based on existing guidelines from the NZ Ministry of Justice, best practice guidelines from the United States, the UK and Australia, and comments from the reference group. The NAATI framework has separate tests and training prerequisites for legal interpreters, but does not describe their specific competencies separately.*

Interpreters in legal settings require specialised knowledge and higher skill levels in all the competency areas. Typical situations that demand this additional level of competency are interactions in courts and tribunals, which cover a wide range of subjects (some highly technical) and discourse types, and which involve participants from a large variety of cultural backgrounds and language use (including idiosyncratic language use).

To achieve the legal competencies, it is expected that the interpreter:

- has already met the 'certified' (qualified and experienced) Interpreter competency level
- has had further specialised professional development and/or training, including observations of a variety of court and tribunal settings
- has had further significant work experience, including supervised work experience in legal settings.

### Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

Interpreters in legal settings are expected to have all the knowledge, skills and attributes that have previously been described in this document. Here we note how these generic competencies apply to legal settings.

#### Attributes

In legal settings it is especially important that the interpreter is assertive, adaptable and able to remain calm under pressure.

#### Transfer

Interpreters in legal settings need to have a high level of command of interpreting techniques and modes so that they can apply the mode that is most appropriate to the situation.

When there is a large mismatch between the formal language used in court and the language used by the client (especially when the client has limited fluency in either signed or spoken language or has idiosyncratic language use), the consecutive mode and/or supplementary communication strategies may be more appropriate to allow for meaning to be transferred accurately.

Accuracy of meaning transfer is crucial in legal settings, and the interpreter needs to be especially skilled in accurately reflecting the intent and 'character' of participants.

Discourse management in legal settings includes:

- asking for a statement to be repeated, rephrased, or explained if it is unclear
- immediately informing the court or tribunal and parties if:
  - the interpreter has made a mistake.
  - the interpreter needs to have a conversation with their client to clarify something
  - The interpreter cannot interpret a statement or question accurately because of cultural or linguistic differences between the two languages. If possible, the interpreter should help the lawyer, representative, party, or presiding officer to re-phrase the statement or question so it can be accurately interpreted.

In courts or tribunals, the interpreter must place themselves where they can be clearly seen and heard by all participants.

### **Language**

Interpreters in legal settings need to be highly competent in both languages and understand how these languages are used in the legal domain. This includes technical expressions and jargon used in the legal domain, forms of address, and common discourse and rhetorical devices.

Interpreters also need metalinguistic awareness to be able to comment succinctly on language use (for example, when grammatical differences between the two languages mean that the interpreter won't be able to achieve the same rhetorical effect without major changes to the message).

NZSL interpreters in legal settings need to be familiar with a wide range of signing styles.

### **Intercultural**

The interpreter has to have extensive experience interacting with Deaf community members from different social and cultural backgrounds, since they are likely to encounter an especially wide range of clients in legal settings.

The interpreter has to be aware of the power dynamics in court and legal settings and may, with permission, need to convey the contextual norms and expectations of the legal setting to the client.

### **Thematic**

Interpreters in legal settings need to have comprehensive knowledge of:

- The NZ court and legal systems
- Court and legal interpreter protocol, including court procedures and the roles and hierarchies of court officers and others involved in the court setting
- Specialised legal terminology

The interpreter also needs to understand their role in legal settings as an integral member of the court.

### **Ethical**

Interpreters in legal settings need full knowledge and understanding of the SLIANZ Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct as they apply to the legal domain. In addition, the Ministry of Justice *Guidelines for Interpreters* highlight expected ethics and conduct, including:

- Accuracy
- ability to judge your own competency and withdrawing if needed
- impartiality
- declaring conflicts of interest
- confidentiality
- information acquired while working not to be used for personal gain
- not accepting gifts or gratuities
- appropriate dress standard
- punctuality

### **Research**

Research may include specialised legal resources and documents about the case (e.g. a copy of the charges, summary of facts, witness statements, and expert witness briefs).

### **Service provision**

The interpreter understands that they operate as an integral member of the court. When working in courts and tribunal, they act strictly in the interests of that court or tribunal and this duty overrides any duty to the parties in a case.

The interpreter is familiar with the court / tribunal's sign-off and invoicing processes, and knows how they will receive preparation material or briefing

In a small community, there is a high chance that interpreters will have had some or contact with parties or other persons connected to legal cases, through their work or through personal involvement in the community. The interpreter must declare any conflicts of interest or situations where there may be a perceived conflict of interest (e.g. when interpreting for a hearing where the interpreter or their business could financially benefit from the outcome).

In legal settings, interpreters need strong communication skills and interpersonal skills to work as part of a team with other court officials and with other interpreters, and interact with other parties in the setting. They need to be confident in approaching members of the court at all levels of the hierarchy when needed.

### **Technological**

The interpreter knows how to use technical equipment used in the courtroom, including microphones and video cameras, and can interpret via telephone or video remote interpreting when needed (e.g. when a client in custody is not present in the court room but is following proceedings remotely).