

Court Interpreter Program Frequently Asked Questions

Judicial Council of California

Distinction Between Certified and Registered California Court Interpreters

The Judicial Council of California recognizes two categories of court interpreters: certified and registered. Certification is required for interpreters of the following languages: **Arabic, Armenian (Eastern), Cantonese, Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Tagalog), Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi (India), Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.** Individuals seeking certification in these languages must successfully complete the Bilingual Interpreting Exam when it is available.

For languages not listed above, interpreters are classified as registered. To obtain registered status, candidates must pass a two-part Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE), which assesses their ability to communicate effectively in both English and the target language.

Which examinations must candidates complete to qualify as certified or registered court interpreters

Required Elements	Certified	Registered
Written Exam	√	√
Oral Proficiency Exam (English)	Optional	√
Oral Proficiency Exam (Non-English Language)	Optional	√
Bilingual Interpreting Exam	√	Not available

The Bilingual Interpreting Exam is formerly referred to as the “Oral Exam” or the “Oral Interpreting Exam.”

Is it possible to obtain registered interpreter status in a certified language?

No, candidates cannot achieve registered interpreter status in any of the following certified languages: **Arabic, Armenian (Eastern), Cantonese, Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Tagalog), Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi (India), Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.** Oral Proficiency Exams do not confer registered status for these languages. Individuals seeking to interpret in these languages must fulfill all requirements for certification as previously outlined.

Prometric administers court interpreter certification exams in the following languages: **Arabic, Armenian (Eastern), Cantonese, Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Tagalog), Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi (India), Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.**

Individuals seeking qualification to interpret in a certified language are required to complete the certification examination when it is offered.

What is the purpose of the OPE exam?

The Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) is designed to evaluate a candidate’s ability to communicate effectively in the specific language being tested. It does not measure interpreting skills.

Content of the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE)

The Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) is a 30-minute telephone-based assessment conducted between the candidate and an American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) trained and certified interviewer. The exam is administered at a proctored test center and is structured into four main components:

1. **Warm-up:** An initial conversation to help the candidate become comfortable and set the tone for the assessment.
2. **Level Checks:** The interviewer explores the candidate's ability to communicate at various levels of complexity.
3. **Probes:** Targeted questions designed to further assess the candidate's speaking proficiency in the tested language.
4. **Wind Down:** A concluding segment to wrap up the assessment.

During the exam, the interviewer engages the candidate in discussions on topics of interest and evaluates their functional ability to communicate in the specific language. It is important to note that the OPE measures language proficiency and does not assess interpreting skills.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.prometric.com/exams/cacourtint>

What does the Bilingual Interpreting Exam assess

The Bilingual Interpreting Exam evaluates a candidate's interpreting proficiency across several distinct modes:

- **Sight Translation – English to Foreign Language:**
Candidates are required to orally interpret a document written in English into the target foreign language. Six minutes are allotted for review and completion of this task.
- **Sight Translation – Foreign Language to English:**
Candidates must orally interpret a document written in the foreign language into English. Six minutes are provided for review and completion.
- **Consecutive Interpretation:**
This section involves interpreting a simulated trial scenario, featuring an English-speaking attorney and a witness who speaks the foreign language. At least 22 minutes are allocated for this portion.
- **Simultaneous Interpretation:**
Candidates interpret English-language proceedings delivered at approximately 120 words per minute. Seven minutes are allotted to complete this segment.

This comprehensive assessment is designed to ensure interpreters possess the necessary skills to perform effectively in a variety of courtroom settings.

Eligibility Period for the Bilingual Interpreting Exam in Certified Languages

To be eligible for the Bilingual Interpreting Exam in certified languages, candidates must first complete and pass the Written Exam. Effective January 1, 2018, all Written Exams, whether previously taken or taken moving forward—remain valid for six years. Upon passing the Written Exam, candidates are allowed up to four attempts to successfully complete the Bilingual Interpreting Exam. There is no time limit for completing these four attempts, and candidates may take the Bilingual Interpreting Exam in a particular language once during any exam cycle. If a candidate does not pass the Bilingual Interpreting Exam within four attempts, they must retake and pass the English-only Written Exam before becoming eligible to attempt the Bilingual Interpreting Exam again.

When is the next Bilingual Interpreting Exam scheduled

The Bilingual Interpreting Exam is typically offered twice per year (Spring and Summer/Fall) on predetermined dates. For the most up-to-date schedule and registration information, please visit the official Prometric website: <https://www.prometric.com/exams/cabint>