ENGLISH-SPANISH / SPANISH ENGLISH
LEGAL TRANSLATION TEST

Who Can Take the Test?

The duties set forth in the job specification for staff court interpreters includes translation. When someone is hired as a staff court interpreter, he or she is required to take the test in the early months of employment. Staff court interpreters may translate documents only after having passed this test and being approved. Candidates who pass both parts of the test are approved to translate in either direction, from English or from Spanish. However, some candidates pass only one part of the test, in which case they are then approved only to translate in the direction of the part that was passed (for example, if a candidate passes only the Spanish-to-English part, that candidate is approved to translate from Spanish but not from English.

What Does the Test Consist of?

The test consists of two one-page written documents, one in each language. Each document is a fairly representative document that a staff court interpreter could be asked to translate.

How Is the Test Administered?

The test is proctored by vicinage personnel according to instructions provided by the Language Services Section. The interpreter's supervisor schedules the test in advance so the candidate knows when it will be and has time to prepare for it. A set of instructions and background information is provided to the candidate in advance. Candidates have one hour to complete the test and may bring and use any dictionaries or other written reference materials of their own choosing.

How Is the Test Graded?

The test is graded by marking every error. The scoring process is structured according to two major sets of criteria.

1. <u>Semantic Precision</u> focuses on the candidate's errors in meaning. Six types of such errors are scored:
    a. *Flat wrong, major effect*: These are major errors in translating substance that have the potential or probability of leading the reader of the translation to misunderstand the document in a significant way, e.g., leading to decisions that would be harmful to a litigant.
    b. *Flat wrong, minor effect*: These are errors in translating substance that have limited or no impact on the overall understanding and decisions that a customer reading the translation might make.
    c. *Partially wrong.* These are errors that are partly but not completely right.
    d. Semantic additions, This counts anything that the candidate adds to the document that was not in the source document.
    e. Semantic deletions. This counts elements in the source document that are omitted in the translation.
    f. Register. This refers to situations when the candidate substantially lowers or raises the register of the source document.

2. <u>Mechanics</u> evaluates the candidate's basic language skills in three aspects:
   a. Spelling. This includes not only whether all of the letters are correct, but also whether diacritical marks are used appropriately.
   b. Grammar. This focuses on the standard issues such as subject/verb agreement, adjective/noun agreement (both in number and gender), etc.
   c. Style). This is a measure of wording that strikes the persons grading the test as awkward or unnatural, words or combinations of words that an educated native speaker of the language would be very unlikely write and would not sound right to a native speaker reading the document.

Each of the nine scoring criteria is weighted, ranging from .5 for Spelling to 3.0 for Flat wrong, major effect. The weights are assigned based on an assessment of the comparative import of each criterion on the effect the translation would have on a reader of the document. Attached is a sample of the form by which results are transmitted to candidates, which provides the weighting for all of the scoring criteria.

A perfect score with no errors would be 0. The worst possible score is 100 (after that, errors are not counted!). The scores are *not* percentages; they are the actual weighted score: number of errors x weight, all criteria in a subcategory added together.

If the same mistake occurs more than once, only the first occurrence is counted in the scoring. For example, if the same word is misspelled the same way twice, that counts as only one spelling error.

The persons grading the test keep a reference document to ensure consistent grading practices over time. It includes examples of how specific errors are considered, which is especially important for borderline renderings. This promotes reliability in scoring from examinee to exminee.

What Score Is Required to Pass?
In order to pass, a candidate may accumulate no more than 12 points in the semantic precision category. Mechanics scores are also considered, but in relationship to scores in the meaning category. The fewer mistakes there are in semantic precision, the more mistakes in mechanics are permitted. The following ratios are used to determine outcomes: Semantic precision scores followed by corresponding ranges of mechanics scores: 10-12/0-10; 7-9/11-15; 4-6/16-20; 0-3/21-25.

Who Grades the Test and What Are Their Qualifications?
Each test is graded by a team of two professional translators. Each one is required to have the following credentials:
   1. ATA certification in both directions;
   2. Certification as a Spanish court interpreter by the AOUSC.

At least one of the raters must also have a Masters Degree in Spanish translation.

All persons who grade the test have been trained in rating the exam. They must agree on everything that they believe is a mistake as well as on the kind of mistake each error is (per the nine criteria identified below).

RESULTS OF THE

SPANISH LEGAL TRANSLATION EXAMINATION

Examinee's Name:

Date exam taken:

A. Spanish to English

CRITERIA	# OF ERRORS	WEIGHT	SCORE
MEANING			
Flat wrong: Major effect (A)		3	
Flat wrong: Minor effect (B)		2	
Partially Wrong (C)		1	
Semantic Additions (D)		1	
Semantic Deletions (E)		1	
Register (F)		1	
TOTAL			
WRITING			
Spelling (G)		.5	
Grammar (H)		2	
Style (I)		1	
TOTAL			

Result: Pass   Fail

In order to pass, a candidate must accumulate no more than 12 points in the meaning category. Writing scores are also considered, but in relationship to scores in the meaning category. The fewer mistakes there are in meaning, the more writing mistakes that are permitted, as illustrated by the following ratios (meaning scores followed by corresponding ranges of writing scores): 10-12/0-10; 7-9/11-15; 4-6/16-20; 0-3/21-25.

B. English to Spanish

CRITERIA	# OF ERRORS	WEIGHT	SCORE
MEANING			
Flat wrong: Major effect (A)		3	
Flat wrong: Minor effect (B)		2	
Partially Wrong (C)		1	
Semantic Additions (D)		1	
Semantic Deletions (E)		1	
Register (F)		1	
TOTAL			
WRITING			
Spelling (G)		.5	
Grammar (H)		2	
Style (I)		1	
TOTAL			

Result: Pass   Fail

In order to pass, a candidate must accumulate no more than 12 points in the meaning category. Writing scores are also considered, but in relationship to scores in the meaning category. The fewer mistakes there are in meaning, the more writing mistakes that are permitted, as illustrated by the following ratios (meaning scores followed by corresponding ranges of writing scores): 10-12/0-10; 7-9/11-15; 4-6/16-20; 0-3/21-25.

I hereby certify that these scores are accurate.

_____, Court Executive

Language Services Section, Administrative Office of the Courts, P.O. Box 988, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0988