



What You Should Know Before Taking ATA's Certification Exam

Here are the answers to

some frequently asked questions we receive concerning ATA's Certification Program and its exam.

Can I still work in the field if I do not meet the eligibility requirements to take the certification exam?

No credential is required to work as a professional translator or interpreter in the U.S., unless you are working for the court system, which requires its own credential in many cases, or for a client who requires a particular credential. We call ATA certification a "voluntary credential" because it is not required to work in the field. Certification is an excellent marketing tool that shows certified members have met ATA's eligibility requirements and performed skillfully on a rigorous exam. It also demonstrates an individual's commitment to continued professional growth through continuing education.

Isn't ATA's exam for beginning translators?

The eligibility requirements alone should show that ATA's certification exam is not for beginners. The exam is designed for someone with a degree in either translation or interpreting, or with significant experience working as a professional translator; successful candidates often have both.

If I was raised in a bilingual household, why isn't that enough background to take the exam?

Bilingualism is certainly a wonderful building block for a translator, but it is not sufficient to qualify you to work effectively in the field or prepare you for the certification exam. Generally, when people talk about being bilingual, they are indicating speaking skills. The ability to read and analyze material in the source language and write effectively in the

target language is something entirely different. Some interpreters also work as translators, but I think all of them will tell you that translation involves another complete skill set.

ATA's certification exam is graded for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure, as well as strict attention to meaning within context. It is also structured to test transfer skills, which are important elements of professional translation that need to be learned through experience or training in a translation or interpreting program.

I have heard that graders fail candidates to limit competition in their language pair. What is done to ensure fair grading?

ATA strives to have graders who are at the top of their profession, and who will be objective in their grading. We have rigorous training for graders emphasizing fairness and moderation in assessing the severity of errors. Two people grade every exam, and if there is a disagreement, a third grader makes the final decision. There is also an independent spot-check of graded exams by the language chair or other program managers. An extensive review and appeal process is also available to candidates.

Why can't I see my graded exam?

The certification exam determines professional competence in a specific setting. Whereas the certification exam is not meant to be a learning exercise, the practice test is an opportunity to receive feedback about the type of errors the graders identified. The practice test is returned with the errors marked by the grader, which should give candidates a good indication of how they might perform on the actual exam. In addition to the practice test, candidates who want feed-

back are encouraged to attend the language-specific workshops offered throughout the year, including during ATA's Annual Conference. (Please note that these workshops are not offered for every language combination.)

Candidates who feel that a mistake has been made in the grading of their exams can see a marked copy of their exam by applying for a review. Candidates have six months from the date they receive their results to apply for an exam review, and must submit the review form along with payment. As part of the review process, candidates receive a copy of the exam with the errors marked, along with an explanation of the error categories and points. In addition, candidates have an opportunity to respond to individual marks on the review via the appeal process. Candidates have six months to apply for the appeal of a review, and must submit a defense of their challenge that would substantiate an overturning of the original grade.

Why aren't samples of earlier tests available on ATA's website?

Some candidates feel that just viewing sample passages will give them all the information they need to prepare for the exam and to gauge its difficulty. Our belief is that the only way to get a true picture of how you might perform on the exam is to complete a practice test and return it for grading. We feel that making the passages available on ATA's website might actually be counterproductive and less helpful for candidates, because it will encourage them to make a quicker, less-informed decision about taking the exam.

Even though the pass rate for the practice test is pretty much in line with the overall pass rate for the actual exam, the two tests are

taken under different circumstances. For example, the certification exam is a proctored three-hour exam. The time constraint for the practice test is whatever candidates decide to impose on themselves. Whereas for the certification exam the translator must use only the resources at hand, with the practice test, translators may use any resource they find useful.

When taking practice tests, we encourage candidates to simulate the

conditions they will face when taking the actual certification exam (e.g., no Internet searches, completing the exam within the appropriate time period, and using only the resources that will be allowed during the exam). Doing so will yield a more realistic practice test result. Candidates will also be in a better position to judge whether the time limitation or other constraints will pose a problem.

Ordering and completing a practice test does require more forethought and preparation, but it can also save you money in the long run. Seeing firsthand exactly how graders mark and the types of errors they find in your work is the best preparation.

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New Certified Members

Congratulations! The following people have successfully passed ATA's certification exam:

English into Croatian

Seka S. Plemenitas
Ringoes, NJ

German into English

Marlene E. Heinemann
Seattle, WA

English into Spanish

Daniel G. Grau
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Active Membership Review

Congratulations! The Active Membership Review Committee is pleased to grant active or corresponding status to:

Active

Courtney M. MacNab
Fayetteville, NC

Corresponding

Sabine Bongartz
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Joaquina Pires-O'Brien
Mutford, Suffolk,
United Kingdom

Don't Miss These Events

October 31–November 3, 2007

American Translators Association
48th Annual Conference
San Francisco, California
www.atanet.org

November 7–11, 2007

American Literary Translators Association
30th Anniversary Conference
"Celebrating the Past, Imagining the Future"
Richardson, Texas
www.literarytranslators.org

November 15–18, 2007

American Council on the
Teaching of Foreign Languages
41st Annual Convention & Exposition
"Bridging Cultures Through Languages"
San Antonio, Texas
www.actfl.org

November 24–26, 2007

Organización Mexicana de Traductores
Capítulo Occidente
11th International Translation
& Interpretation Congress
"San Jerónimo 2007"
Guadalajara, Mexico
www.omt.org.mx/general.htm

November 24–26, 2007

FIT Regional Centre Latin America
2nd Meeting of the FIT Regional
Centre Latin America
Guadalajara, Mexico
www.omt.org.mx/general.htm

December 27–30, 2007

Modern Language Association
123rd Annual Convention
Chicago, Illinois
www.mla.org/convention