

AUSIT Code of Ethics

The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc (AUSIT) was founded at a meeting in Canberra in 1987, convened by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to establish a national association of interpreting and translation professionals in Australia.

Central to the establishment of any profession is the codification of its practices not only in organisational matters, but also, and crucially, in matters of professional conduct. Adherence to a Code of Ethics represents an undertaking by the members of a professional association that they can be relied upon to behave according to rules that protect and respect the interests of their clients as well as those of their fellow members.

The development of the AUSIT Code of Ethics was completed in 1995, when it was endorsed by NAATI, adopted by AUSIT at the National General Meeting and presented to the International Federation of Translators at its World Congress in Melbourne in 1996.

In summary, the Code obliges members to:

- respect their clients' rights to privacy and confidentiality
- decline to undertake work beyond their competence or accreditation levels
- take responsibility for the work of people under their supervision
- decline to mix promotional activity for clients with interpreting or translation work
- guard against misuse of inside information for personal gain
- guard against encroaching on the work of co-members
- maintain professional detachment, impartiality and objectivity
- refer to arbitration by the National Council of any dispute with other members and to accept the Council decision as binding.

The development of the rules embodied in the Code has been a serious and painstaking undertaking, but its effectiveness is attested to by the fact that, apart from the NAATI endorsement, a number of major organisations have sought and been granted the right to adopt and reproduce it. They include inter alia the Commonwealth Government's Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS), Centrelink Multicultural Services, the Refugee Review Tribunal.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Interpreters and translators shall at all times act in accordance with the standards of conduct and decorum appropriate to the aims of AUSIT, the national professional association of interpreting and translation practitioners.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Interpreters and translators shall not disclose information acquired during the course of their assignments.

3. COMPETENCE

Interpreters and translators shall undertake only work which they are competent to perform in the language areas for which they are “accredited” or “recognised” by NAATI.

4. IMPARTIALITY

Interpreters and translators shall observe impartiality in all professional contracts.

5. ACCURACY

Interpreters and translators shall take all reasonable care to be accurate.

6. EMPLOYMENT

Interpreters and translators shall be responsible for the quality of their work, whether as freelance practitioners or employed practitioners of interpreting and translation agencies and other employers.

7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Interpreters and translators shall continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills.

8. PROFESSIONAL SOLIDARITY

Interpreters and translators shall respect and support their fellow professionals.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Annotations to General Principles of Code of Ethics

1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

a) Standards of Conduct and Decorum

- i. Interpreters and translators shall be polite and courteous at all times.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall explain their role to those unaccustomed to working with them.
- iii. Interpreters and translators shall be unobtrusive, but firm and dignified, at all times.
- iv. It is the responsibility of interpreters and translators to ensure that the conditions under which they work facilitate rather than hinder communication.
- v. Interpreters shall encourage speakers to address each other directly.

b) Honesty, Integrity and Dignity

- i. Interpreters and translators shall not allow personal or other interests to prejudice or influence their work.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall not solicit or accept gratuities or other benefits. [Cf. 6. Employment b) (iii)]
- iii. Interpreters and translators shall not exercise power or influence over their clients.
- iv. Interpreters and translators shall maintain their integrity and independence at all times.
- v. Interpreters and translators shall frankly disclose any possible conflict of interest.

c) Reliability

- i. Interpreters and translators shall adhere to appointment times and deadlines, or in emergencies advise clients promptly.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall undertake appropriate preparations for all translating and interpreting (T&I) assignments.
- iii. Interpreters and translators shall complete interpreting and translation assignments they have accepted.

d) Infamous Conduct

Interpreters and translators shall refrain from behaviour which their colleagues would reasonably regard as unprofessional or dishonourable.

e) Disputes

- i. Interpreters and translators shall try to resolve any disputes with their interpreting and translating colleagues in a cooperative, constructive and professional manner.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall refer any unresolved disputes with other AUSIT members to the Executive Committee of their professional association and the conclusive direction of the Executive Committee shall be binding on members, with the provision of appeal or review in the interests of natural justice.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Information Sharing

- i. Information shared in interpreting and translating assignments is strictly confidential.
- ii. Disclosure of information may be permissible with clients' agreement or when disclosure is mandated by law.
- iii. Where teamwork is required, and with the clients' permission, it may be necessary to brief other interpreters or translators who are members of the team involved in the assignment. In such circumstances, the ethical obligation for confidentiality extends to all members of the team and/or agency.
- iv. Information gained by interpreters and translators from consultations between clients and their legal representatives is protected under the common law rule of legal professional privilege.
- v. Interpreters and translators shall not sub-contract work to interpreting and translating colleagues without permission from their client.
- vi. Translated documents at all times remain the property of the client and shall not be shown or released to a third party without the express permission of the client, or by order of a court of law.

3. COMPETENCE

a) Qualifications and Accreditation

- i. Interpreters and translators shall accept only interpreting and translation assignments which they are competent to perform.
- ii. Acceptance of an interpreting and translation is an implicit declaration of an interpreter's or translator's competence and constitutes a contract (oral or written).
- iii. Interpreters and translators shall clearly specify to their clients the NAATI level and direction in the languages for which they are accredited or recognised.
- iv. If requested by clients, interpreters and translators shall explain the difference between NAATI "Accreditation" and "Recognition".

b) Level of Expertise

In the course of an assignment, if it becomes apparent to interpreters and translators that expertise beyond their competence is required, they shall inform the clients immediately and offer to withdraw from the assignment.

c) Prior Preparation

Interpreters and translators shall ascertain beforehand what will be required of them in a projected assignment, and then make the necessary preparation.

d) Second Opinions and Reviews

Any alterations made to interpreting and translation work, as a result of a second opinion and/or review by other interpreters or translators, shall be agreed upon by consultation between the interpreters and translators concerned.

4. IMPARTIALITY

a) Conflicts of Interest

- i. Interpreters and translators shall not recommend to clients any business, agency, process, substance or material matters in which they have a personal or financial interest, without fully disclosing this interest to the clients.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall frankly disclose all conflicts of interest, including assignments for relatives or friends, and those affecting their employers.
- iii. Interpreters and translators shall not accept, or shall withdraw from assignments in which impartiality may be difficult to maintain because of personal beliefs or circumstances.

b) Objectivity

- i. A professional detachment is required for interpreting and translation assignments in all situations.
- ii. If objectivity is threatened, interpreters and translators shall withdraw from the assignment.

c) Responsibility related to Impartiality

- i. Interpreters and translators are not responsible for what clients say or write.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall not voice or write an opinion, solicited or unsolicited, on any matter or person in relation to an assignment.
- iii. If approached independently by separate parties to the same legal dispute, an interpreter or translator shall notify all parties and give the first party opportunity to claim exclusive right to the requested interpreting or translation service.

5. ACCURACY

a) Truth and Completeness

- i. In order to ensure the same access to all that is said by all parties involved in a meeting, interpreters shall relay accurately and completely everything that is said.
- ii. Interpreters shall convey the whole message, including derogatory or vulgar remarks, as well as non-verbal clues.
- iii. If patent untruths are uttered or written, interpreters and translators shall convey these accurately as presented.
- iv. Interpreters and translators shall not alter, make additions to, or omit anything from their assigned work.

b) Uncertainties in Transmission and Comprehension

- i. Interpreters and translators shall acknowledge and promptly rectify their interpreting and translation mistakes.
- ii. If anything is unclear, interpreters and translators shall ask for repetition, rephrasing or explanation.
- iii. If recall and interpreting are being overtaxed, interpreters shall ask the speaker to pause, then signal to continue.

c) Clear Transmission

- i. Interpreters shall ensure that speech is clearly heard and understood by everyone present.
 - ii. A short general conversation with clients prior to an assignment may be necessary to ensure interpreter and clients clearly understand each other's speech.
 - iii. In a law court, simultaneous interpreting for clients shall be whispered.
- d) Certification
- Translators shall provide certification, if requested by their clients, that their translation is true and accurate so far as they know. Certification shall include the translator's name, details of NAATI accreditation/recognition, language and language direction, and be signed and dated.

6. EMPLOYMENT

- a) Freelance and Agency-employed Practitioners
- i. Interpreters and translators may work in interpreting and translation assignments as independent (freelance) professionals, or under contract to a commercial or government agency.
 - ii. In both instances, freelance and employed interpreters and translators shall abide by the AUSIT Code of Ethics.
 - iii. If this Code of Ethics and an employing agency's directions are in conflict, interpreters and translators shall abide by the Code of Ethics and, if necessary, withdraw from the assignment.
- b) Fees and Payment in Kind
- i. Members are free to set their own rates and conditions. AUSIT may provide information on ranges of rates charged by members.
 - ii. Interpreters and translators shall not accept for personal gain any fees, favours, commissions or the like from any person, firm, corporation or government agency, including another interpreter or translator, in connection with recommending to a client any person, business agency, substance, material matters, process or service.
 - iii. In general, gifts and tips in addition to the agreed fee shall not be accepted. However, some discretionary latitude may be exercised in accepting a gift as a token of gratitude, as this is obligatory in certain client cultures.
- c) Accountability
- i. Interpreters and translators shall be responsible for any services to or on behalf of clients by assistants or sub-contractors employed by the interpreters or translators.
 - ii. Interpreters and translators in the employment of another practitioner or interpreting and translation agency shall exercise the same diligence as in all professional contexts in the performance of their duties.

7. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- a) Maintaining Skills

- i. Interpreters and translators shall constantly review and re-evaluate their work performance to maintain acceptable standards.
 - ii. Practising interpreters and translators are expected to maintain and enhance their language skills by pursuing further relevant study and experience.
 - iii. Interpreters and translators shall maintain close familiarity with the languages and cultures for which they offer professional interpreting and translation expertise.
 - i. Interpreters and translators shall continually endeavour to improve their interpreting and translating skills.
- b) Training and Practice
- ii. It is incumbent on interpreters and translators to support and encourage the professional development of their colleagues.

8. PROFESSIONAL SOLIDARITY

a) Support of Colleagues

- i. Interpreters and translators shall support and further the interests of the profession and their colleagues and offer each other reasonable assistance as required.
- ii. Interpreters and translators shall refrain from making comments injurious to the reputation of a colleague.

b) Trust and Respect

- i. Interpreters and translators shall promote and enhance the integrity of the profession by fostering trust and mutual respect between colleagues.
- ii. Any differences of opinion interpreters and translators shall be expressed with candour and respect, rather than by denigration.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Some useful suggestions follow which do not fit neatly into the Code of Practice, but which may help explain some clauses.

1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

To determine the appropriateness or otherwise of a proposed course of action, consider whether or not it might impede or jeopardise effective communication.

If approached directly by a client, known to be a client or another interpreting or translation professional or agency, do not accept any assignments offered without first conferring with, and obtaining endorsement from, the other professional or agency.

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3. COMPETENCE

It is more informative for interpreters and translators to use arrows <> rather than hyphens to specify in writing language directions for which they are NAATI “accredited” or “recognised”. [cf3(a) (ii)].

The distinction between NAATI “accreditation” and “recognition” needs to be understood, and those who work with interpreters and translators should be given the opportunity to make informed decisions when seeking their services. [cf3 (a) (iii)].

Interpreters and translators ought to be given the opportunity to comment on any alterations made to their work a result of a second opinion and/or review by other interpreters or translators. [cf3 (d)].

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6. EMPLOYMENT

When employed by an interpreting and translation agency for specific tasks, interpreters and translators may present business cards representing that agency only - do not use personal cards or cards which imply employment by any other organisation. [cf1 (d)].