

Title:	NZSL Interpreting: an alternative qualification pathway for NAATI testing
Board meeting date:	17 & 18 March 2023
Question:	Can a person with a Certificate in interpreting and has passed the NAATI NZSL interpreting test, work as a NZSL Interpreter?
Action required of the Board:	Decision
ODI Recommendation:	Proceed with NAATI certification for all NZSL interpreters if they have an interpreting qualification
NZSL Strategy link:	Use/Access
<p>Executive Summary</p> <p>In August 2022 the Board approved the use of NAATI certification for NZSL Interpreters as the preferred NZSL Interpreter Standard. The certification process assesses NZSL interpreting skill and sets a requirement for ongoing Professional Development (PD).</p> <p>A series of online hui were held in December 2022 to announce this decision. Appendix B provides a summary and list of questions that still require clarification.</p> <p>Since then, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has received information about the qualification requirements for NAATI testing (see Appendix C) that could impact on the Board’s decision.</p> <p>The Board have previously stated that the AUT NZSL English Interpreting qualification should be included as pre-requisite for NAATI testing. ODI now understand that a generic Certificate in Interpreting (see Appendix D for a list of study options), i.e., not related to sign language meets the qualification requirements for testing. This requirement is consistent with all other spoken languages and cannot be changed for NZSL interpreters.</p> <p>The Board need to confirm that a generic interpreting qualification is acceptable before proceeding with the implementation of NAATI certification. Additional background information is provided in Appendix A.</p> <p>ODI recommend the Board proceed with NAATI certification because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of people with the required level of NZSL proficiency would be small, perhaps mainly CODAs or others heavily involved in the Deaf community to develop NZSL fluency • To pass the NAATI test, the person needs to demonstrate the same interpreting skill as someone who has studied at AUT. • NZSL proficiency can be tested through the NZ Sign Language Proficiency Interview (NZSLPI). • NAATI certification is one tool to support quality interpreting, but more work is needed in other areas, such as recommendations for the NZSL Interpreter Workforce Strategy, to resolve any quality issues. <p>Supporting an alternative qualification responds to community feedback that interpreting training in Auckland only is restrictive and doesn’t meet student needs around New Zealand.</p> <p>Note: Ireland are currently investigating a short course for Children of Deaf Adults (CODAs) to meet growing demand for interpreters.</p>	

Other options

Option A: Defer the decision to May 2023 and seek expert advice on the impacts (risks and opportunities) of this decision.

ODI don't recommend open consultation but targeted information needed by the Board to be confident to make a good decision.

Option B: Establish a NZSL Interpreter Registry as recommended in the Fitzgerald report (2017)

This option is not recommended for a several reasons:

- The cost is very expensive due to the small workforce and is unlikely to be paid by another government service
- Little capacity and capability in the Interpreting sector to create and operate a registry
- Could create confusion for public services to understand a different interpreter standard for sign language interpreter's vs spoken language interpreters

Risks and Mitigation

Risk: if implemented, the AUT NZSL-English interpreter training programme could be at risk
Mitigation:

- Promote AUT training will still be the most appropriate way for people who have little or no NZSL skills at the beginning of their study.

Risk: NAATI certified interpreters with a generic certificate won't have a good understanding of Deaf culture and community

Mitigation: Booking agencies and the Deaf community will still maintain control of interpreters being placed into jobs. If they demonstrate low cultural awareness and practice, they are likely to get less work.

Risk: AUT and SLIANZ won't support the implementation of NAATI certification alongside ODI.

Mitigation: Create open channels for any interpreters and booking agencies to provide feedback on issues and risks.

Risk: The NZSLPI assesses conversational NZSL fluency in adults and won't test vocabulary used in some interpreting settings.

Mitigation: The person still needs to demonstrate interpreting skills to pass the NAATI test.

Risk: A certificate qualification will produce a lower quality of NZSL Interpreters

Mitigation: The NZSL Board set the Standard for NZSL interpreter according to qualifications to describe different levels of quality. For example:

- Expert – Sign Language interpreting qualification and CI NAATI certification
- Proficient - Sign Language interpreting qualification and CPI NAATI certification
- Intermediate - interpreting qualification and CPI NAATI certification

Next Steps

1. ODI will inform MBIE and NAATI of the decision
2. Release information to the Deaf community and interpreters
3. NAATI will begin to recruit NAATI assessors and develop a test.

Appendix A: Qualification pathways for NAATI testing

Background

In August 2022, the NZSL Board approved the use of NAATI certification for NZSL Interpreters. The certification process would assess NZSL interpreting skill and set a requirement for ongoing Professional Learning and Development (PL&D).

A series of online hui were held in December 2022 to announce this decision with just over 40 people attending the sessions.

Challenges in maintaining the NZSL Interpreter workforce

In the NZSL Interpreter workforce paper, several issues were described that are relevant to the implementation of Interpreter Standards. These were:

- Difficulty for some people to study in Auckland thereby preventing employment as an NZSL interpreter
- Feedback from the Deaf community that a single qualification pathway does not meet the needs around New Zealand
- There is a very small number of graduates from AUT each year.
- The risk to the sustainability of the workforce if training was restricted to Auckland (Fitzgerald, 2017)

ODI has learned more about the NAATI certification process

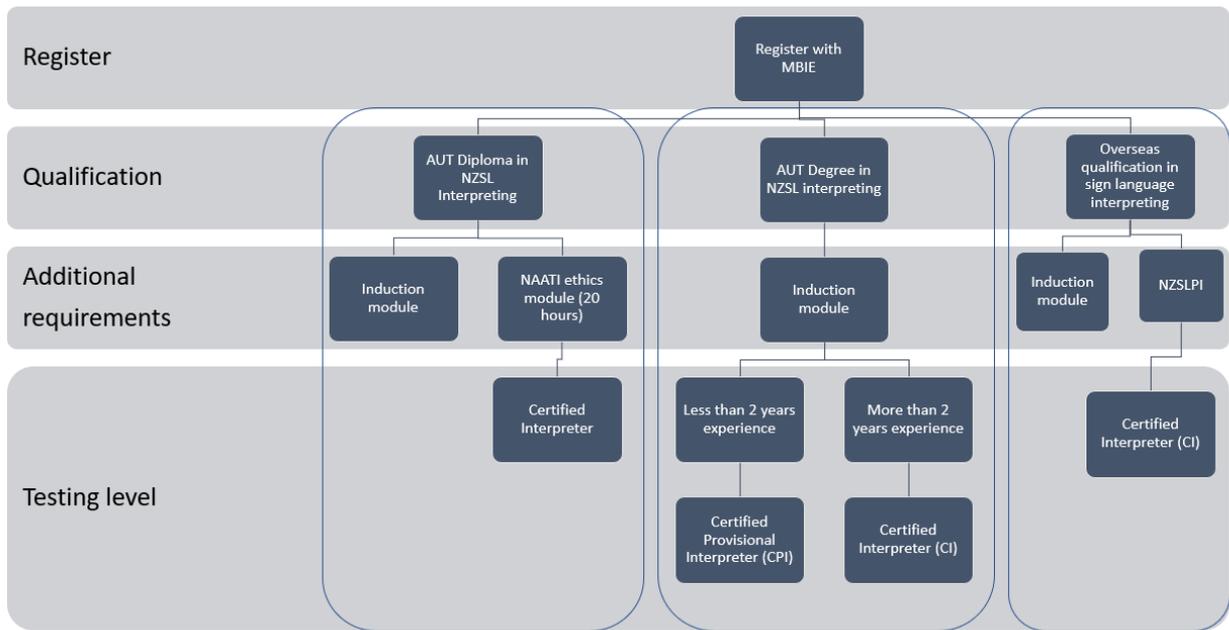
Following the decision made by the Board, the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) learned that a person fluent in NZSL with a certificate in interpreting could become eligible for NAATI certification and therefore work as an NZSL interpreter.

Following this information, we have revised our advice, however we still recommend that the Board proceeds with its decision to use NAATI certification for NZSL Interpreters.

What do we know about qualification pathways?

Qualified interpreter pathway

We have a clear understanding of the NAATI pathway for AUT-trained interpreters and internationally trained sign language interpreters, see diagram below.



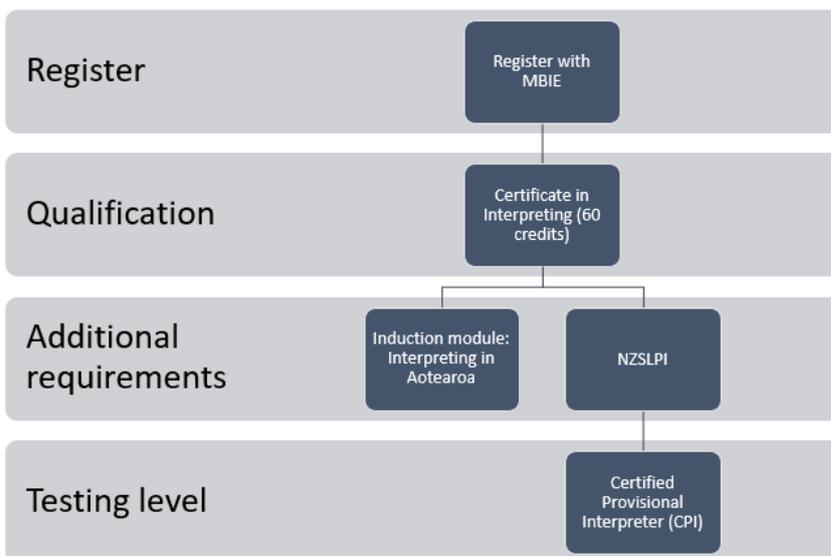
Unqualified interpreter pathway

The pathway for unqualified communicators is different. Previously, ODI believed who had not studied at AUT was 'unqualified'.

However, we now understand that a person will be eligible to sit the NAATI certified interpreter test if:

- a person completes a one-year Certificate **and**
- they can demonstrate a suitable level of NZSL.

See diagram below:



ODI acknowledges that this will cause disappointment and concern for the Board and community

- In previous decisions, the Board has been clear that formal study as NZSL Interpreters should not be compromised by the introduction of NAATI certification.
- ODI acknowledge that many interpreters were concerned that the NZSL Interpreting Diploma or Degree may be devalued if NAATI certification was introduced.
- However, in the broader context of NZSL Interpreter workforce issues, this creates an opportunity for a very small number of people to work as NZSL Interpreters with the requirement for ongoing Professional Learning and Development (PL&D).

ODI recommends the Board proceed with NAATI testing pathway

ODI believes the Board should proceed with NAATI certification as:

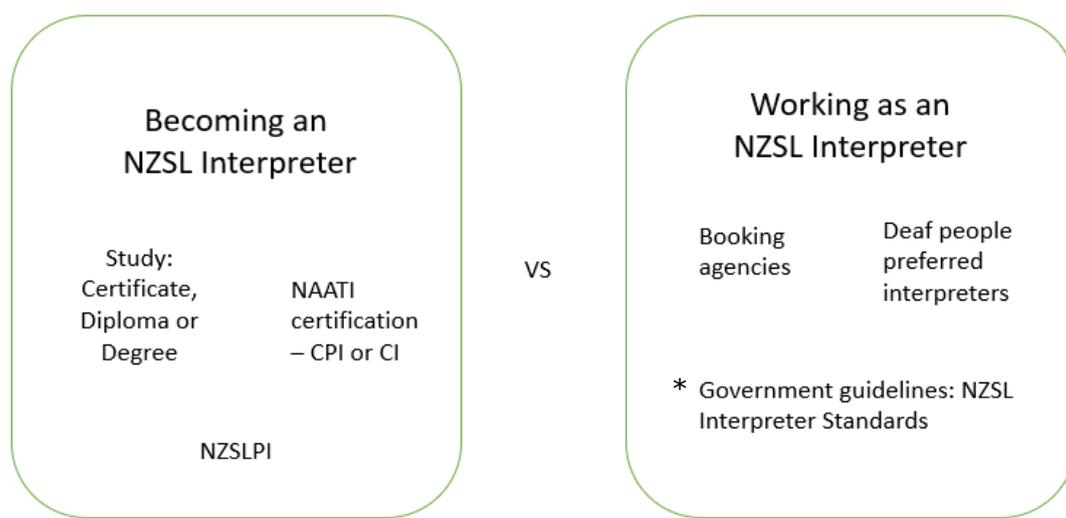
- The number of people with the required level of NZSL proficiency would be small, perhaps mainly Children of Deaf Adults (CODAs) or others heavily involved in the Deaf community to develop NZSL fluency
- To pass the NAATI test, the person with a generic qualification will need to demonstrate the same interpreting skill as someone who has studied at AUT.
- The Board can set the minimum level of NZSL fluency to become eligible for NAATI testing:
 - NAATI can require evidence of NZSL fluency before allowing anyone with a generic interpreting qualification using the NZSL Proficiency Interview (NZSLPI) assessment
 - The Board can set the minimum level of NZSL proficiency before becoming eligible which minimizes any risk for Deaf users
 - NZSLPI has already been recommended for interpreters who have trained overseas
- To be eligible for NAATI testing, people need to provide evidence of:

Requirement	Evidence
Qualification	Certificate, Diploma or Degree in interpreting
NZSL fluency	SLPI can be used for those who have not completed a NZSL interpreting qualification, this includes interpreters trained overseas

- The certificate will demonstrate that a person understands the interpreting role and ethics required. Five institutions offer study by distance, supporting more people outside of Auckland to gain a qualification.
- Each person will still need to pass the NZSLPI to become eligible to test and then need to demonstrate interpreting skills to pass the test
- Once certified, they will need to do PL&D which includes NZSL development, ethics and other content to maintain or develop interpreting skills.

How can NAATI certification be used when booking interpreters?

- It's important to remember that interpreter booking requests will still be made through booking agencies who can have a record of Deaf peoples' preferred interpreters.
- Government will expect booking agencies to make the best match between the interpreter and Deaf client.
- The expectation will be that information such as NAATI certification will be used to allocate work, for example interpreters with a qualification and current NAATI certification will receive more work than interpreters who do not have NAATI certification



* Example of Government Guidelines: NZSL Interpreter Standards

Level	Minimum level for the following settings
Sign Language interpreting qualification NAATI Certified Interpreter (CI) certification	Court, specialist medical
Sign Language interpreting qualification NAATI Certified Provisional Interpreter (CPI) certification	
Interpreting (certificate) qualification NAATI Certified Interpreter (CI) certification	
Interpreting (certificate) qualification NAATI Certified Provisional Interpreter (CPI) Certification	
Sign language interpreting qualification No NAATI certification	
No interpreting qualification or NAATI certification	Not suitable for any setting

Appendix B: NAATI interpreter Q&A sessions – December 2022

A total of four meetings were held in the evenings, two in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and two in English for up to an hour and half. Participants included 40 NZSL interpreters, four Deaf community members and three organisations – Concentrix, Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education Centre and SLIANZ.

A range of questions were asked relating to eligibility, testing, re-certification and how the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) certification will be managed in a range of different settings i.e., education, community settings. Most discussion provided clarification of the NAATI testing system and transition processes for interpreters.

There were also questions that will be redirected to NAATI and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for answering in the New Year, see the list below. In the New Year additional meetings will be organised with representatives from MBIE and NAATI to answer questions raised in the public meetings, provide more information about the transition support package and steps to implement NAATI certification for NZSL Interpreters.

Questions for MBIE

- If interpreters have previously gained Recognised Provisional Interpreter (RPI) certification, prior to the establishment of the LAS programme, will they have to register again?
- If there is a gap between graduating from AUT and receiving an academic transcript, does this prevent interpreters from working and earning money to pay for the test?

Questions for NAATI

Qualifications

- Some Diploma trained interpreters have also gained the Postgraduate Diploma in Interpreting as a joint qualification between Macquarie University and Victoria University of Wellington. Would this remove the need for the NAATI ethics module?

Testing

- Is there a minimum number of hours of work experience to become eligible to sit a test at a Certified Provisional Interpreter (CPI) or a Certified Interpreter (CI) level? This will be relevant for graduate interpreters who initially sit CPI and then go on to sit CI.
- Is it possible to share stats for pass/fail rates of different languages assessed by NAATI?
- How is test validity and reliability monitored? If a large number of trained interpreters fail the test, is there a review of test delivery/assessment?
- Will there be a sample NZSL test available? The sample Auslan test is useful but not a complete fit for NZSL interpreters e.g., there is more fingerspelling in Auslan than NZSL
- After the test is completed, does the interpreter get feedback or can they debrief with the assessment supervisor?
- How is test availability managed, are they triggered by requests or scheduled throughout the year?
- How many Assessors are trained to conduct tests at any one time?

Re-certification

- How do interpreters provide evidence of 40 hours of work per year, is it annually or once every three years?
- If an interpreter fails to meet re-certification hours due to a lack of work hours, do they have to test again?
- What are the pathways required if a certified interpreter has a gap in employment, e.g., raising a family for 5 years or working in academia. Do they have to sit the test again?

- Is there a maximum length of time that triggers a requirement for a new test?
- Can membership of a Deaf club be counted as PD points similar to member of a national interpreting body like SLIANZ?

Appendix C: Differences in qualification requirements for NAATI certification

Qualification definition	Who
Sign language interpreting qualification Diploma or Degree from AUT or internationally recognised equivalent	NZSL Board, ODI, AUT, SLIANZ
Any qualification that provides interpreter training aimed at providing you with the knowledge, skills and competencies to gain the appropriate NAATI credential Certificate level (60 points)	NAATI, MBIE

Appendix D: Certificate level qualifications endorsed by NAATI and funded by MBIE

Institution	Qualification
Auckland University of Technology (AUT)	Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting) . Completion of 4 papers (60 points) (needs to include TRIN603 Interpreter Role, Ethics and Practice)
Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)	Postgraduate Certificate of Intercultural Communication and Applied Translation . Completion of 2 papers (60 points) one of which must be LANG504 Interpreting in Aotearoa New Zealand: Theory and Practice) plus either FHSS 401 or LANG 403.
UNITEC	Micro-credential bundle: Liaison Interpreting Contexts (Social Systems, Culture, Ethics) and Liaison Interpreting Theory and Practice
University of Canterbury (UOC)	<p>Postgraduate Certificate in Arts: Applied Translation and Interpreting (NAATI endorsed): which must include LANC401 & LANC404 for Certified Provisional Interpreter</p> <p>Postgraduate Diploma in Arts: Applied Translation and Interpreting (NAATI endorsed): 120 points. MBIE funds 60 points which must include LANC401 & LANC404 for Certified Provisional Interpreter</p> <p>Master of Applied Translation and Interpreting (NAATI endorsed): 180 points. MBIE funds 60 points which must include LANC401 & LANC404 (Certified Provisional Interpreter; Certified Interpreter)</p>