



NCSC Oral Exam Development

The Language Access Services Section (LASS) of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) develops and maintains valid and reliable oral performance examinations that can be used by state court systems to credential persons who wish to become spoken language court interpreters.

The NCSC's oral exams are developed to measure a candidate's ability to faithfully and accurately interpret the range of English ordinarily used in courtrooms into another language, and to understand and interpret into English what is said by a native speaker of another language.

All NCSC oral exam development is supervised by a Test Development Manager and oral exams are developed by a team consisting of at least two specialists as described below:

- One applied linguist, preferably a practicing professional interpreter who possesses the highest credentials available in the field; and
- One theoretical, scholarly linguist who has the most formal academic training possible in the linguistics of the language.

The NCSC's oral exam content is based on transcripts from court proceedings that involve general legal concepts and procedures and on types of legal situations that require large volumes of interpreting services, representing a wide range of:

- Stages of legal proceedings (e.g., preliminary hearings, trials, sentencing);
- Types of proceedings and legal subjects heard in state courts (e.g., criminal, family, and civil courts); and
- Levels of proceedings (e.g., state, county, and, to a lesser degree, municipal courts).

NCSC oral exams are developed in accordance with a Test Construction Manual, which ensures that the development of each oral exam part is standardized across languages.

All NCSC oral exams include an even distribution of scoring units, which are specific linguistic phenomena that interpreters must be able to deliver for a complete and accurate interpretation.

In addition, all audio recordings developed as part of an NCSC oral exam are recorded by native speakers of English and of the non-English language, in accordance with the Test Construction Manual standards.

NCSC Oral Exam Rating

Each NCSC oral exam is rated by at least two NCSC-approved raters. Raters include individuals with the highest level of applied linguistic credentials, including certified court interpreters, and individuals with extensive academic studies in the language.

Raters are trained in accordance with the NCSC's Test Rating Manual, which provides guidelines for the oral examination rating process to ensure that all NCSC oral exams are rated in an objective, valid, and reliable manner for all languages.

Under the NCSC's standardized rating guidelines, raters are trained to be open to geographical and social variations in usage and to rate renditions provided by candidates in accordance with established rater scoring criteria and research processes.