

AIIC Interpreter Checklist

Performing Remote Interpreting Assignments from Home *in extremis* during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Introduction

AIIC's Covid-19 distance interpreting guidance is based on the following principles:

- The health and well-being of interpreters and the protection of public health
- Commitment to multilingualism
- Quality of service
- Effective teamwork and booth partnering
- Respect of ethics and confidentiality
- Compliance with ISO standards
- Information and data security
- Respect for AIIC's Professional Standards

AIIC has always been and will always be committed to enabling multilingualism and interpreting the world. However, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the issues of health and well-being of interpreters and the protection of public health must come to the fore. Currently, in many locations even leaving one's home can constitute a risk not only to the individual but also to the wider public. In such locations our message is unequivocal: stay safe!

Remote interpreting from home *in extremis* (both consecutive and simultaneous) is very different from onsite interpreting, and from remote hub interpreting: interpreters are no longer co-located with their teammates or even booth partner(s). Not addressing or adapting to these differences will have a negative impact on the quality of the interpreting service and may also affect long term health. In addition to interpreting, interpreters have to manage the technical and physical aspects of the meeting and environment. Managing these additional aspects, whilst interpreting with a reduced quality and quantity of relevant sensory inputs, increases the cognitive load on the interpreter, and can be a source of additional stress and fatigue. Adapting working conditions to the various DI modalities – including remote interpreting from home – is imperative, and may set a precedent for the future.

The AIIC Taskforce on Distance Interpreting has issued several guidance documents on distance interpreting. Please ensure you familiarise yourself with them, in particular the Covid-19 advice:

- [AIIC Position on Distance Interpreting](#)
- [AIIC Guidelines for Distance Interpreting \(Version 1.0\)](#)
- [AIIC Best Practices for Interpreters during the Covid-19 Crisis](#)
- [AIIC Covid-19 Distance Interpreting Recommendations for Institutions and DI Hubs](#)

Until the measures to fight Covid-19 are lifted, and given our commitment to multilingualism in the international arena, it is imperative – as an interim measure – that the possible need to work, *in extremis*, from interpreters' own premises be considered:

Ultimately the decision is yours.

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PART I – PRIOR TO OR UPON RECEIPT OF AN OFFER

A. INTERPRETER TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. ICT and AV Equipment

- Do you have the necessary ICT/AV equipment to perform remote interpreting from home *in extremis*, or will this be provided to you by your employer or client?
 - Requisite headset (or headphones and mic) with a frequency response of 125 - 15,000 Hz?¹
 - Lightweight and ergonomic on-ear or around-ear headphones, binaural semi-open or semi-closed;
 - Cable (3.5 mm or USB²), not wireless (e.g. Bluetooth), connection to interpreter interface;
 - Noise and/or echo cancelling, to prevent disturbing noises from being picked up and/or feedback between microphone and headphones;
 - Microphone control:
 - With volume control dial or buttons;
 - Treble and bass adjustments;
 - Cough or mute button?

¹ [AIIC's Technical and Health Committee](#) is preparing a list of ISO-compliant headsets and mics suitable for interpreters.

² Although USB connection would normally be preferred, 3.5 mm headphone or microphone plugs can be connected to USB via a USB soundcard with USB soundcard with headphone/microphone inputs and rotary controls (which has the advantage of feeling like a console with a volume, bass and treble dial, allowing for more gradation than buttons) and possibly an acoustic shock protector, whereas a USB headset or headphones may have volume buttons and some level of in-built acoustic shock protection in certain models.

- Requisite ICT hardware?
 - For the system or platform envisaged (check with RSI solution/platform provider);
 - Should a web platform be used: desktop/laptop or other computer exclusively for the virtual console³ (physical separation of data and documentation from console for data protection and privacy reasons)?⁴
- Integrated hearing protection in RSI system or headset?⁵
- Additional computer for the viewing of confidential documentation in separate physical environment from platform, or screen to enable multi-screen view of event (speaker and participants), glossaries etc.
- Do you have the additional requisite technical equipment for sign language interpreting from home:
 - HD video/web camera (1080p/4K);
 - video monitor;
 - audio monitor?

³ Also known as soft console (ISO), online console, screen console.

⁴ Creating a new user login on the computer with no admin rights exclusively for remote interpreting and videoconferencing platforms is a recommended security measure.

⁵ For ISO limits both for long-term exposure and immediate shock, see [ISO 20109 clause 4.5](#).

2. Network Infrastructure

- Do you have the necessary network connection to perform remote interpreting from your home *in extremis*:
 - Requisite speed of internet connection (4Mbps up and download speed for each video feed⁶);
 - Stable wired⁷ Ethernet connection to internet;
 - Access to a secure network connection, e.g. via VPN tunnel established by employer/client or other;
 - Backup internet access option?

3. Personal and Physical Environment at Home

- Do you have a secure soundproof area from which you can work without disturbance at home?
 - If not, can you make appropriate adaptations to at least work undisturbed from a noise-free environment?⁸
 - If other persons are at your home due to Covid-19 restrictions (e.g. children), can you ensure you will not be disturbed or distracted by them?
- If on video, do you have the requisite set up to ensure a professional appearance and keep potential visual distractions to a minimum, including:
 - A background screen or solid coloured background, or green screen software configuration;
 - Sufficient space between you and the background (particularly for sign language interpreters);
 - Adequate lighting (professional studio lighting is necessary for sign language interpreters).

⁶ Ensure you have information on the number of video feeds from your platform provider, client or employer in advance. Internet speed can be checked online with tools such as [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net), although values may fluctuate throughout the day. Business or professional subscriptions may offer more stability: contact your internet provider for details.

⁷ A simple way of ensuring a wired connection from the home working station to the home router, when these are not conveniently co-located, is to use powerline adapters which use the house electrical wiring. How well they work may depend on the wiring system in your house. A last resort would be to invest in an Ethernet extension cable long enough to reach your chosen place of work from your modem or router. It only has to be there for the duration of the assignment.

⁸ You can temporarily limit noise and prevent unauthorised access to your interpreting output by setting up a home studio in a quiet area in your house, closing doors and windows, disabling your doorbell or leaving a note requesting that it should not be rung, disabling app notifications, etc. If ambient noise is still an issue then a mobile podcast studio or best of all mobile interpreting booth would be the solution.

4. Nature of and Preparedness for Assignment

- Is this your first remote interpreting assignment from home?
 - Is it possible to do a familiar assignment first?
 - Is it possible to do a short assignment first?
- Are you prepared to work without co-located booth partner(s) or teammates?
- Taking into account the above considerations, do you think you will be able to perform the assignment optimally and professionally?

B. TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: ALL STAKEHOLDERS

1. RSI platform or system

- Does the employer/client/organiser have the requisite system or platform for simultaneous interpretation?⁹
 - Does the software provide mechanisms for booth partnering and teamwork, inter alia:
 - Does the system have a dedicated and effective handover system?
 - Does the system allow for communication with other team members e.g. via another audio interface, audio channel or chat function?
 - Is the chat function easily visible?
 - If not, can the font be enlarged?
 - Is the chat easily accessible from or on the platform?
 - Can the chat function be moved to another screen?
 - Does the system allow for communication with key persons such as the chair, meeting coordinator, technicians?
- Does the platform allow for preselection and choice of:
 - output channels (for retour);
 - input channels (for relay or to listen to your booth partner).
- In relay setting, can the volume be adjusted independently of the floor, e.g. to allow for checking the interpreting against floor delivery?
- Is remote technical support available?
 - Do you have a back-up to ensure connection to your boothmate, team or technicians in the event of technical outage?
- Does the RSI platform provide adequate protection against acoustic shock (at least 102 dBSLP peak loads as per G616 guideline or ISO 20109-compliant: 94 dBA SPL for any duration longer than 100ms).
 - If not, who is responsible for providing the hearing protection;
 - Who is responsible for the cost of protection?
- Has the employer/client/organiser ensured that participants have the requisite equipment¹⁰ for and information on how to actively participate in the event (e.g. participation protocol including mic muting)?

⁹ Single-channel cloud platforms were not designed for simultaneous interpreting from a home studio, with some exception given to sign languages. A multichannel videoconference system or RSI platform that allows for all language channels provided to be controlled as separate audio channels is the preferred option for remote simultaneous interpreting. Multi-channel platforms should develop an interpreter interface with console functionalities, in accordance with ISO.

¹⁰ [AIIIC's Technical and Health Committee](#) is preparing a list of ISO-compliant headsets and mics suitable for interpreters.

- Has a full test been run with all parties in the event (see subsequent)?¹¹
- Does your equipment combined with the videoconference system or platform enable views of:
 - the active speaker/signer;
 - presentations, slides and other material projected live.¹²
- If so, are both visible at the same time?
 - If not, can you switch between the speaker/signer and the presentation easily?
- For sign language interpreting, will the video stream with the sign language interpreter be:
 - embedded (in-vision); or
 - presented in a separate, resizable window which covers at least 25% of the screen size?

¹¹ Organisers, technicians, speakers and interpreters, testing quality of AV inputs and briefing on event protocol.

¹² A view of non-speaking participants, chair and boothmate is sensory information that would be available to conference interpreters in face-to-face situations. Reproducing this sensory input in a video-mediated view may be possible in remote hub interpreting but is more difficult in home settings using a web platform.

C. CONTRACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS: INTERPRETER AND CLIENT/EMPLOYER

1. Liability and Compensation

- Does the contractual agreement with the employer/client exempt interpreters for liability for, *inter alia*:
 - interruption of service;
 - pixelation, freezing or loss of visual input;
 - partial or complete loss of audio, audible artefacts;
 - unauthorized access to personal or confidential data;
 - leaking of information due to inadequate soundproofing;
 - data loss?
- Does the employer/client assume liability¹³ for:
 - sudden acoustic shock or peak loads (94 dBA SPL for any duration longer than 100ms);¹⁴
 - constant noise exposure (80 dBA SPL over 1 minute)?¹⁵
- Does the contractual agreement include remuneration for the following:
 - platform training (time spent prior to testing);
 - platform testing (time spent prior to event);
 - additional responsibilities (e.g. of a technical nature);
 - additional home insurance costs;
 - use of own premises and equipment, including ISO-compliant hearing protection (94 dBA SPL for any duration longer than 100ms)?
- Does the contractual agreement include provisions for usage and exploitation of interpreting services (copyright) for the following:¹⁶
 - live private distribution of event (e.g. web-streaming);
 - live public distribution of event (e.g. web-streaming);
 - recording of event;
 - storage of event recording;
 - post-facto reproduction and/or distribution of event recording;
 - creating or publishing transcripts of or based on your interpretation?

¹³ Do NOT sign hearing protection waivers!

¹⁴ [ISO 20109:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements\)](#).

¹⁵ [ISO 20109:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements\)](#).

¹⁶ Recording is much simpler and therefore much more prevalent with online and virtual events, and often assumed by organisers and attendees. Interpreters therefore need to ensure this issue is explicitly addressed in contractual agreements.

- Does a visible disclaimer apply to any public distribution, broadcast or transcription of interpretation, or parts thereof, as above?
- Are the contractual conditions the same for all members of the interpreting team?
- What cancellation policy is in place for the contract?
- Is “force majeure” included in the contract?

2. Working Conditions

- Does the contractual agreement stipulate working conditions specific to the remote modality in question to compensate for increased cognitive load¹⁷ on the interpreter, *inter alia*:
 - shorter meeting duration;
 - longer and/or more regular pauses and breaks;
 - increased team strength?
- Has a protocol been agreed in advance for interpreter intervention in case of insufficient quality of audiovisual input?
 - Indicating poor audiovisual input where this is the case;¹⁸
 - Stating “inaudible” or “not visible” where this is the case: you cannot interpret what you do not hear or see;¹⁹
 - Pausing interpreting to allow for technical problems to be resolved.
- Have event organisers and speakers been clearly informed that interpreters will need any and all support documentation that will be used for the meeting? This includes presentations, agendas, speaker notes, videos and all documentation used prior to and during the meeting.
- Has a team leader been appointed and trained as a team leader in the remote modality?
 - Has a back-up team leader been appointed in case of the unavailability of the team leader for technical or other reasons?

¹⁷ Due *inter alia* to reduced quality and quantity of sensory inputs in this modality compared to face-to-face and remote hub interpreting, additional non-interpreting responsibilities prior to and during the event, etc. For sign language interpreters performing relay interpreting, an additional loss of sensory input is the transferral of a 3D source language (sign) to a 2D screen.

¹⁸ Sub-standard audiovisual input will require the interpreter to make an additional comprehension effort that can lead to an earlier onset of fatigue and possibly to impaired performance.

¹⁹ Whilst a lack of visual input renders sign language interpreting impossible, the lack of visual input to an interpreter of spoken language is also detrimental, depriving the interpreter of a significant source of sensory information for the construction of meaning.

PART II – EXECUTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT: ALL STAKEHOLDERS

A. Pre-meeting

1. Training

- The meeting organiser shall ensure technicians, interpreters and participants have the requisite equipment and training prior to testing before the event.
 - Such training for interpreters and participants shall include:
 - establishing a secure internet connection for the meeting;
 - establishing a stable internet connection for the meeting;
 - protection of personal and client data;
 - how to use the platform or system in question.
 - Such training for speakers should include²⁰:
 - presenting documentation in a videoconference;
 - videoconference microphone management;
 - how to speak into a microphone;
 - when and how to mute your microphone;
 - preventing microphone feedback;
 - preventing audio shocks by not tapping or dropping microphone;
 - avoiding cell phone or otherwise induced interference.
 - Such training for interpreters shall include:
 - How to use the platform or system in question;
 - How to interact with other interpreters, team leader, remote technicians and the chair;
 - Effective handover procedures;
 - Back-up mechanism in the event of system failure.

²⁰ For further guidance, see AIIC's [Tips for remote speakers using remote platforms](#).

2. Testing

- The meeting organiser shall allow sufficient time to test the connections and equipment of interpreters and active participants prior to the event. Interpreters shall inform organisers of their observations of the following:
 - Audio quality indicators:
 - i. Parts totally inaudible;
 - ii. Loss of certain words or parts thereof “clipping”;
 - iii. Audible artefacts: hiss, crackles, hum, feedback;
 - iv. Tonal quality limited, but otherwise no sound loss;
 - v. Broadcast quality or equivalent.
 - Video quality indicators:
 - i. Frozen picture;
 - ii. Picture lag (sound and image not synchronized);
 - iii. Heavy pixelation, blurring, low resolution;
 - iv. Slight pixelation, images not sharp;
 - v. Broadcast quality or equivalent.
- The meeting organiser shall ensure the interpreter has all relevant meeting documentation and/or speaking notes prior to the event.
- The meeting organiser shall ensure and test effective interaction possibilities between the interpreters, team leader, remote technicians and the chair.
- The meeting organiser shall ensure and test a back-up mechanism to enable interaction between the interpreters, team leader, remote technicians and the chair in the event of system failure.
- A protocol for interpreter intervention during the event shall be set out in advance, including the following:
 - Indicating poor audiovisual input where this is the case;
 - Stating “inaudible” / “not visible” where this is the case;
 - Pausing interpreting to allow for technical problems to be resolved.
- Meeting duration, pauses, breaks and team strengths shall be set out in the protocol.

B. During Meeting

Interpreter Intervention

- The interpreter shall indicate the following:
 - Inadequate AV input, as above;
 - Lack of relevant documentation;
 - Any kind of difficulties impeding the usual delivery of quality interpreting services;
 - Inability to provide quality interpretation for any other reason.

C. Post-Meeting: Feedback and Evaluation

- The organiser shall require feedback from interpreters, technicians and participants on the quality of audiovisual inputs and any other factors that may contribute to an improved quality of service in the future, including the following list of potential quality indicators:
 - view of speakers/signers;
 - availability and/or view of documents and other projected materials;
 - communication possibilities with:
 - booth member(s);
 - team members;
 - technician(s);
 - meeting chair;
 - other relevant stakeholders.
- Interpreters will give feedback to their representatives on the appropriacy of the following working conditions for the specific RSI modality performed:
 - meeting duration (shorter);
 - breaks and pauses (longer or more regular);
 - team strength (reinforced).
- Interpreters will give feedback to their representatives on the following additional issues with regard to the remote interpreting from home *in extremis*:
 - appropriacy of platform or system used for the remote modality in question;
 - perceived level of fatigue compared to equivalent face-to-face scenarios;
 - perceived level of stress compared to equivalent face-to-face scenarios;
 - perceived additional responsibilities (e.g. of a technical nature) compared to equivalent face-to-face scenarios.

Annex A – Feedback Form Template for Interpreters and Participants²¹

Observable Audiovisual Quality Indicators

| Video Quality Indicators | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|--|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| i. Frozen picture | | | | | |
| ii. Picture lags behind sound (sound and image not synchronized) | | | | | |
| iii. Heavy pixilation (poor quality image) | | | | | |
| iv. Slight pixilation (good quality but not always sharp) | | | | | |
| v. Broadcast quality image | | | | | |

| Audio Quality Indicators | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|--|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| i. Parts totally inaudible | | | | | |
| ii. Loss of certain words or parts thereof, “clipping” | | | | | |
| iii. Audible artefacts: hiss, crackles, hum, feedback | | | | | |
| iv. Tonal quality limited, but otherwise no sound loss | | | | | |
| v. Broadcast quality sound | | | | | |

²¹ Criteria adapted from Ambe-Niba, P. and Constable, A. (2013) *The Impact of New Technologies in the Interpreter Workplace: a Case Study of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)*, University of Geneva (Faculty of Translation and Interpreting)

Annex B - Technical Checklist for Meeting Organisers and Technicians

- Is compliance with ISO and other international and national norms ensured for all software and hardware used in the setting, from the interpreter to the end user?

Audio

- Is the volume level from each active participant equal (floor)?
- Is the volume level of the floor equal to that of the interpreted channels?
- Can distant sound sources be managed within the system?
- Is acoustic echo cancelling ensured at all sites?
- Are interpreters protected from:
 - sudden acoustic shock or peak loads (94 dBA SPL for any duration longer than 100ms);²²
 - constant noise exposure (80 dBA SPL over 1 minute).²³
- Are participants protected from acoustic shock or noise exposure in accordance with relevant national or international legislation?
- Are reverberation or echoes within the limits set out in [AS/NZS 2107](#)?
- Is the speech transmission index (STI) at least 0.64?

Microphones

- Can all interpreter and participant microphones reproduce audio frequencies between 125 Hz and 15,000 Hz?
- Are all video conferencing microphones equipped with physical on/off or mute button?
- Can all microphones be muted remotely by a technician?
- Does the platform/system allow for a configuration in which only one microphone in the meeting room can be switched on at all times?

²² [ISO 20109:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements\)](#).

²³ [ISO 20109:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements\)](#).

Audiovisual input

- Is lip sync ensured?
 - Sound behind image no more than 45 ms;
 - Sound before image no more than 125 ms.
- Will image and sound arrive at the interpreter's screen and headphones within 500 ms of their production at the source?

Interpreter and Participant Connections and Equipment

- Is 4Mbps of bandwidth permanently available and ensured for every HD video feed?
- Have secure connections been established to interpreters and participants?
- Is the equipment (including the interface) accessible to persons with disabilities?
- If in doubt, refer to [ISO/PAS 24019:2020](#) for compliance issues.

Annex C - ISO standards

AIIC emphasises that all distance interpreting modalities must meet the Association's own technical specifications and the applicable requirements of the following ISO standards relating to conference interpreting equipment and sound and image input to interpreters:

[ISO 2603:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Permanent booths — Requirements\)](#);

[ISO 4043:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Mobile booths — Requirements\)](#);

[ISO 20109:2016 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Equipment — Requirements\)](#);

[ISO 20108:2017 \(Simultaneous interpreting — Quality and transmission of sound and image input — Requirements\)](#);

[ISO 22259:2019 \(Conference systems — Equipment — Requirements\)](#).

These standards provide the relevant requirements both for the quality and transmission of sound and image provided to interpreters and for the equipment needed in the booths.

AIIC has also participated in the development of [ISO/PAS 24019:2020](#), a publicly available specification addressing Simultaneous Interpreting Delivery Platforms used for the delivery of simultaneous interpreting services in remote interpreting settings.