



**SATI**

SOUTH AFRICAN  
TRANSLATORS' INSTITUTE

# South African Translators' Institute

Accreditation examination in sworn translation

# Prerequisites for the sworn translation examination

The following are the prerequisites for qualifying to write the exam:

- Current SATI membership of at least three months (student members do not qualify)
- Paid-up SATI membership fee

# Prerequisites for the sworn translation examination (continued)

- A post-secondary language practice qualification plus evidence of at least three years' language practice work in the relevant discipline (with professional references)

*or*

- Evidence of at least five years' language practice work in the relevant discipline (with professional references)

*or*

- Current SATI accreditation

*or*

- Membership of/or current accreditation by a FIT member association accepted by the SATI Council

# Important facts about sworn translation

- One does not have to be a 'sworn' translator to work as a translator in South Africa, although it is required for specific types of texts.
- Candidates must study the SATI sworn translation manual (2020 edition) before applying for the practice test and exam.
- Candidates must write the compulsory practice test for sworn translation before applying for the exam.
- Candidates must follow the conventions in the SATI sworn translation manual (2020 edition) to pass the exam.

# Important facts about sworn translation (continued)

- Candidates should have a legal background or thorough knowledge of the legal systems relevant to the languages they are translating.
- Once the candidate passes the accreditation exam, they have to be sworn in at the High Court of South Africa to complete the process.
- The court application procedure is explained in the SATI sworn translation manual (2020 edition).

# The reason for the compulsory practice test

- The practice test will give candidates an idea of what to expect in the exam.
- After writing the test, they will be able to determine –
  - whether their legal knowledge is sufficient to pass the accreditation exam;  
and
  - whether they understand the correct use of the required certification,  
translator's notes and format.
- Note that writing the practice test is compulsory, but passing the test is not a guarantee that the candidate will pass the exam.

# The differences between the practice test and the exam

- The practice test consists of one text. The examination consists of at least four compulsory texts.
- The practice test must be returned within three months, but there is no time limit for writing it. The examination must be written within 24 hours.
- The practice test is marked by one examiner only. The examination is marked by two examiners who work independently and anonymously.
- With the test, the full marked script is returned to the candidate, with comments written by the examiner. With the exam, the candidate receives a report compiled by the SATI accreditation officer.

# In case of an unsuccessful result in the practice test

In the practice test, the following will constitute a fail:

- Two or more major errors  
*or*
- One major error plus four minor errors  
*or*
- Eight or more minor errors

If the candidate passes, they may apply to write the examination at their convenience.

If the candidate fails, the following waiting periods apply for rewriting the practice test:

- No major errors and up to 15 minor errors: 3 months
- No major errors and 15+ minor errors: 6 months
- One or more major errors and up to ten minor errors: 6 months
- One or more major errors and ten minor errors: 8 months

# Preparation for the examination

- The SATI accreditation examination is designed for candidates who are already experts and seasoned translators and would like to add SATI accreditation to their qualifications.
- SATI provides a sworn translation manual (2020 edition) to assist candidates in preparing for the examination in sworn translation.

# Examination venue and date

- A suitable examination date and time is agreed upon with the accreditation officer.
- At the agreed time, the candidate will receive the examination paper via email with password-protected access.
- The candidate must complete and return the examination within 24 hours.
- They will be required to submit a statement declaring that the translation is their own work.
- If any examination conditions are not complied with, the examination will be declared null and void, the examination fee will be forfeited and the candidate will have to wait 12 months before applying to write the examination again.

# The examination format

- All texts must be translated in the sworn translation examination.
- Examples of texts include academic certificates and transcripts, contracts, civil and personal documents (birth/death/divorce/marriage certificates), testimonials and wills.
- The texts will be black-and-white photocopies of actual documents, but should be treated as originals for the purposes of the examination.

# Tips for writing the examination

- Read the instructions carefully.
- Analyse the text for tone, style, emphasis, context, cotext, etc.
- Plan time carefully to spend enough time on each text.
- Translate in the same style and register as the source text.
- Adhere as closely as possible to the format of the original document.

# Tips for writing the examination (continued)

- Use a spellchecker set to the correct target language.
- If translating into English, always use English (UK).
- Proofread carefully for typos, extra spacing and other odd formatting.
- Double-check that sentences or important segments of information have not been omitted.

# Tips for writing the examination (continued)

In the sworn examination particularly, please check the following:

- Proper names are spelled correctly
- Numbers are typed correctly.
- No words on the page have been missed, including words that appear in the margins, for example
- All stamps, signatures, logos, drawings, etc. have been annotated
- Each page has been correctly certified
- All pages have been numbered

# Recommended sources

The following may be used when writing the test and examination:

- Any dictionaries, glossaries, wordlists, reports, grammar guides and books on language
- For sworn translation, specialist legal dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual) are essential
- Internet resources

# Assessing the examination paper

- The script is marked by two examiners.
- The examiners do not have contact with each other and the candidate remains anonymous.
- The examiners are professional and experienced sworn translators.
- The final result is approved by the SATI Council.

# Assessing the examination paper (continued)

The following are considered major errors:

- ***Gross mistranslation*** – where the meaning is lost completely
- ***Omission*** of vital information
- ***Insertion*** of information
- Including ***alternate translations*** (instead of making a choice)
- ***Failure in target language grammar*** (e.g. concord, tense, conjugation, prepositions, idiom)
- ***Misspelling names of persons or places or reference numbers***
- ***Miscopying*** dates or numbers
- ***Failure to certify at all***

# Assessing the examination paper (continued)

The following are considered minor errors:

- ***Mistranslation*** – where the meaning is distorted slightly / not changed
- ***Omission*** of less important information
- ***Inelegant target language grammar*** (e.g. word order, spelling, punctuation)
- ***Typographical errors***
- ***Failure to certify every page***

# Assessing the examination paper (continued)

The following aspects are also considered:

- The target text must stand as a text in its own right. It must read like an original.
- The equivalent pass mark (e.g. in an academic examination) would be around 90% (in other words, almost perfect).

# Assessing the examination paper (continued)

The following number of errors will result in a fail in the examination:

- Two or more major errors in one question

*or*

- Twenty or more minor errors overall

*or*

- One major error plus seven minor errors in one question

*or*

- Eight or more minor errors overall

# Assessing the examination paper (continued)

Using annotations:

- Candidates may make use of annotations (footnotes) in the examination, to explain to the examiner a particularly difficult decision they have made. However, these should be used sparingly.

# Results report

- Marking can take up to six weeks.
- Candidates will receive a report with a selection of examiners' comments.

**Note:**

- Not all errors will be listed in the report.
- Candidates will not see their marked examination script.
- Candidates cannot discuss their results with the accreditation officer.

# Passing the examination

Candidates who pass the examination –

- will receive an accreditation certificate;
- will have their name appear on SATI's list of accredited members; and
- may use their accreditation status in communication with clients, i.e. in an email signature.

# In case of an unsuccessful result

- If a candidate fails, it means that they were not able to produce work to the required standard for accreditation on the day of the examination.
- The candidate should read the comments carefully and follow the advice given.
- The candidate may reapply to write the examination after one year.

# Appeal process

An appeal process is available.

- A candidate who wishes to lodge an appeal should submit an application form and proof of payment within 8 weeks of receiving the result.
- The original examination script will be marked by a third examiner and their report will be the final result.
- No further correspondence will be entered into after the final result is made available.
- If the 'Fail' result is overturned, the candidate will be refunded for the appeal and will be considered accredited.

# Period of validity

Accreditation remains valid as the translator remains a member of SATI.

Please note:

- Accreditation lapses when membership lapses.
- If a candidate subsequently wishes to become re-accredited, they will have to apply to the Accreditation Committee to review their case. This committee will decide whether the person could retain their accreditation status or if the person should pass the examination again.



For any further information

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