ITI PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

GUIDANCE AND EXAMPLES

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The ITI Professional Practice Framework sets out 31 professional practices that describe what excellent practice looks like for translators and interpreters at all stages of their careers. It is organised into five categories: Linguistic, Cultural and Subject Competence; Business Skills; Service Delivery Skills; Commitment to Professionalism; and Ethical Mindset.

The framework is built around a simple but powerful idea: that professional excellence in translation and interpreting rests on three interconnected foundations. At its core are linguistic, cultural, and subject competencies – the knowledge and skills essential to the work. These are supported by enabling skills: the business acumen and service delivery capabilities that allow a professional to operate effectively in the real world. And underpinning everything are professional values – a commitment to professionalism and an ethical mindset – that elevate technical competence into genuine excellence and give the work its meaning and purpose.

The framework sits alongside the mandatory standards in the ITI Code of Professional Conduct and is fully consistent with them. It describes practices that meet the standards.

CORE COMPETENCIES

The linguistic, cultural, and subject knowledge and skills that make it possible to do the work – the essential foundation of professional practice.

ENABLING SKILLS

The business and service delivery capabilities that allow a professional to operate effectively – turning competence into a sustainable, client-focused practice.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES

The commitment to professionalism and ethical mindset that elevate technical excellence into a practice that is trustworthy, responsible, and genuinely valuable.

ITI exists to promote and maintain the highest standards in translation, interpreting and related language services – and to support its members in achieving them. The framework is central to that mission. It provides a shared, clearly articulated definition of professional excellence, one that reflects the full breadth of what it means to be a skilled, ethical, and committed language professional today.

The framework is designed to apply to all professional translators and interpreters, regardless of specialism, working context or career stage – whether you are a freelance translator, a staff interpreter, an in-house language professional, or anything in between. Membership of ITI signals a commitment to these standards, and this document is intended to help you put that commitment into practice.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

These guidelines accompany the framework and are intended to bring it to life. For each of the 31 practices, it provides a set of illustrative examples drawn from real professional contexts, covering both translation and interpreting.

The examples are not exhaustive, and they do not all apply to everyone. Some are relevant to translators, some to interpreters, and others will be germane depending on career stage. Some are relevant only to those who have chosen to work with CAT tools, AI or other new technologies. They are all starting points, intended to help you recognise the practices in your own work and reflect on how they apply to your professional context.

You might use the framework and this guidance document in various ways:

- **CPD planning** – using the 31 practices as a structure for identifying areas you would like to develop and for planning and recording your CPD activities
- **Self-assessment** – reflecting on how you currently approach each practice and where you might want to improve
- **Mentoring and professional-development conversations** – using the framework as a shared reference point for structured discussions about professional growth
- **Induction** – if you are new to the profession or to ITI, taking the framework as a comprehensive map of what good professional practice looks like.

FEEDBACK

We hope you find this document useful. If you have any constructive comments or suggestions, please contact the ITI Professional Development Team at training@iti.org.uk.

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1. LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL AND SUBJECT COMPETENCE

1.1 Core language competence: possesses linguistic ability, fluency and range in source and target languages

- Maintaining active competence across all modes of communication in source and target languages – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – including the ability to engage confidently with clients and subject matter experts in the source language.
- Cultivating an awareness of changes in current usage, e.g., developments in inclusive language.
- A translator actively honing their target-language writing skills to master clarity, coherence, rhythm, and prosody.
- A translator recognising the register and tone of voice used in a source text and ensuring the target text maintains an equivalent register and tone, rather than defaulting to their own usual personal style.
- An interpreter drawing on a wide active vocabulary in the target language to render a speaker's meaning without pausing or resorting to approximations.

1.2 Fitness for purpose: balances fidelity to the source material with transparency of expression in the target language, according to the requirements of the brief or assignment

> ***Note:*** *"Fitness for purpose" refers to the principle that a translation or interpretation should be appropriate for its intended use and audience. This includes accuracy (fidelity to the source) and naturalness of expression in the target language, but the balance between these will vary depending on the purpose of the text or discourse.*

- A translator ensuring that translation decisions reflect the text's communicative purpose (to inform, to sell, to persuade, etc.), regardless of whether this is explicitly stated in any brief.
- A legal translator rendering a formal document accurately and completely, while ensuring the target text reads naturally for a native speaker of the target language.
- A literary translator deciding how to adapt cultural references, idioms and humour so they land effectively with a target-language reader, without distorting the author's voice or meaning.
- An interpreter rendering a speech in real time, making split-second judgements about how to follow the structure and register of the source, balancing accuracy with naturalness of delivery.

1.3 Cultural awareness: understands cultural references, social norms and communication conventions in the source and target languages

- Appreciating that humour, irony, wordplay, or popular cultural references in the source language may not translate directly and may require cultural adaptation – for example, a joke that relies on a pun in one language may need a completely different approach in another.
- Knowing how to deal with concepts, institutions or social norms in the source culture that have no direct equivalent in the target culture – for example, translating references to the NHS for a non-UK audience or rendering terms such as the French *état civil* or Danish *hygge* for those unfamiliar with the concepts.
- An interpreter being aware of cultural differences in communication styles – directness versus indirectness, or differing norms around interruption – and adjusting interpretation accordingly.

1.4 Specialisation: possesses the subject knowledge and terminology in the source and target languages appropriate to the chosen field(s) of practice

- Building and maintaining sufficiently deep knowledge of a subject – for example, marine engineering or financial instruments – to understand and render the nuances of specialist texts with clarity and authority.
- Being able to discuss a complex document with a client or subject matter expert, asking informed questions and seeking clarification with confidence.
- Keeping a personal glossary of specialist terminology in your source and target languages, updated regularly as the field evolves.
- A medical translator recognising the difference between clinical and lay terminology and choosing the appropriate register for the intended audience – for example, translating a patient leaflet differently from a clinical-trial report.

1.5 Research skills: finds, evaluates, and applies relevant information and terminology to support professional practice

- Evaluating the reliability of online glossaries, terminology databases and search results including AI- generated answers, checking against other sources, using back translation; and knowing when to consult a subject matter expert rather than rely on a secondary source.
- Being aware of differences in legal systems (e.g., civil and common law) and finding the most appropriate terminology to render lexical and conceptual gaps in the target language.
- Where a document references an EU or UN legal text, finding and using the same text in the target language.
- Fact-checking statements and claims made in a source text, where appropriate, and notifying the client of errors.
- An interpreter proactively researching the subject matter, key terminology and likely vocabulary in both languages before an assignment, going beyond briefing materials provided to build a thorough understanding of the topic.

1.6 Critically evaluates and, where appropriate, uses tools and technologies for language work

- A translator understanding how translation memory (a database of previously translated text segments) and CAT tools work and using them to ensure consistency of terminology and phrasing.
- A translator using suitable consistency-checking and quality-control tools as part of their revision and review processes.
- Recognising that AI and machine translation can produce translations that appear fluent and authoritative but in fact contain errors, knowing which text types make that failure more serious and assessing the related risks.
- Opting to use AI to research terminology or to generate a first-draft glossary from a source text, then applying a critical eye to verify and refine the output before use.
- After assessing the value of using new technologies, making an informed choice whether or not to use them.

2. BUSINESS SKILLS

2.1 Manages financial administration, including budgeting, record keeping, invoicing and payment follow-up

- Keeping track of tax-deductible expenditure throughout the year and maintaining the records needed to support claims and complete a tax return.
- Issuing invoices promptly, with clear payment terms, applying the correct taxes according to the client's legal status and territory of operation.
- Using a spreadsheet, database, or app to record payment due dates, track overdue payments and monitor the financial performance of a freelance business.

2.2 Organises workload and sets priorities, applying sound project management practices to ensure timely delivery to specification

- Being able to estimate the amount of time that a potential new project would take (based on word count, complexity, availability of resources, etc.) before deciding whether to accept it.
- Maintaining a clear overview of all current and upcoming deadlines and flagging potential conflicts.
- A translator breaking a large project into manageable stages – for example, drafting, revision, quality assurance and final check – and allocating time for each within the overall deadline.
- An interpreter requesting assignment details well in advance, including venue, duration, subject matter, and any required preparation materials.

2.3 Understands and complies with legal requirements for business activities

- Identifying and complying with all relevant legal requirements for commercial activities in your own and your clients' jurisdictions, such as taxation, insurance, data protection, company incorporation, contract formation and security vetting.
- Assessing the risks associated with your professional operations, maintaining appropriate professional-indemnity insurance, and understanding what it covers.
- Understanding the legal implications of signing a non-disclosure agreement, e.g., as regards the use of online tools, before beginning work on a confidential project.

2.4 Critically evaluates and, where appropriate, uses tools and technologies to manage operations

- Using project management software or a spreadsheet system to track client details, word counts, project specifications and delivery requirements across multiple concurrent projects.
- Selecting invoicing and accounting software appropriate to the scale of the business and to the legal or administrative requirements in the country of fiscal residence and keeping it up to date.
- Using an appropriate appointment calendar that is available and works even while away from base.
- Opting to use AI tools to support administrative tasks such as drafting client communications or preparing invoices.
- Implementing and maintaining an appropriate disaster-recovery procedure to assure business continuity and data security in the event of fire, data loss, natural disaster, technology failure, incapacity, death, etc.

2.5 Applies marketing skills to promote services

- A freelancer maintaining a professional website that clearly describes services, language pairs, subject specialisms and contact details while convincingly conveying the value of the expert human services offered.
- Seeking face-to-face meetings with existing and potential clients, e.g., by attending their trade fairs or CPD events.
- Using LinkedIn or other professional networks to raise visibility, share relevant content and connect with potential clients.

- Asking satisfied clients for testimonials and, where appropriate, referrals to other potential clients.
- Keeping professional profiles accurate as to current qualifications, experience, and field(s) of competence.

2.6 Negotiates effectively with clients on all aspects of projects, assignments, and consultancy work

- Discussing and agreeing the scope of a project before beginning work – for example, a translator clarifying whether footnotes, captions, embedded text, or bibliographies are included in the word count or whether the client might require multiple rounds of revisions.
- A translator negotiating a realistic deadline when a client requests an unreasonably short turnaround, explaining the implications for quality and reputational or other risks.
- A translator negotiating any additional charges for format conversion or technical preparation when a client requests specific software or file formats.
- An interpreter negotiating the terms of a booking, including preparation time, travel expenses, cancellation terms and the provision of relevant materials in advance of the assignment.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY SKILLS

3.1 Acts as a professional adviser to clients, promoting understanding of quality, professional standards, and fair rates for language services, including the value of human expertise

- A translator advising a client on the realistic cost of a high-quality, effective translation and explaining what factors affect pricing – including the language pair, subject matter, turnaround time and intended use – especially in situations where the consequences of error would be grave.
- Advising a client on the need for full human revision of an AI-assisted safety-critical translation, setting out the costs alongside the risks of not doing so.
- A translator explaining the difference between translation and transcreation and recommending the appropriate service for a new client's marketing campaign.
- A translator advising a client when errors that risk reputational damage are found in their published content, even if that content was not part of the specific project for which the translator was originally engaged.
- Recommending a colleague with appropriate expertise when a client requests work outside your own sphere of competence.

3.2 Sets and manages client expectations, keeping clients informed throughout the engagement

- A translator confirming at the outset of a project the agreed deadline, word count, file format and any other specifications, and following up with a written summary if the brief was given orally.
- A translator providing staged interim deliveries of pieces of a very large project, according to a pre-agreed schedule.

- A translator letting a client know promptly if a document turns out to be significantly more complex or time-consuming than anticipated, discussing the implications, and proposing an approach before proceeding.
- An interpreter working in consecutive mode explaining to a client the importance of speakers pausing regularly to allow for accurate interpretation and agreeing a protocol for managing this during the assignment.

3.3 Builds positive, lasting professional relationships

- Taking the time to understand a regular client's business, preferences, and communication style, and adapting your approach accordingly.
- Developing a network of contacts within your specialist field – including clients, colleagues, and relevant industry professionals – to respond quickly and effectively to client needs, for example by assembling a team at short notice for a large urgent project.
- Following up after completing a significant assignment to check the client was satisfied and to maintain the professional relationship.
- Developing and maintaining the ability to communicate naturally and convincingly in the client's native language wherever possible.

3.4 Works collaboratively and effectively with other professionals in multidisciplinary and team settings, where required

- A translator working as part of a large team on a complex multilingual document, coordinating with other translators, editors, content writers and project managers to ensure consistency of terminology and style.
- A translator working with a client's in-house legal or marketing team, adapting to their workflows, house style and review processes.
- A community interpreter working in a hospital coordinating with doctors, nurses, and social workers to ensure effective communication with a patient who does not speak the local language.
- A legal interpreter working alongside solicitors and court officials, understanding their roles, and communicating effectively within the constraints of the legal process.

3.5 Critically evaluates and, where appropriate, uses tools and technologies for the delivery of professional services.

- Testing new platforms or resources and giving practical feedback from the perspective of a professional.
- A translator evaluating a new CAT tool before deciding whether to use it, considering factors such as interoperability, compatibility with existing workflows, data security implications and the quality of its translation memory.
- Testing a new tool, such as an AI or QA app, against a sample of your own past work before opting to use it on a live project, recognising that vendor claims can be a poor predictor of performance – e.g., trialling a new QA app to see what it catches and what it misses.
- An interpreter evaluating a remote-interpreting platform before accepting an assignment that requires it, considering factors such as audio quality, technical reliability, and data security.

3.6 Uses innovation and creativity to add value where appropriate

- A translator proposing a transcreation approach rather than a straight translation when a client's marketing material relies on wordplay, cultural references or emotional impact that would be lost in a more straightforward rendering.
- A translator finding a creative solution to an untranslatable term or concept – for example, working with the client to coin a new expression in the target language that captures the meaning and tone of the original.
- A translator recognising the opportunity to add a judicious hint of engaging flair to a marketing translation where the source text is counterproductively dry or bland.
- Developing and carefully testing a bespoke app or macro to streamline or enhance a part of the translation QA process at scale.

4. COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONALISM

4.1 Holds formal qualifications or recognised credentials

- Holding a recognised qualification in translation or interpreting, such as a Bachelor's or Master's degree in translation, a postgraduate diploma in translation or interpreting, or a Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI).
- Achieving MITI or FITI status with ITI, or Chartered Linguist status through CIOL, or passing an entry examination with a recognised professional-translation association outside the UK, as a mark of professional standing and commitment to excellence.
- Maintaining a record of qualifications and credentials and being able to provide evidence of these to clients or professional bodies on request.
- Pursuing additional qualifications in a specialist area – for example, a wine diploma or a legal- or medical-translation qualification – to strengthen credibility in a chosen field.

4.2 Maintains membership of a relevant professional association (e.g., ITI, CIOL, AIIC, MET) and adheres to its code of professional conduct

- Renewing ITI membership annually and engaging with the obligations that membership entails.
- Familiarising yourself with the code of conduct of your professional association(s) and consulting it to help you navigate an ethical dilemma or unfamiliar situation.
- Taking (and making) opportunities to network with fellow members and learn from their professionalism, e.g., at lunches, workshops and language exchanges.
- Reading publications by professional associations in language-related fields such as translation, interpreting, editing and/or copywriting.

4.3 Maintains and develops professional knowledge and skills through CPD, reflective practice and keeping abreast of the changing professional landscape

- Keeping a reflective CPD log that records not just activities undertaken but what was learned and how it has informed practice or been integrated permanently into workflows.
- Reading, listening, and watching widely and regularly in both source and target languages, across a range of genres and subject areas, to maintain and develop linguistic range and fluency.
- Joining a relevant professional body in a specialist field – for example, becoming an affiliate member of RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) as a translator specialising

in architecture – to gain access to industry events, publications and CPD opportunities while building credibility with clients.

- Setting aside time at the end of a challenging project to reflect on what went well, what proved difficult, and what you would do differently next time.

4.4 Makes independent professional decisions with confidence

- Declining a project on the grounds that it falls outside your area of competence – for example, an interpreter determining in advance that they lack the subject knowledge or specialist terminology for a particular assignment.
- Deciding to charge a higher rate for an urgent or technically demanding project and explaining and justifying that decision to the client.
- A translator pushing back on a client's request to use a specific MT tool that you consider unsuitable for the subject matter, or the project aims.
- A translator trusting their own professional judgement when identifying that a source text is ambiguous or in error, documenting their reasoning and flagging it to the client.
- Identifying that a client's preferred expression would not be suitable (e.g., because of misleading resonances, inaccuracy in certain contexts or risk of double entendre) and proposing and explaining better alternatives.
- A consecutive interpreter having the confidence, even when under pressure, to interrupt and ask for clarification when a term, number or instruction is unclear.

4.5 Strives to produce high-quality work and meet the highest professional standards

- A translator returning to a completed translation draft to review and refine it as a standalone target-language text before delivery.
- Seeking feedback from a trusted colleague on a challenging piece of work.
- Reflecting after a demanding assignment on aspects of performance you would like to improve and identifying relevant CPD activities to address these.
- Seeking out experienced expert colleagues to regularly check and discuss your work as part of an ongoing personal CPD programme, e.g., through a mutual revision-buddy or revision-club arrangement.
- Accepting assignments only when confident that you have sufficient time to complete them to the required standard.

4.6 Manages own wellbeing, recognising the demands of professional practice and the importance of sustainable working habits

- Setting clear working hours and holiday periods and communicating these to clients, rather than being available around the clock.
- Avoiding over-reliance on a single client by actively maintaining a diverse client base, reducing vulnerability to sudden loss of work.
- An interpreter asserting the need for regular breaks or team rotation during extended assignments, to maintain accuracy and avoid mental and physical exhaustion.
- Recognising when workload is or would become unsustainable and taking steps to reduce it – including declining work, bringing in a trusted colleague or negotiating adjusted deadlines.
- Assuring appropriate mental and emotional recovery after undertaking challenging or stressful jobs (e.g., exposure to vicarious trauma in public-service interpreting contexts).

- Maintaining an ergonomic working environment to reduce the risk of repetitive strain, backache, etc.

4.7 Engages with and contributes to the wider professional community, including sharing knowledge and supporting others in the field

- Mentoring a less experienced translator or interpreter, sharing knowledge of professional practice, specialist fields or business management.
- Presenting at a conference or professional event on a topic within your area of expertise.
- Designing and delivering training or workshops to support the development of other translators and interpreters.
- Volunteering for a committee, working group or other initiative within a professional association.
- An early-career professional speaking up in groups and meetings, so that your peer-group perspective is acknowledged.

4.8 Recognises role in shaping public perception of the profession and promoting the value of human translation and interpreting

- Correcting misconceptions about translation and interpreting when they arise in conversation – for example, the assumption that being bilingual is sufficient qualification to translate professionally.
- Demonstrating that the value of human expertise lies not only in the quality of the output but in the quality of the service – solving problems, exercising professional judgement and developing trusted relationships.
- Representing the profession positively in interactions with clients, colleagues and the public, mindful that individual conduct contributes to how the profession as a whole is perceived.
- Doing outreach activities in schools and colleges to raise students' awareness of the profession.
- Attending or speaking at events in your clients' industries or professions to help counteract the hype about AI and MT.

5. ETHICAL MINDSET

5.1 Acts with integrity and honesty in all professional dealings and is accountable for their outcomes

- Declining work that you know could be harmful, even if it pays well – for example, translation of disinformation or material that could incite hate.
- Declaring a potential conflict of interest when asked to translate material relating to a person, organisation, or cause with which you have a personal connection.
- Informing clients about your use of AI or MT and how, if at all, they affect your output – and their data.
- A translator acknowledging and taking responsibility for a translation error and working with the client to correct it promptly and to repair any damage to the professional relationship.

5.2 Recognises and exercises a duty of care to end users of their work

- A translator being mindful of how accessibility considerations might be relevant to the target text – e.g., ensuring that all text is readily comprehensible to users of screen readers, dissuading the client from conveying information by the use of colour alone.
- A translator of patient information leaflets ensuring that the target text is not only accurate but genuinely clear to a lay reader in the target language.
- A medical interpreter in a clinical setting ensuring that a patient fully understands their diagnosis and treatment options, going beyond a literal rendering of the doctor's words if necessary to ensure comprehension.
- A legal interpreter ensuring that a defendant understands the proceedings against them, including the right to ask for clarification if something is unclear.
- An interpreter being alert to signs that a vulnerable service user is not grasping what is being communicated and raising this with the relevant professional.

5.3 Respects confidentiality of all information received in the course of professional work and handles data with discretion and care

- Deleting client files from personal devices and cloud storage once a project is complete, where required under agreed data retention policies.
- Treating all information received from a client as confidential unless explicitly told otherwise, and not discussing it with anyone outside the project.
- Checking the terms and conditions of any online tool – MT engine, AI assistant, cloud storage or transcription service – including whether client material may be retained or re-used to train the provider's models. Using only those whose terms of use permit confidential processing.

5.4 Strives to be impartial and objective

Note: *"Strives to be" acknowledges that complete impartiality is not always achievable in practice – for example, an interpreter representing a client in negotiations may legitimately advocate for their client's position. Impartiality is an aspiration rather than an absolute state.*

- A translator producing an accurate translation of legal or political content without editorialising, adding commentary or omitting uncomfortable material.
- An interpreter rendering a witness statement or testimony accurately, even when the content is distressing or morally objectionable, without allowing personal reactions to affect the interpretation.
- An interpreter in a mediation or negotiation rendering both parties' positions accurately and without favouring one side.

5.5 Considers the environmental and social impact of their professional practice and adopts responsible working practices where possible

- An interpreter considering the environmental implications of international travel for conference interpreting assignments and discussing remote-interpreting options with clients where appropriate.
- Considering whether a translation project serves communities equitably or whether it could contribute to the marginalisation of minority-language speakers.
- Adopting paperless working practices and responsible data disposal as part of a broader commitment to environmental responsibility.