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HEDSA GUIDELINES ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

(enabling Deaf students access and support at Higher Education Institutions)

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PROCESS OF DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

In 2015, the then HEDSA Chairperson, Reinette Popplestone, developed the first guideline with contributors from the University of Cape Town, the University of the Free State, North-West University, the University of Witwatersrand, the National Institute of the Deaf (NID), and the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA).

In 2019, the HEDSA Executive Committee attempted to update the guideline with the inclusion of Stellenbosch University, which, at the time, started with Sign Language interpreter services.

In 2023, HEDSA hosted its bi-annual conference with the theme focusing on reasonable accommodation of Deaf students, including the rendering of Sign Language interpreter services. A resolution was taken that HEDSA should review its guidelines, which led to a workshop held in 2024, inviting all HEDSA members to participate in the development of this document together with South African Sign Language Interpreters, Coordinators and Deaf students at Higher Education Institutions.

HEDSA acknowledges that there are other groups of deaf students (including those who are deafblind) with different communication access needs (i.e. lip speakers or tactile interpreting), which is very specific and requires research and consultation with more stakeholders. This document seeks to address only the appointment of South African Sign Language Interpreters for Deaf students as South African Sign Language users.

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HEDSA Guidelines: Appointment of SASLis at HEIs

GLOSSARY

Deaf	Deaf with a capital “D” refers to those who identify with Deaf culture and the use of South African Sign Language.
DU	Disability Unit.
HEDSA	Higher Education Disability Services Association
HEI	Higher Education Institution refers to any institution of higher education where SASLi services are provided, including universities, TVET colleges, and universities of technology.
In good standing	For a SASLi or an organisation representing SASLis, in good standing is regarded as having complied with the Code of Ethics and has conducted business with organisations for the Deaf in a just manner while not being subjected to any form of sanction, suspension or disciplinary process.
SALPC	South African Language Practitioners Council (registration and accreditation processes of interpreters are still in development).
SASL	South African Sign Language.
SASLi	South African Sign Language interpreter.
SATI	South African Translators’ Institute

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BACKGROUND

Educational interpreting for Deaf students is a relatively new field in South Africa. Due to the lack of an appropriate and adequate schooling system for the Deaf in the country, Deaf school leavers often do not meet the admission requirements necessary to access Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

One factor that contributes to this statement is also due to the lack of qualified teachers in Deaf schools who are not proficient in Sign Language. This makes communication in the classroom very difficult; the student is unable to grasp a concept, or the teacher is unable to explain the concept using sign language. This results in the number of Deaf people enrolled in HEIs being low and not proportionally representative. As a result, academic interpreting is a field that is mostly decided upon by the HEI where the service is required.

HEIs find it challenging to appoint interpreters based on the institution's existing salary scales, specifically designed for academic or administrative staff. It is at times difficult to clearly define the exact number of hours an interpreter is actively working and to justify the workload versus the salary scale. It is also necessary for institutions to understand the complexity of academic interpreting to ensure that the best service is provided to students who make use of South African Sign Language interpreters (SASLis).

It is important to note that the focus of Disability Units (DUs) at HEIs is on the reasonable accommodation of Deaf students and that the services of SASLis speak to a specific profession in language practice. The Higher Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA) acknowledges that Deaf students don't regard themselves as disabled but of a minority language group. DUs' focus should, therefore, be on the academic performance of Deaf students with access provided by SASLis.

Since South African Sign Language (SASL) has been recognised as an official language of South Africa, the appointment of SASLis at HEIs must be prioritised accordingly. In doing so, it is essential to understand that it is a language issue and, therefore, requires SASLis to work within a language practice framework. This includes an understanding that SASLis have to be fluent in at least two languages (SASL and one spoken language) and adhere to a Code of Ethics. In addition, the implications of the South African Language Practitioners Council Act (Act number 8 of 2014) and Regulations (promulgated in November 2015) on the SASLi profession must be considered.

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The Objectives of the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) in the context of HEIs are:

- to promote and protect the language practice in SA;
- scrutinise particulars of people intending to register;
- accredit people who are accreditable by the Council;
- register people who are accredited by the Council;
- develop, implement, revise and amend a code of conduct relating to the conduct of registered language practitioners;
- protect language practitioners' professional interests;
- protect the Deaf students who make use of services provided by language practitioners;
- regulate the provision of language services to Deaf students.

Cognisance is given to the fact that not all HEIs have similar structures and support departments, and this guideline should be read as a supporting document to guide institutions with different current case studies to identify the best fit within their structures and resources.

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PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINE

The purpose of the guidelines is, on the one hand, to guide HEIs who do not have SASLi services to establish the service and, on the other hand, to assist current existing SASLi services at HEIs in implementing it correctly.

Furthermore, the guidelines aim to ensure that Deaf students receive the appropriate access to communication and information equal to their peers and contribute to the success of Deaf students in their student life cycle by rendering a proper and appropriate SASLi service.

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CURRENT SITUATION

Current HEIs with an established service				
Institution	Province	Deaf Staff	Deaf Students	SASLis
University of the Free State	Free State	1	10	10
University of Witwatersrand	Gauteng		2	4
University of Cape Town	Western Cape	7	2	1
Stellenbosch University	Western Cape	7		2
Boland TVET College	Western Cape	0	8	2
University of Limpopo	Limpopo	0	1	2
Tshwane University of Technology	Gauteng		1	1
Durban University of Technology	KwaZulu-Natal	2	Deaf: 13 deaf: 4	7
University of KwaZulu-Natal	KwaZulu-Natal	0	12	7
Majuba TVET College	KwaZulu-Natal	0	1	1
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Western Cape		1	1
Motheo TVET College	Free State		11	12
University of South Africa	Gauteng	2	100 (online)	1
Vhembe TVET College	Limpopo		50	2

There is a growing need for trained, professional SASLis. Furthermore, Deaf people have a challenge in terms of accessing HEIs due to the lack of qualified and available SASLis.

The current skill level for SASLis who are appointed at HEIs varies from beginner to advanced, which is determined based on an evaluation by Deaf persons and qualified SASLis as per the minimum requirements set out in this document. It is not about vocabulary alone, but also about interpreting skills, training received and qualifications. The skills of SASLis play an essential role in the success of the service.



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HEDSA Guidelines: Appointment of SASLis at HEIs
BEST PRACTICE AT DIFFERENT HEIs: CASE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Background

The first Deaf student registered at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2016 with the appointment of SASLi. This service has grown to accommodate 12 Deaf students with 7 SASLis in 2024. The service has transitioned from a one-to-one service to a team-based approach due to increased enrolment. Students are also enrolled in various academic programs across three campuses, making the logistical coordination of the service challenging. The service has developed a strong digital competency to offer both hybrid interpreting and pre-recorded SASL encoded content to students, in line with a modern blended approach towards teaching and learning. The service is solely responsible for the provision of academic support in an educational setting. Interpreting for therapeutic sessions and non-academic activities is referred to independent contractors contracted by the individual relevant departments. SASLis collaborate with various departments and structures at the institute to raise awareness of SASL and Deaf Culture and facilitate coordination of various student-driven projects. SASLis are also required to be involved in various community engagement initiatives that connect the service directly to the Deaf community in the province to ensure that their interpreting remains contemporary and representative of the Deaf community. This aids in adapting to indigenous dialects as well.

Existing Institutional Structures and Documents

Although the SASLi service is housed within the DU of the university, collaboration exists with the University Language Planning and Development Office (ULPDO), the University Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO), the Corporate Relations Division (CRD), and the Information and Communication Services (ICS).

Existing documents are the Language Policy, the Assessment Policy, and the SASLli Standard Operating Procedure for delivery of academic support that speaks to the SASLi service at the university.

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Successes and Challenges

Successes include a pass rate of >75% over the last 5 years, with Deaf students also transitioning to more independent modes of study. In 2021, the first Deaf student supported by the service graduated with a bachelor's degree and subsequently went on to graduate with an honours degree in 2022. In 2022, the institute also graduated a Deaf PhD student for the first time. SASLis are regarded as professionals, although recruitment and remuneration remain challenging. The continuous professional development, burn-out, stress and fatigue of SASLis continue to be obstacles. Particularly considering increasing enrolment, which has seen the 7 SASLis have to deal with up to 16 students in recent years. Therefore, the interpreting load does not match the staffing capacity on hand in any given year, and the pool of qualified SASLis to draw upon within the province remains challenging.

New vocabulary is being introduced in the classrooms, and unfortunately, most, if not all, lecturers do not share the materials and notes before the class some lecturers do not share material as they say that it is a guideline for them to use. However, interpreters schedule time with the students to discuss the materials and notes once they have received them.

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Background

In 2017, when the university started with SASLi services, it was vital to ensure that all classes were interpreted in teams of two. The Language Centre works closely with the DU for additional support for note-taking and scribes, along with other human support in general, as needed. The SASL portfolio in the Language Centre focuses on language support as a reasonable accommodation for Deaf staff and students. The DU promotes universal access through SASL.

The interpreting service covers access to essential services like medical and mental health appointments, bank visits, legal consultations, family events, etc., for SU staff and students (as far as possible) as part of their social impact initiative. Depending on availability, the SASL interpreting team offers additional support to the Deaf community beyond campus when in need, including DeafBlind interpreting. Benefits to the community include access where it was limited. It also serves as an opportunity for the enrichment and development of SASL as a language for the interpreters, improving their signing skills in the classrooms.

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Hybrid interpreting takes place when needed through Zoom, MS Teams, and also using PowerPoint to record an uploaded lesson and add the interpreting while live transcripts of recorded lessons are also available (AI). In some instances, online material is made available in SASL via a video — however, it's important to note that as a rule all classes are offered face-to-face, and any online classes are supplementary or exceptions. The SASL Portfolio also encourages the use of alternative methods and technology to continue supporting staff and students with AI (in the form of Chat GPT or CoPilot) along with Convo (on-demand interpreting services for out-of-class experiences) have come up as very strong tools.

Successes and Challenges

Since 2017, when the SASLi services started, the university has had two graduates within the Education Faculty, producing Deaf teachers for Deaf children, and 1 Master in Linguistics graduate who is embarking on her PhD studies — the first Deaf person to conduct their PhD at Stellenbosch University. In addition, 7 Deaf staff members' (academic and support staff) SASL needs are also accommodated. The university also offers a SASL short course and an online course.

The interpreting load is more than what the interpreting capacity allows for. Limited availability of local, in-person qualified and experienced interpreters in the field of Higher Education. Participation in continuous development activities for interpreters are limited due to the interpreting load.

Permanently employed interpreters allow for availability of appointed interpreters and easier to budget annually. While Ad Hoc interpreting expenses can fluctuate, it allows for more interpreters to be exposed to the environment and widens the pool of available interpreters. The coordinating of full-time employees is far easier while Ad Hoc would be more labour intensive.

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Background

While a spoken language interpreter service was rendered by the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment (ULFE) for students during lectures, the SASLi service started in 2005 with one Deaf student registered. The SASLi

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was appointed on contract and worked according to the timetable of the Deaf student. When needed, a freelance SASLi was requested to assist and pay on an ad hoc claim basis.

In 2009, there were 5 Deaf students and one SASLi appointed as a Senior Officer within the DU, and four freelance interpreters were used to ensure all Deaf students had a SASLi during lectures. The Senior Officer then had the responsibility to coordinate the service as well, while also coordinating the service for other needs of the Deaf students, i.e. tutor sessions, meetings with lecturers, and group discussions (as a support function). At this stage, SASLis received R80 per hour (according to the rates of DeafSA at the time) and increased to R120 per hour for both the academic and support service interpreting done during 2009. It became necessary to retain SASLis as well and remain with a pool of SASLis to ensure continuity.

In 2013, the ULFE agreed to accept the SASLi service as part of their function, specifically the academic (classroom) interpreting. The budget for classroom interpreting was provided from the top management's budget. Top management also took budget responsibility for SASLi services provided at university events. At this stage, SASL was not included in the UFS Language Policy. The fee per hour to SASLis then quadrupled (the fee equal to that of an ad hoc junior lecturer, which includes preparation time) while the support interpreting remained within the DU and continued to pay R120 per hour. The ULFE then also appointed a SASLi permanently to be the first SASLi to book according to the schedule of SASL interpreting to be done. Where the maximum hours of this SASLi were reached, freelance SASLis were booked. During this time, more awareness among students who were registered for the SASL module also happened, and the interest in becoming a SASLi developed. The DU and the SASL Department started promoting the profession with 3rd-year SASL students. The DU Senior Officer coordinates the support interpreting necessary for Deaf students and is the "go-to-person" for Deaf students. It became apparent that Deaf students needed to report to someone when they were not satisfied with the SASLi service, and the DU staff member communicated regularly with the ULFE coordinator to ensure the development of SASLis, but also matching the level of SASLis with the level of academic difficulty of modules. Newly identified SASLis were evaluated and then encouraged to shadow SASLis in the classroom. Team interpreting started to provide an opportunity for the beginner SASLis to obtain exposure. Mentorship of SASLis started with beginner SASLis, with the DU SASLi as a mentor.

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Towards the end of 2015, the UFS Language Policy was reviewed, and SASL was included as important for the inclusion of Deaf students. Spoken language interpreting has since been phased out, while the UFS has accepted that English will be the medium of instruction.

In 2019, the UFS had 7 Deaf students who made use of the SASLi service. Since 2013, team interpreting, which was already in place with the spoken language interpreter services, started to phase in more. Currently, ten freelance SASLis are paid on an ad hoc claim basis. Due to the new UFS Language Policy, the Interpreter Service now falls within the Academy for Multilingualism. The SASLis are paid according to their level of development (beginner, junior and senior), which is determined by means of evaluation (DU SASLi and Interpreter services involved). Mentorship happens through the Interpreter Services recording videos of SASLis in the classrooms and meetings regularly. Deaf students are also involved in providing feedback and, in the process, learn more regarding the role of SASLis. During meetings, terminology development also occurs, but it is not formalised yet.

Existing Institutional Structures and Documents

- Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS) within Student Affairs is responsible for ensuring that SASLis are present during lectures and academic support sessions, working with Interpreter Services, informing lecturers about the Deaf student's support needs, mentorship of SASLis; and coordinating SASLis for support activities.
- Academy of Multilingualism for the financing of Interpreter Services, which is responsible for providing access to lectures and campus events; ensuring professionalism; coordinating timetables, arranging in-house training and mentoring, quality control; arranging feedback sessions; terminology development; providing information to lecturers regarding SASLis' role.
- Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies within the Faculty of Humanities, which is responsible for the identification of beginner interpreters. Deaf students registered for the SASL module become participants in the classroom, which is beneficial to hearing students.
- UFS Language Policy.
- UFS Policy on Universal Access and Disability Support for Students with Disabilities.
- CUADS Disability Support Procedure (which guides the support service provided to all students with disabilities).

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- CUADS Communication Access Procedure.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Background

Since 2009, the Wits Disability Rights Unit has already employed a full-time interpreter. SASLis are also appointed on contract on an hourly basis when there is a need. Real-time captioning (RTC) or/and supplement interpreting with RTC, e.g. during tutor sessions, are also utilised for communication access. The DRU continues with the SASLi service and builds on real-time captioning, explores more and makes better use of technology to support students as well.

Existing Institutional Structures and Documents

- Disability Rights Unit provides services towards Deaf students.
- Deaf studies employ their own interpreter, but they also do academic training.
- SASL Department employs its own interpreter.
- Wits Language School is also involved in short courses and training SASL training.
- Wits Language policy.
- Disability Rights Unit Standard operating procedures.
- Job Description.

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Background

The Disability Rights Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT) was established in 2016 with the mission of enhancing the educational experiences of students with disabilities. Initially, the unit operated with a single staff member, a Disability Officer, who was dedicated to providing essential support and resources for disabled students. A key aspect of the University is the Deaf Centre, located within the Information Systems department, which specifically caters to Deaf students. This centre not only facilitates effective communication and learning for its students but also employs interpreters to bridge any communication gaps.

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Successes

In recent years, the Disability Rights Unit has successfully expanded its services beyond the Information Systems department, enrolling Deaf students from various faculties, including Arts and Design and Management Sciences. This diversification illustrates a growing acknowledgement of the needs of Deaf students across different academic disciplines. Currently, the deaf centre supports 10 Deaf students in the Information systems programme, 2 in the Arts and Design faculty, and 1 in the Faculty of Management Sciences. Additionally, it provides services for four deaf and hard-of-hearing students who rely on lip reading, reinforcing its commitment to inclusivity.

To meet the increasing demand for support, the unit has proactively hired three interpreters. This initiative has been instrumental in ensuring that all students have access to the necessary resources in their respective classes, significantly contributing to a more inclusive learning environment and fostering a sense of belonging among Deaf/deaf students.

Challenges

Despite these achievements, the Disability Rights Unit faces several challenges. A primary concern is the consistent availability of interpreters for students enrolled in non-IT disciplines. While the need for interpreters is critical, the unit often struggles to secure sufficient resources and personnel to adequately support the diverse and growing student population. This challenge is particularly evident in the Arts and Design and Management Sciences faculties, where the demand for specialised interpretation services may not always be met.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need for increased awareness and training within the broader university community about the unique challenges faced by Deaf students. Promoting a more inclusive culture that not only supports but also celebrates diversity is essential. The unit is actively working to address these issues through advocacy, outreach, and collaboration with other departments, striving to ensure that all students receive the comprehensive support they need to thrive in their academic journeys.

The Disability Rights Unit at DUT has made significant strides in enhancing the educational experiences of Deaf students, successfully integrating them into various academic programs and hiring interpreters to improve accessibility.

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However, ongoing challenges highlight the need for continued efforts and resources to ensure equitable support for all students with disabilities.

BOLAND TVET COLLEGE

The Inclusive Education Policy at Boland TVET College was adopted by the College Council 15 years ago. The Disability Support Unit was subsequently established in 2016 by the psychometrist, who was responsible for identifying concession needs and providing more focused support to students with disabilities. Line managers approved and supported the development of a Disability Support Unit. In 2022, the Department of Higher Education and Training officially acknowledged that Boland College is one of 5 TVET Colleges in South Africa with a Disability Support Unit. The unit serves about 120 students with disabilities per year.

Existing Institutional Structures and Documents

- SASLi Job Descriptions.
- Boland College Policies:
 - Inclusive Education Policy.
 - Student Support Policy.
 - Admission Policy.
- Continuing Education and Training Act.
- DHET Examination Instructions – Concessions and Exams.

Successes and Challenges

Challenges:

The DHET Exam regulations – specify that the class lecturer may not be present in the exam venue. This applies to the SASLi as well to protect the integrity of the exams. It is a challenge as it implies that the SASLi may not interpret in the examinations of Deaf students. Vacancies for TVET tutors who can sign were advertised twice, and applicants

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were interviewed. However, appropriately qualified persons could not be identified. There was a poor throughput rate in diploma programmes.

Successes:

Enrolling Deaf students in groups has proved to be more successful in helping them to adjust quickly to the new TVET environment than single students. There is a better throughput rate in the National Certificate Vocational programmes, possibly due to the slower tempo as it is a 12-month long program and not only 6 months as the diploma programmes, allowing students more time to adjust to the college environment, as well as to learn the academic terminology.

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CO-ORDINATION OF A SASLI SERVICE

This function should be fulfilled by a dedicated person. All requests for interpreting (in and out of working hours) should go through the coordinator. The person responsible should be knowledgeable about SASL, Deaf Culture and SASLi. If an interpreter unit exists at the institution, coordination should be done through them. There should be sufficient communication between DUs, Deaf students applying and interpreting or coordinating services.

Co-ordinator's Role

- Contact lecturers to inform them that there will be a SASLi in their class.
- Communicate the role of the SASLi and Code of Ethics to lecturers.
- Facilitate lecture notes and materials for SASLi preparation.
- Guide Deaf students regarding the role of SASLi and SASLi responsibilities.
- Allocate SASLi to specific classes, keeping in mind timetable clashes and challenges.
- Manage complaints lodged by SASLi and Deaf students and mediate solutions.

Both parties need to know which route they should take to complain. Often, the student is unaware of what the interpreter's role is, and when the interpreter is unable to offer their services, a complaint is made.

Interpreters should be notified a day in advance of any changes to the interpreting schedule as well as receive study guides/presentations/textbooks and notes of lectures for preparation.

The coordinator should actively engage in consultation with students, staff and relevant organisations in the development and presentation of Deaf awareness initiatives and campaigns.

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HEDSA Guidelines: Appointment of SASLis at HEIs

BEST PRACTICE APPOINTING SASLis

The responsibility for the appointment of SASLis should not lie with DUs. It should be an institutional coordinated service, and DUs should attempt to establish that understanding at their respective institutions. HEDSA acknowledges that HEIs differ regarding resources, structures and support. These guidelines, however, will assist institutions that are just starting with the service and who plan to appoint a SASLI permanently. The ideal should be that DUs focus on the support of the academic programme of Deaf students and that the SASLI service should be allocated to a language division (language services/interpreter services) independent from the support service to Deaf students. Within a TVET College, it will be different since no language services exist in this sector. It then makes sense to have SASLIs as part of Student Support Services.

SALPC Sub-categories	Recommended HEI Levels
Paraprofessional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal qualifications; Informal community situation: e.g. church. 	Level 1 / Beginner
Professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully competent and have a degree or post-graduate degree; Formal interpreting: meetings and medical. 	Level 2 / Intermediate 500 hours of interpreting experience at HEI
Expert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competent to handle complex, technical and sophisticated language and have a degree or post-graduate degree; Formal interpreting: legal and high-level conference. 	Level 3 / Senior Tertiary qualification and above

Recruitment Process

The advertisement for a permanent SASLI should be specific and based on the *minimum requirements*, consisting of:

- 3-year degree or equivalent;
- 4 years interpreting experience (2 years Educational Interpreting experience preferred) – a portfolio of experience to be submitted, including mentor reports, reference letters of interpreting assignments done;
- RPL and community recommendations are also to be considered;



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- Qualification—A South African Sign Language Interpreter (not just SASL, but SASL interpreter) specific qualification from an accredited Higher Education Institution, NQF level 5 and above;
- Fluency in SASL and English or language of instruction;
- Member of SATI/accreditation by the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC);
- Be in good standing with Deaf organisations;
- Working knowledge of the SATI Code of Ethics for SASL interpreters;
- Ability to work independently and manage own workload;
- Ability to adapt to a wide range of speaking and signing styles and preferences of Deaf clients;
- Acquainted with different dialects and cultures in SA (where there is more than one dialect presented in an interpreting situation, the SASLI should be able to adapt to accommodate all);
- Ability to network and consult a variety of stakeholders, including lecturers, the Deaf community and SASLI;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Computer literacy;
- Basic understanding of HEI environment and structures;
- Flexibility in terms of working hours, dependent on students' timetable and as agreed upon with the institution.

For **intermediate and senior SASLis**, the following **additional requirements** are applicable:

- 2 years of mentoring experience;
- 4 years interpreting experience in Education interpreting;
- Qualification—A South African Sign Language Interpreter (not just SASL, but SASL interpreter) specific qualification from an accredited Higher Education Institution, NQF 7 and above;
- Accredited member of SATI/SALPC.

The advertisement should also inform applicants that they will be expected to undergo a practical skills evaluation at the interview.

Interview Process

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The interview will be conducted according to the institutions' requirements.

The panel should consist of:

- Deaf graduate or current student, or Deaf leader from the Deaf community;
- A qualified SASLi with experience in educational interpreting;
- A separate SASLi should be appointed for all Deaf panel members during the interview process;
- A representative from Human Resources;
- Head of Disability Unit and or interpreter service coordinator.

A competency test will be conducted at the interview (Voice to Sign and Sign to Voice) – this should be video recorded. It is also recommended that the Deaf panel member asks an interview question to the interviewee for the interviewee to respond in SASL to test the ability to converse in SASL.

Selection

In selecting the best candidate, the outcome should be determined primarily by the level of interpreting skill demonstrated during the selection process. Although recognising that it is preferable to select people who are based in a specific region or province, the quality of the candidate should supersede “logistical” issues, e.g. relocation, etc.

Working conditions and working hours

Occupational law will apply. However, the standard working conditions for a SASLi in a HEI setting are as follows:

- One interpreter for each class, but team interpreting is preferred where possible. Two interpreters per class will be beneficial to the SASLis' development and access to information for the Deaf student.
- This is also to ensure the SASLi's mental fitness and avoid fatigue. One SASLi can only effectively interpret for 30 minutes at a time, where mental fatigue will set in, and the quality of the message will deteriorate. In other words, Therefore, if the SASLi is fatigued, the Deaf student runs the risk of not receiving full and quality access.
- In the case of an educational setting, one SASLi, interpreting alone, can interpret for 3 hours consecutively with a 10-minute break after each hour of class. After 3 hours, one full hour break needs to be provided.
- For classes outside of the SASLi's working hours, an option of freelance interpreters should be considered.

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- Administration duties such as preparation, reports, vocabulary development and evaluations should be part of the working hours.
- SASLis can also be appointed on flexi-hours, i.e. only interpreting when lectures are happening, but this will vary from institution to institution.
- SASLis need to have their own office space for preparation and debriefing.

Availability of SASLis

To encourage the development of SASLis, an allowance may be made for internships/students to volunteer at the institution. If a SASL department exists at the institution, hearing students with developing SASL interpreting skills can feed into the internship programme. This will assist in creating a pool of interpreters to be available to assist with ad hoc academic or student-life requests from students.

Minimum Requirements: Ad Hoc SASLI

- A South African Sign Language Interpreter (not just SASL, but SASL interpreter) specific qualification: NQF 5 and above;
- 4 years of SASL interpreting experience and education interpreting experience are recommended;
- Fluency in SASL and English or language of instruction;
- Member of SATI/accreditation by the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC);
- Be in good standing with Deaf organisations;
- Working knowledge of the SATI Code of Ethics for SASL interpreters;
- Ability to work independently and manage own workload;
- Ability to adapt to a wide range of speaking and signing styles and preferences of Deaf clients;
- Acquainted with different dialects and cultures in SA;
- Ability to network and consult a variety of stakeholders, including lecturers, the Deaf community and SASLI;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Computer literacy;
- Basic understanding of HEI environment and structures.

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Minimum Requirements: Internship SASLi

This can be:

- A SASL 3rd year student or a person with at least 3 years of SASL communication experience — recommended by the Deaf community or SASL department;
- A SASLi with no educational interpreting experience.

Additional requirements to be added

- Evaluate the potential internship SASLi;
- Depending on the SASLi's experience and exposure to educational interpreting, a period of shadowing must take place;
- Attend SASLi meetings on campus to get on board with terminology and the role of educational SASLis;
- Enter into a mentorship agreement with an advanced educational SASLi;
- Meet with a mentor on a weekly/biweekly basis to discuss questions regarding shadowing;
- After the period of shadowing the intern, SASLi can work in a team with an advanced SASLi;
- Evaluation of the internship SASLi can be done per semester as part of quality control;
- From here, levels can be determined from Beginner / Junior / Senior SASLi.

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ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL SASLI

First and foremost, SASLis are meant to be professionals in language practice and, therefore, fluent, skilled and competent in SASL and a spoken language, and in a Higher Education setting, English is the medium of instruction. The Education SASLI's priorities are Deaf students who are studying at HEIs. Outside requests for interpreting should be handled by the manager/coordinator of the DU or Interpreter Unit.

SASLis should be allowed to interpret outside of the HEI and, if available, according to class schedules to develop their skills.

The role of an educational SASLI is to:

- Ensure communication between the lecturer/speaker and Deaf students by interpreting words and meanings, but also establish a positive connection. To do this, SASLis should also navigate cultural differences and prevent misunderstandings.
- Explain their role as interpreters and the interpreter process to both parties.
- Respect the integrity and rights of both parties and remain confidential at all times.
- Position themselves in order to be visible to the Deaf student by taking into account background, clothing, lighting, projector, screen, position of lecturer/speaker and seating arrangement (depending on the type of interpreting assignment).

With team interpreting, the following must also be taken into account:

- Establish working /concentration capacity (30 – 45 minutes) before switching, and commit to their timeframe.
- It is expected of both SASLis on duty to be prepared, punctual and stay for the duration of the interpreting assignment.
- The supporting interpreter is responsible for keeping time and notes and supporting the working interpreter. The only time an interpreter can be on their phone is to check time or look for information on the internet, which will enhance the interpreting.
- Notes made during the interpreting assignment are to provide constructive criticism, which should be beneficial to both SASLis to become better at their job. It is not about the SASLI's level of intelligence but the interpreting

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process, skill and terminology. SASLis must have a positive attitude towards criticism since it is about the task at hand and not the interpreter as a person.

From the above, it is clear that a SASLi is not an educator or a tutor and should stay within the boundaries of being a SASLi to prevent confusion for both the student and the hearing client. Institutions should caution against appointing educators/teachers from Deaf schools as SASLis. It is acknowledged that they may know SASL, but they are not necessarily qualified/trained as SASLis.

It is also recommended that academic staff/lecturers be informed of the role of SASLis to establish a repertoire in class between lecturer, interpreter and Deaf students.

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HEDSA Guidelines: Appointment of SASLis at HEIs

JOB DESCRIPTION: PERMANENT SASLI

Main Objectives

- Providing SASLI services as and when required. This should include students, staff and visitors to the institution.

Main Responsibilities

- Provide SASLI services between Deaf and hearing people, as and when required;
- Source preparation materials for lectures/tutorials which are to be interpreted;
- In consultation with Deaf students, Deaf organisations and relevant stakeholders to develop and gather new/current signs for educational terms and subject-specific terminology;
- Ensure that new signs are updated, easily accessible, and recorded;
- Educate staff and students on the role of the SASLI;
- Abide by the SATI Code of Ethics for SASL interpreters;
- Develop and maintain networks with other SASLI and organisations and tertiary institutions relating to SASLI issues;
- Keep a record of the types of assignments (i.e. classes interpreted or staff meetings) of SASLI support provided, including clients and hours;
- Participate in the development and implementation of support systems for Deaf students;
- Promote own professional development by keeping abreast with the latest research in the field;
- Mentor ad hoc SASLis;
- Evaluate possible ad-hoc and/or intern SASLI;
- Enter into a mentorship agreement with an intern SASLI;
- Meet with intern SASLI on a weekly/biweekly basis to discuss questions regarding shadowing;
- Quality control of the SASLI service.

JOB DESCRIPTION: AD HOC SASLI

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Main Objectives

- Provide SASLi services as and when required. This should include students, staff and visitors to the institution.

Main Responsibilities

- Provide SASLi services between Deaf and hearing people, as and when required;
- Source preparation materials for lectures/tutorials which are to be interpreted;
- Abide by the SATI Code of Ethics for SASL interpreters;
- Keep a record of the types of assignments (i.e. classes interpreted or staff meetings) of SASLi support provided, including clients and hours;
- Promote own professional development by keeping abreast with the latest research in the field;
- Participate in quality control of the SASLi service.

JOB DESCRIPTION: INTERN SASLi

Main Responsibilities

- Depending on the SASLi's experience and exposure to educational interpreting, a period of shadowing must take place;
- Attend SASLi meetings on campus to get on board with terminology and the role of educational SASLis;
- Enter into a mentorship agreement with an advanced educational SASLi;
- Meet with a mentor on a weekly/biweekly basis to discuss questions regarding shadowing;
- After the period of shadowing, the intern SASLi can work in a team with an advanced SASLi;
- Participate in quality control of the SASLi service;
- Vocabulary collection.

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HEDSA Guidelines: Appointment of SASLis at HEIs

TERMINOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

It is best practice for a support SASLi, during team interpreting, to make notes while the other SASLi is busy working. After the class, the signs specific to the class are to be recorded on video. Deaf community/students should then review the signs at the end of the semester to accept or reject the sign as part of the lexicon of SASL.

As per the role of a SASLi, terminology development is integral to their job description. At the institution, this process should run throughout the year:

- Each SASLi will be responsible for keeping their own weekly records of vocabulary used.
- An accessible record is to be kept on video;
- There should be a conscious acknowledgement that regional variants exist;
- A SASLi may not force the use of their signs on Deaf students;
- The choice of vocabulary is to be done in consultation with Deaf students and Deaf organisations.

Collected signs should be submitted to the PanSALB SASL National Language Board (NLB) for verification and authentication of terminology by the language/interpreter service as an institutional input:

- The institution submitting terminology lists to PanSALB must ensure that domain experts attend verification meetings to provide technical support.
- Submit the terms list to PanSALB along with the SASL video and English term definitions.
- The signed videos must be clear, with each clip separated by its words/sign.
- The costs for verification and authentication meetings include sitting fees, flights, accommodation, venue, private transport, and SASL interpreting services.
- There has to be some form of a signed agreement between PanSALB and the institution that requests authentication from PanSALB.
- This is to protect each of the parties against any future disagreements that may arise.
- PanSALB will communicate with the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation to establish a database of terminology/terminology bank for HEIs SASLis to access.
- Clear outcomes for post-verification and authentication must be documented.

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Relevant stakeholders (HEIs, PanSALB technical committee, and domain experts) should undergo some form of training or short courses on terminology development, human language technology, as well as language management and planning to inform the outcomes, quality assurance, and digital enhancement of the overall terminology development initiatives (especially in academic settings).

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SALARY FRAMEWORK

Payment of SASLi should be based on experience and qualification. Recommended periods per week for full-time junior and senior interpreters are 30 hours per week. A reasonable ratio for the number of working hours and salary should be kept in mind. The salaries below are a recommendation and should always be negotiated with the SASLi, keeping in mind his/her level of experience and qualification. Fees are before PAYE and are not inclusive of any benefits. Fees also do not include transport expenses and reimbursement of these costs should be considered in contexts where extensive travelling is required.

HEIs are encouraged to adopt a standardised salary framework to ensure SASLis are compensated fairly and to make the profession more attractive.

SALPC Sub-categories	Recommended HEI Levels	Recommended Ad Hoc Rate	Recommended Ad Hoc Daily Tariff (for more than 5 hours a day)*	Recommended HEI Peromnes Levels for permanent SASLis
Paraprofessional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal qualifications; • Informal community situation: e.g. church. 	Level 1 / Beginner	R300 per hour	R1 500 per day	Level 11
Professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully competent and have a degree or post-graduate degree; • Formal interpreting: meetings and medical. 	Level 2 / Intermediate 500 hours of interpreting experience at HEI	R400 – R500 per hour	R2 000 – R2 500 per day	Level 10
Expert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent to handle complex, technical and sophisticated language and have a degree or post-graduate degree; • Formal interpreting: legal and high-level conference. 	Level 3 / Senior tertiary qualification and above	R500 – R600 per hour	R2 500 – R3 000 per day	Level 9

*In case of an ad hoc service that is needed for more than five hours a day, consideration could be given to negotiating a daily rate, especially where interpreting is needed for consecutive days over an extended period.



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CODE OF ETHICS FOR SASL INTERPRETERS

Similarly to medical doctors registering with the Health Professions Council of SA, SASLis need to register with SALPC as a regulatory body (which is currently still in the process of being established). In the meantime, membership and accreditation with SATI is recommended. The Code of Ethics remains the same for all SASLis, notwithstanding the setting (i.e. academic, conference, medical, community, etc.).

The Code of Ethics of SASLi is the same as that of the World Association for Sign Language Interpreters and the World Federation of the Deaf.

Interpreters shall:

1. adhere to all aspects of the Code of Ethics at all times during and after assignments;
2. keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential and adhere to professional standards of confidentiality;
3. render the message faithfully, always conveying the content, intent and spirit of the speaker using the language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve;
4. not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions even when asked to do so;
5. accept assignments using discretion about skill, setting, and the consumers involved;
6. be required to possess the professional skills and knowledge necessary for any specific interpreting situation;
7. request compensation for services, adhering to the current accepted rates professionally and judiciously;
8. not request compensation or any form of payment from any individual Deaf person;
9. be requested at times to carry out community service;
10. conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the interpreting situation;
11. be punctual for every assignment;
12. demonstrate respect for consumers, colleagues, co-interpreters and students of the profession;
13. dress appropriately, fitting to the interpreting situation:
 - 13.1 dark skin = light clothes;
 - 13.2 fair skin = dark clothes;
 - 13.3 no excessive cosmetics;

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- 13.4 moderate and appropriate jewellery;
14. engage in ongoing professional development;
15. maintain ethical business practices and high professional standards in compliance with this Code of Ethics.

Explanation of the Code of Ethics

- Confidentiality means no revealing of information in person or on social media platforms.
- Accuracy and completeness of the interpretation of the message are important, and preparation must form an integral part of the interpreter's job.
- Impartiality means no personal opinions or beliefs should cloud the interpretation or the communication facilitated.
- Proficiency in two languages as a language practitioner.
- Compensation must be according to skill level and acceptable rates.
- Professional standards/discreetness speak to conduct and behaviour.
- Continuing education by gaining experience and participating in Deaf community projects to enable socialising and learning vocabulary.
- Community service for SASLis at HEIs can include availing themselves for non-academic projects, i.e. Deaf students' personal engagements, university events, etc.
- SASL is a visual language and should, therefore, be visible to the Deaf client, and the dress code should enable the visibility of the language.



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DEVELOPMENT OF SASLis

Training of appointed SASLis will include mentoring, team interpreting and in-house training. Where at all possible, interpreters should be provided the opportunity to attend formal training or workshops to obtain CPD points as per the Code of Ethics and the accreditation requirements of SALPC.

Establish a formal CPD pathway to ensure HEI SASLis stay up to date with best practices. Provide detailed mentorship programs, advanced certifications, recognition of prior learning guidelines for SASL interpreting-related experience, collaboration with universities that offer interpreting practice courses and linguistics, as well as funding opportunities for attending local and international conferences and specialised training courses (academic interpreting).

Students and SASLis should meet regularly to get feedback, discuss issues that may arise and clarify vocabulary. Regular meetings should also be held between the coordinator, Deaf students, the head of the DU and SASLis.

Taking into account new developments about registration and accreditation of SASLis with SALPC, the aim should be to develop SASLis to advance through the following sub-categories until they have reached the expert level:

1. Paraprofessional

No formal qualifications;
Informal community situation: e.g. church.

2. Professional

Fully competent and have a degree or post-graduate degree;
Formal interpreting: meetings and medical.

3. Expert

Competent to handle complex, technical and sophisticated language and have a degree or post-graduate degree;
Formal interpreting: legal and high-level conference.



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QUALITY CONTROL

To maintain quality interpreting services, interpreters should be video recorded whilst interpreting to identify growth, challenges and potential problem areas. Video recordings can be done by a fellow/senior interpreter, mentor, representative from a Deaf organisation, interpreting services coordinator or a representative from the interpreting unit. This arrangement must be communicated to all parties involved (including lecturers, interpreters and Deaf students). The purpose of the video recordings is solely for the development of the interpreter and cannot be distributed. These recordings should be evaluated by a senior / mentor interpreter giving feedback to the interpreter. If a problem is detected, the interpreter goes for extra mentoring / internal training sessions to solve the issue. If internal training measures do not exist, a mentor can be outsourced.

The mentor/team interpreter will observe the class and give feedback and/or report any problems. To measure the Deaf student's experience of the service, an evaluation can be conducted using a questionnaire or survey once a semester. The manager/co-ordinator can access the data to provide feedback to the interpreter. The identity of the student is kept confidential if possible (i.e. if there is more than one Deaf student).

It is also recommended that interpreters and Deaf students meet once a semester to discuss experiences and challenges to maintain and strengthen the professional relationship between interpreters and Deaf students. During these meetings, interpreters and Deaf students can agree on certain ways of working, clarify areas of frustration, and find mutually beneficial solutions. Opportunities must be created where interpreters can share their experiences to learn and enhance the service. This can be done by having monthly or quarterly meetings between interpreters, facilitated by the interpreter coordinator / DU co-ordinator.

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

All Deaf students should have a contact person to whom complaints can be lodged (interpreter co-ordinator / DU co-ordinator / DU head where available). This person needs to be neutral (preferably a SASL user) and cannot be the SASL interpreter who the complaint is against.

Deaf students must be able to complain to a SASLi independently without the presence of the institution's SASLi. It is preferable to source a SASLi externally. Alternatively, Deaf students should be informed to whom they could email their complaint. The responsible manager or co-ordinator takes up the issue anonymously with the SASLi concerned, documents the complaint, and sends a mentor to observe the SASLi in class and report back on the outcome. A mentor can be sourced from a Deaf organisation if there is no mentor/team SASLi at the institution. If the problem is not resolved or reoccurs, a written warning should be given, after which the institution's disciplinary rules will apply.

Conversely, a SASLi must be able to complain with the interpreter coordinator/DU co-ordinator / DU head (where available) against a Deaf student. Depending on the type of appointment of the SASLi (ad hoc / permanent), student mediation processes need to be followed.

All complaints must, as far as possible, be evidence-based.



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WHO TO CONTACT FOR GUIDANCE

Should your institution require any assistance or additional information regarding the setting up of SASLi services, feel free to contact the following institutions with established SASLi services:

University of the Free State

Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support
Academy of Multilingualism

University of Witwatersrand

Wits Disability Rights Unit

University of Stellenbosch

SU Disability Unit
SU Language Centre

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Disability Support Unit

Boland TVET College

Disability Support Unit

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