



The Boston University Certificates in COMMUNITY, LEGAL, MEDICAL INTERPRETING



Foreign language interpreting is one of the most exciting and challenging professions to emerge in the globalized workplace. Professional interpreters are increasingly in demand in courts, hospitals, and service agencies, as well as in legal and administrative offices. In order to provide the quality training necessary for this important occupation, the Center for Professional Education hosts a well-established and highly respected program in interpretation. Our classes are taught in three language-specific groups.

At Boston University, we begin by giving students the attention they need to bring their linguistic competence in their two languages up to professional levels. As the courses progress, students learn the technical vocabulary and professional ethics needed to work in community, legal, and medical settings, and, most importantly, the techniques they will need to perform the various types of interpretation competently.

The program prepares students to interpret in a variety of settings. Students receive a minimum of 156 hours (maximum of 228 hours) of instruction from respected, veteran interpreters. Classes meet on Saturday mornings, and the program is designed to be completed in approximately 12 to 18 months. Our graduates have found that these certificates have also led to employment as bilingual professionals in non-interpreting jobs.

The Boston University Interpreter Program is open to those who are able to fluently speak, read, and write in English, in addition to Chinese, Portuguese, or Spanish. Our focus is on interpreting in formal encounters, i.e., in one-on-one professional exchanges. Interpreting in legal, medical, and other technical encounters requires a thorough preparation. This program allows students to earn certificates in up to three interpretive specializations: community, legal, or medical.

CURRICULUM

In this program the individual classes follow a fixed order, and substitutions are not permitted, because later courses build on those that come before. The order is as follows:

- INT 100** Interpreter Testing
- INT 101** Introduction to Communication and Translation
- INT 102** Interpreting I
- INT 106** Community Interpreting
- INT 103** Interpreting II

The four preceding classes are required to earn a certificate in Community Interpreting. There are two additional courses, Legal Interpreting and Medical Interpreting, which are strongly recommended, but not required. Certificates are awarded upon completion of each:

- INT 104** Legal Interpreting
- INT 105** Medical Interpreting

LANGUAGE SKILLS PREREQUISITE

INT 100 Initial Language Proficiency Testing
Acceptance in the Interpreter Program is based on fluency in English and a second language. Students are required to demonstrate this fluency through all modes of communication—reading, writing, and speaking—at an on-campus testing session. The test includes short essay questions, reading comprehension, and meeting with the faculty to assess your language skills. See “[How to Apply](#)” on our website for more information.

SEQUENTIAL CORE COURSES

INT 101 Introduction to Communication and Translation

Introduction to Communication and Written Translation is a foundational, preparatory course. Because students in this program come from a wide variety of different backgrounds, most have not studied language at the university level. Therefore, this course introduces the study of language and the theory of translation. Through reading comprehension, testing, and meeting with faculty members to assess the student’s oral language ability, students are allowed to grow in their appreciation of comparative linguistics and other topics. They learn how to identify and conserve meaning, and how to produce high-quality target-language speech and texts. This course is both theoretical and practical. As they participate in this class and do the exercises, students realize where their weaknesses lie and what they must do to improve. Most importantly, after this foundational course they are much more ready to begin the practical study of interpreting. (48 hours)

Prerequisite: Acceptance into program after testing

INT 102 Interpreting I

Interpreting I lays the foundation necessary to take full advantage of the terminology-intensive courses to come. Students focus on the practical fundamentals of interpreting. The primary mode of learning is role-play practice under the guidance of the instructor. In addition to learning the three standard modes of interpreting (simultaneous, consecutive, and sight translation), students will learn and practice note-taking, perform memory- and vocabulary-building exercises, and begin developing personal glossaries. (36 hours)

“The Boston University program in interpreting provides the highest return on investment of any program I have ever participated in. Thanks to the program, I was able to find work at two of the most prestigious hospitals in the country.” — **Ana Arnal**

Program Director

MICHAEL O'LAUGHLIN, ThD

Michael O'Laughlin, ThD, is a legal interpreter certified by the states of California and Massachusetts. O'Laughlin has a lifetime of experience in the courts and has published translations from a number of languages. He holds advanced degrees from Oxford and Harvard Universities, and his own books and articles have been translated into 13 languages. Although still a certified interpreter, he now works primarily as an expert witness in legal cases with linguistic or cultural issues.

Prerequisite: INT 101

INT 106 Community Interpreting

This course addresses the broadest and most flexible of interpreter specialties: community interpreting. Community interpreters deal with interactions involving education, the workplace, financial institutions, banking, insurance companies, and public welfare agencies, as well as a variety of settings, clients, and ethical considerations. Students study real-life situations involving speakers of different languages who must communicate and reach agreements regarding living conditions, work, medical treatment, social services, and legal obligations, or any combination of scenarios. Coursework focuses on case studies, role-plays, and cultural comparisons. (36 hours)

Prerequisites: INT 101, 102

INT 103 Interpreting II

This course returns to the intensive skills-training approach of Interpreting I, but now at a much higher level. After taking the preceding courses, students are ready to tackle more complex and technical subjects and scenarios. While the practice-intensive methodology is the same as in Interpreting I, the level of proficiency, complexity, and speed are all higher. (36 hours)

Prerequisites: INT 101, 102, 106

RECOMMENDED SPECIALIZATION COURSES

INT 104 Legal Interpreting

This course presents the full range of legal scenarios that often require interpreters, including criminal court sessions, depositions, and financial and housing scenarios. It is imperative that interpreters working in this area understand the fundamentals of legal processes and master legal terminology, so there is an emphasis on acquiring this knowledge. Students also learn to follow the strict ethical standards and responsibilities by which legal interpreters are bound. This course covers these fundamentals through lectures, discussion, and practicums. (36 hours)

Prerequisite: INT 103

INT 105 Medical Interpreting

This course provides tools to develop and master the art of medical interpreting and to understand the role, responsibilities, and boundaries of the interpreter as an active team player in medical interviews and procedures. Special consideration is given to privacy concerns and the ethical guidelines of interpreting in a medical setting. The course also considers the interpreter's role as linguistic and cultural mediator, and provides an introduction to anatomy, physiology, medical terminology, medical procedures, and the roles of various medical providers. (36 hours)

Prerequisite: INT 103

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Boston University values its association with the New England Translators Association (NETA). Interpreter classes are not held during the NETA conference so that students and faculty may participate. Bulletins received from NETA and the ATA (American Translators Association) are also regularly forwarded to students.

HOW TO ENROLL

1. Applications are available for download at bu.edu/professional. A \$50 non-refundable testing fee must be paid before the screening tests are administered.
2. Written and oral proficiency exams are held on Boston University's Charles River Campus in the evening, usually once a month. The final testing date is two weeks prior to the start of the first class. Exceptions to established testing dates are rarely made.
3. Once a candidate has successfully completed the language testing, he/she may register for the Interpreter Program. Registration should be completed at least one week prior to the start of the first class. Accepted students receive a comprehensive orientation to the program during their first class session.

COSTS AND PAYMENT

Program costs are available at bu.edu/professional. Accepted students may register up to one week prior to class; payment is required at the time of registration. For all classes throughout the program, registrations received less than one week before class begins will be assessed a \$50 late fee.

Please note that course fees do not include textbooks or other student materials, which must be purchased separately.

FINANCIAL AID

Because certificate programs at the Center for Professional Education are non-degree (not-for-credit), they are eligible for private loans only. We cannot accept any federal education loans. Students must work with a lending institution directly to obtain a private loan. For more information, please visit the registration page at bu.edu/professional.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Registration in non-credit classes does not qualify students for any US visa. Students requiring a visa must already have one from an outside sponsor.

FACULTY

For faculty biographies, please visit our website.

Michael O'Laughlin, ThD

*Program Director,
Master Lecturer*

Sue Aldred
Eduardo Berinstein
Teresa Coelho
Frank Geoffrion
Sandra Henry
Ana Helena Lopes
Lewanna Li

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LEARN MORE

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For a complete schedule, please visit bu.edu/professional.