

# EMCI Quality Assurance Standards

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European Masters in Conference Interpreting is a consortium of post-graduate interpreter-training programmes. It was launched as a pilot project by the European Commission's Joint Interpreting and Conference Service (JICS), Directorate General for Education (DGXXII) and the European Parliament in 1997. At the invitation of these stakeholders, and in consultation with them, a working group comprising seven university-level training institutions drew up a core curriculum.

The members of the EMCI pursue a common policy on student recruitment and assessment and are committed to quality maintenance and regular reviews of their programmes to adapt to changing needs and new developments. They agree on common standards in selection, curriculum and assessment, and conduct regular quality assessment to ensure compliance with the criteria and principles of the EMCI. The EMCI Governing Board is the executive body of the EMCI Consortium. It represents all Members and takes decisions concerning the running and structures of the Consortium. The Quality Assurance and Membership Committee (QAMC) is the Standing Committee of the EMCI Governing Board mandated to prepare and monitor compliance with quality assessment procedures.

## 2. QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

### 2.1 PEER ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the peer assessment process is to verify compliance of the conference interpreter training programme with the Core Curriculum and the Constitution of the EMCI Consortium. To this end, the Members have agreed on a set of Core Criteria all Members and Applicants must comply with and continuously develop best practices (see below).

❖ For **members of the EMCI Consortium:**

Peer Assessment is intended to highlight best practices, provide the assessed Members with the opportunity to show their achievements, and ascertain compliance with the core criteria. It also aims at collecting and sharing best practices.

❖ For **Applicants:**

Peer Assessment is intended to verify compliance of the conference interpreter training programme with the EMCI Core Curriculum with a view to granting membership or recognition of the training programme. Non-members may apply for full membership to the EMCI or request recognition of their degree program. In both cases they must meet all the core criteria. Members undertake to play an active role in the EMCI, to participate in the meetings of the General Assembly and the Governing Board, if elected to it, and in the various Standing and Ad hoc Committees of the Governing Board.

### **2.2.2 ASSESSORS**

- Members may not be reviewed by one of their own trainers or by any person having close ties with them (e.g., former students, members of the university management, lecturers from the same University etc.).
- Two assessors shall be appointed to examine each conference interpreter training programme.
- Assessors shall themselves be practising conference interpreters and trainers with one of the EMCI Members.
- Assessors shall be nominated by individual Members. If an assessor cannot continue in this capacity, the Member to which they are affiliated shall nominate a substitute.
- Care shall be taken to ensure that assessors come from a variety of Members and reflect the geographic and language make-up of the Consortium.
- Each Member nominates a minimum of two and a maximum of four assessors for any given period.
- The assessors shall be provided with guidelines and will receive adequate training enabling them to carry out their duties.

### **2.2.3 FREQUENCY OF ASSESSMENT**

Applicants wishing to become members of the EMCI Consortium shall undergo an assessment within one year of submitting their application. They shall receive the EMCI decision within two years of submitting the application.

Members shall undergo an assessment on a rota basis. Frequency will depend on the number of members, but will initially be every four years. All Members shall be reviewed in keeping with the established rota. For those Members not running a course, the appointed assessors will try to establish clearly the reasons for the programme not being run and the likelihood of the course resuming. They will draft a brief report of their findings for discussion in the EMCI QAMC. Should the assessors establish that the Member has not run an EMCI programme for two years or more and that the reasons given are not compelling, they may recommend that the Member's membership be suspended or repealed. The decision shall be taken by the General Assembly of the EMCI, upon recommendation by the Governing Board, after hearing the views of the Member concerned.

### **2.2.4 PROCEDURES**

#### **2.2.4.1 Peer review**

Assessment will comprise two assessment visits. During one assessment visit, an assessor will visit the examined Member during the academic year for at least one day. The assessor will attend classes and be given access to staff and students. During another assessment visit, the assessor will attend at least one day of the final exams. The assessment should ideally be combined with teacher mobility.

The assessor will provide preliminary feedback on the final day of the assessment visit. Assessors shall draw up a report on the basis of their observations, indicating clearly which core criteria are fully, partially or not met.

Assessment reports will be communicated to the examined Member no later than 30 days after the visit, giving the Member the opportunity to react and propose changes where possible. Disagreement shall be discussed and if need be recorded in the final report. Assessors shall forward finalised assessment reports to the EMCI QAMC.

In the event of non-compliance, the assessor shall draft a set of recommendations. A follow-up assessment shall be organised between six months and one year after the first assessment visit to verify whether the recommendations have been implemented (eighteen months after the initial review in the case of Institutions offering a programme only every two years). If the Member has not implemented the recommendations, the assessors shall present a report to this effect to the QAMC which will then inform the Governing Board. The latter shall propose appropriate measures to be taken in the light of the report and after discussing the reasons for non-compliance with the Member concerned. These measures will then be communicated to the Member by the Governing Board.

In the event of any core criteria not being met, the Board shall propose suspension of membership to the General Assembly of the Consortium. Suspension may be temporary and may be reviewed after a period of no less than six months from the date of suspension and, if requested, no more than eighteen months from such date. All decisions concerning the suspension of membership shall be taken by the General Assembly by a three-fourths majority by secret ballot.

#### **2.2.4.2 Procedures for Applicants**

Assessment will be organised in two or three stages. During the first stage the assessor will visit the Applicant during the academic year for at least two days. They will attend classes, have access to the staff and the students. During the second stage, the assessor will attend at least one day of the final exams. If necessary, a third visit may be envisaged to assess the entrance exams.

Preliminary feedback will be provided by the assessors on the final day of the assessment visit. Within 30 days of the visit, the assessors shall draw up a report on the basis of their observations, indicating clearly which criteria are fully met, which only partly and which are not in compliance.

The reports will be communicated to the examined Applicant, thus giving it time to react and propose changes where possible. Any points of disagreement or any doubts shall be discussed before finalising the report. The finalised report will be forwarded to the EMCI QAMC by the assessors.

In the event of compliance or non compliance, the chair of the QAMC refers the application to the Governing Board, which will determine whether the application is ready to be submitted to the General Assembly, or needs to be sent back to the QAMC. Final decisions are taken by the General Assembly by a three-fourths majority in secret ballot.

In the event of non-compliance, a set of recommendations shall be drafted by the QAMC.

Applicants may ask for a follow-up assessment within eighteen months of the finalised report to verify whether the recommendations have been implemented. A follow-up assessment report concerning the elements of previous non-compliance will be drafted following the same

procedures. This report will be referred to the Governing Board, which will determine whether the application is ready to be submitted to the General Assembly. Final decisions are taken by the General Assembly by a three-fourths majority in secret ballot. The QAMC will update the General Assembly on the state-of-play of ongoing applications in the form of intermediate reports.

### **3 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

- Assessment criteria are established on the basis of the core curriculum. New criteria shall be agreed by consensus in the EMCI QAMC and submitted to the Governing Board for referral to the General Assembly, where adoption will require a three-fourths majority voting .
- Assessment criteria are established with a view to guaranteeing best possible compliance in the interest of quality conference interpreter training and are classified into two categories:  
Core criteria: shall be implemented by all Applicants and Members  
Recommendations: should be implemented by all Applicants and Members.

#### **3.1 CORE CRITERIA (compliance with the core curriculum)**

- As to the core curriculum we refer to the document entitled 'EMCI Core Curriculum'. Other core criteria include:
- The course must be at post-graduate level. All candidates must have at least a BA degree or equivalent.
- The EMCI course should in principle be offered at least every 2 years for Members and at least every three years for programs that are recognized by the EMCI. The course may be offered every three years for Members and recognized programs if the country's national language is not widely used and demand does not justify greater frequency.
- The course must be designed and run and interpreting classes taught by practising conference interpreters who are accredited to the European Institutions or International Organizations or who are members of the International or a National Association of Conference Interpreters. Such trainers should teach at least 80% of the interpreting classes and there should be at least one such trainer in each language combination. Other academic staff may work in tandem with these trainers to provide input or comments for a specific language.
- The Diploma/Certificate/ Diploma supplement awarded must state the graduate's language combination, and clearly indicate active languages (i.e., A and B), passive languages (i.e., C). Unless otherwise indicated, all languages comprise consecutive and simultaneous.  
The final diploma/certificate in Conference Interpretation should only be awarded if the candidate's competence has been assessed and judged consistent with requirements for entry into the profession. In other words, candidates' interpreting proficiency should allow them to be recruited immediately to work alongside accredited conference interpreters, it being understood that beginners are not normally assigned to the most technical or demanding meetings.
- The curriculum and other information about the course shall be posted on the EMCI website.

### **3.2 RECOMMENDED GOOD PRACTICE**

- Interpreter trainers shall have received teacher training.
- Language combinations offered shall reflect market practice and demand.
- Courses shall offer access to speech banks and video conferencing equipment. Ideally, courses should aim to provide students with opportunities to participate in videoconferences.
- Some form of interim assessment should be organised. This may be eliminatory or for guidance purposes only.
- Booths shall be in keeping with professional standards, i.e. should comply with ISO standards for fixed or mobile booths as much as possible.
- Courses shall regularly expose students to new technologies in the work environment and include technology-mediated work scenarios such as remote interpreting and video-conference interpreting.
- Students shall be encouraged to evaluate the course.
- Candidates are encouraged to spend time living or working abroad in a country of their B/C language(s).
- The institution shall inform candidates and students of employment opportunities.

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