ATA Certification Examination: What to Expect

IJET-31 (Tokyo) 2023

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ATA Certification

- is a testament to a translator's **professional competence** in translating from one specific language into another

- is available to any candidates, but taking a **practice test** beforehand is highly recommended

- is awarded after a candidate passes **a computerized (handwritten allowed) or an online** examination administered under controlled conditions

- comes with the obligation to continually improve professional skills through **continuing education**

ATA Certification

- is **available only to Association members** and remains valid as long as membership in the Association is continued

- automatically converts membership from associate membership to **active/voting membership** status

- is currently available in the language pairs listed here:

  https://www.atanet.org/certification/about-the-ata-certification-exam/

Benefits of Certification

- Associate members who pass the certification exam will be automatically converted to **Active** members and listed as ATA-certified in the Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services. https://www.atanet.org/directory/

ATA-Certified Translator

- Certified translators may refer to their certification in their résumés, business stationery, cards, and other related materials, provided they specify the language pair(s) and direction(s). There is a seal you can use.

Seal Examples

American Translators Association
ata
Izumi Suzuki
Japanese into English
Certification #8804
Certified Translator

Verify at www.atanet.org/verify

American Translators Association
ata
Izumi Suzuki
English into Japanese
Certification #8804
Certified Translator

Verify at www.atanet.org/verify

Eligibility

- ATA membership:
  Individuals who are ATA members may take a certification exam.

- To join the Association:
  https://web.atanet.org/membership/application.php

- $249/year (from January – December each year)

- mid-year plan ($374) is available (for 18 months)
  https://www.atanet.org/member-center/join-ata/

Nature of the Examination (1)

- a 3-hour, open-book, proctored exam (internet available) in a specific language pair

- Allowed list for internet search (no chat/forum or machine/auto translation site or email allowed)

- One proctor for 5 candidates in actual sittings.

- Select 2 passages out of 3 general-topic ones of 225-275 words

Nature of the Examination (2)

- Exam year: April – October

- Last exam sittings: two at an ATA conference (in Oct.)

- In-person sittings, found in the Exam Schedule page: https://www.atanet.org/certification/exam-schedule-and-registration/

- Online exams: only through Sept.
  (For 2023, 9/25 will be the last online exam.)
- Offered almost 24/7
- Within 30 days after sign-up

Nature of the Examination (3)
In-person Exam

- ❑ Turn on your computer and make sure it is connected to the Internet.

- ❑ The head proctor will distribute a USB drive with a candidate's ID number.

- ❑ Open WordPad on PC or TextEdit on MAC (spell/grammar check functions to be disabled).

- ❑ Work within USB drive.

- ❑ Do not read the source text out loud. (Applicable to online exams as well.)

In-person Exam

- **No electronic equipment** other than your own computer is permitted at the exam sitting (No smart phones or tablets or watches)

Nature of the Examination (5)
Online Exam

- System Check to be done with the service provider prior to the exam.

- Work directly in the web browser (need to have the most recent Chrome or Firefox version).

- Saved automatically.

- Translate two passages out of the three.
  (If you translate all three, the HQ will randomly choose the two passages.)

- Download the online exam app on your phone/tablet and situate it behind you so that the proctor can remotely watch you.

- May not use more than one monitor.

Nature of the Examination (6)
Online Exam

- No copying/pasting.

- No machine translation feature allowed.

- Google searches, only allowed for a few words.
    To check for spelling/*hyoki* or usage.

- Searching the entire paragraph or passage will trigger a warning.

- The HQ staff checks how each candidate has taken exams. Any violation of the above activities may void the exam.

- Failure to abide by these guidelines can result in forfeit of your exam registration fee, restrictions on future certification eligibility, and ATA ethics sanctioning.

Nature of the Examination (7)
Allowed Resources

- Any printed materials (including paper dictionaries).

- glossaries/dictionaries stored on their computer/laptop (not contained within any CAT tools).

- Allow List (Online resources that are permitted during the exam).
  https://tinyurl.com/ATAExamResources

================== C A U T I O N ==================

- Unauthorized websites (not in the Allow List): The third warning will stop the exam.

- Links in the search results may not be clicked (considered to be "unauthorized").

- May only reach any part of the website with the same root as the ones in the Allow List.

Nature of the Examination (8)
Allowed Resources (Tips)

- Bookmark all allowed resources applicable.

- Use allowed resources in your daily work to get used to them.

- Remember to use the same computer environment as registered with the System Check.

- Make sure not to use CAT tools or TM.

Nature of the Examination (9)

- Will be informed **only of the final result** of the exam. The exam will remain the property of ATA.

How to Prepare (1)

- **The certification exam is challenging with an overall pass rate of less than 20%.**

- **Practice tests** are available from ATA website online.

- If you practice without using a practice test from ATA, find a passage (225-275 words) of an appropriate difficulty level and practice on your own, or pair up with peers. Newspaper editorials/commentaries might be a good source. Translate under the exam conditions.

How to Prepare (2)

- **Why do people fail the practice tests/exams?**

  Major omissions, major mistranslations where the meaning of the original is lost, or an accumulation of target-language writing errors.

- Exams taken from the candidate's mother tongue into a second language account for a high percentage of failures.

How to Apply for the Exam

- The fee of $525 should be paid **at least two weeks before the test**.

- Most on-site exams are sold out **3 weeks** beforehand.

- The deadline to register for an online exam will be August 25, 2023. Registration will open on April 30, 2023.

Practice Test (1)

- A practical introduction to:
    1) the nature of the exam
    2) how the graders mark

- An indication of whether the candidate has a reasonable chance of passing the exam.

- You may request more than one passage provided you pay the appropriate fees per test passage.

Practice Test (2)

- Any ATA member or non-member may take a practice test.

- Send your payment for $80 or $120 per passage to the ATA Headquarters.

- The translated passage will be graded and returned with errors marked.

- To order a practice test, complete the Practice Test Request Form and submit online.

- Tests do not change often. Up to three passages are available.

- Please allow 6–8 weeks for receipt of the evaluation.

How the Exam is Graded

- Exams are graded **objectively**.

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- Copies of the examination are sent to **two graders**.

- Candidates who receive **a Pass on both passages** from both graders will receive certification.

- When the graders **disagree** on the outcome, **a third grader** is asked to grade the passages in question.

- Graders mark errors on a scale of 1, 2, 4, 8, or 16 error points. (Up to 3 quality points may be subtracted from error points.)

- A passage with a final score of **18 or higher** is marked **Fail**.

Tools for Graders

- **Flowchart for Error Point Decision**
  https://www.atanet.org/certification/how-the-exam-is-graded/error-points/

- **Framework for Standardized Error Marking**
  https://www.atanet.org/certification/how-the-exam-is-graded/error-marking/

- **Language-specific guidelines (LSGs)**
  Into-English Grading Standards
  https://www.atanet.org/certification/how-the-exam-is-graded/into-english-standards/

- **Passage-specific guidelines (PSGs)**

Error Categories (1)

- **Incomplete passage**

  A substantially unfinished passage is not graded.

- **Illegible** (in case of handwritten)

  Use pen or dark pencil and to write firmly enough to produce legible photocopies.

- **Misunderstanding of original text**

  Misreading a word or misinterpreting the syntax of a sentence.
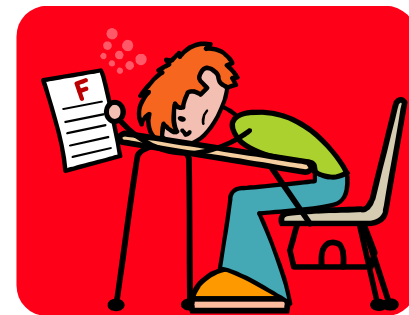
Error Categories (2)

- **Addition or omission**

  Something is inserted that is not clearly expressed in the original text, or something essential to the meaning is left out.

- **Terminology** - word choice.

- **Faithfulness** - the target text does not respect the meaning of the source text as much as possible.

Error Categories (3)

- **Text Type**

  Failure to follow Translation Instruction. The register (language level, degree of formality) and style of the source text should be preserved in the translation.

- **Too literal** - word-for-word translation

- **Verb Form** – a verb is used in a grammatically correct way but conveys a meaning different from the original.

Error Categories (4)

- **Faux Ami -** False cognate

- **Indecision -** gave more than one option

  Even if both options are correct, an error will be marked. More points will be deducted if one or both options are incorrect.

- **Cohesion -** a text is hard to follow because of inconsistent use of terminology or other structural errors.
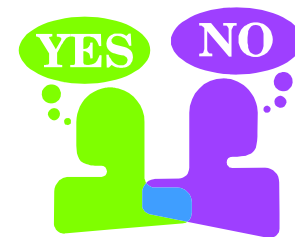
Error Categories (5)

- **Ambiguity**

  The meaning is clear in the source text but ambiguous in the translation.

- **Grammar**

  Lack of agreement between subject and verb, incorrect verb inflections, incorrect declensions of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives, and use of an adjective where an adverb is needed.
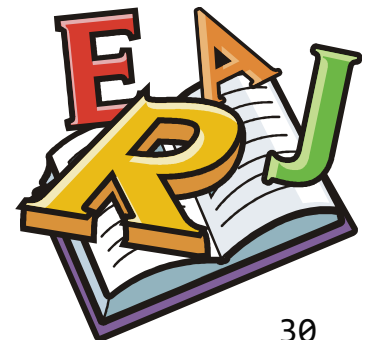
Error Categories (6)

- **Syntax**

  Sentence fragments, improper modification, lack of parallelism, and unnatural word order, etc.

- **Punctuation**

  The use of accents and other diacritical marks, quotation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons.

- **Spelling/Character**

Error Categories (7)

- **Accents and other diacritical marks**

- **Capitalization (upper/lower)**

- **Word Form**

  The root of the word is correct, but the wrong form is used.

- **Usage**

  Correct and idiomatic usage of the target language is expected. Errors include use of the wrong preposition or misuse of a grammatical form.

See *Explanation of Error Categories* (https://www.atanet.org/certification/how-the-exam-is-graded/error-categories/)

Continuing Education

- Certified members will have to earn and keep track of continuing education credits, as determined by ATA, in order to maintain their certification credential. Certified members are given 3 years to accumulate 20 hours of credit.

- All newly-certified members must complete the Ethics Module during your first three-year reporting period.

  https://www.atanet.org/certification/continuing-education-requirement/ethics/
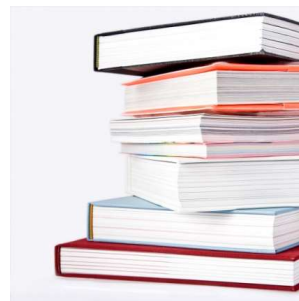
Good Luck to you all!

www.atanet.org/certification