

## NAATI response to the Keyboarded Translation Assessment Discussion Paper

September 2015

### Introduction

As part of the Improvements to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) Testing Project (INT Project), NAATI commissioned research to review options and alternatives to transition to keyboarded translator assessment. An independent research team comprising Dr Stephen Doherty (The University of New South Wales) and Dr Ignacio Garcia (The University of Western Sydney) conducted this research and in May 2015 the *Keyboarded Translation Assessment Discussion Paper* (KTADP) was published by NAATI<sup>1</sup>. This paper provides a starting point for the transition from NAATI's current system for translator accreditation testing using pen and paper to a computer-based system. The INT Project is guided by three aims: improved validity, increased reliability and practicality. This means that NAATI needs to implement a translation testing process that more closely reflects current translation practice.

NAATI has reviewed the KTADP and this paper draws on information contained in this, previous reviews and research relating to the use of computers in translator testing as well as research and practice within the tertiary education sector providing an overview of NAATI's approach to a transition to keyboarded translation assessment. NAATI is committed to implementing new testing procedures that will enable candidates to use technology in translation assessment; however moving from the decision to do so and implementing new testing procedures is unfortunately no easy task. As Doherty and Garcia note: 'that the implementation of computerised certification testing for translation is not meant to be easy is proven by the fact that there are not yet any clear models to follow', all of the proposed options have positives and negatives.<sup>2</sup> This paper progresses discussion of the implementation of keyboarded translation assessment and is organised into four parts. Part 1 provides a brief summary of previous research and recommendations relating to computerised testing; defines terms; articulates a vision of computerised translator testing and the principles that will inform NAATI's decision-making. Part 2 addresses improving translator testing: identifying the need for more detailed data about current translation practice; reviewing the eight elements of translator testing and proposing options for change; and discussing the implementation of new testing processes within the broader content of the INT Project. Part 3 considers options for pilot testing proposed in the KTADP and other options emerging from within the tertiary education sector. Part 4 summarises responses received by NAATI to the KTADP; NAATI's response to recommendations 1-10 in the KTADP and outlines NAATI's proposed plan of action.

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<sup>1</sup> S Doherty & I Garcia (2015) *Keyboarded Translation Assessment Discussion Paper*, NAATI, Canberra, pp: 1-16, available at: [https://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INT\\_Keyboard\\_Translation\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_May15.pdf](https://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INT_Keyboard_Translation_Discussion_Paper_May15.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.1.

## 1.0 Background

As outlined in the KTADP over the past fifteen years NAATI accreditation and testing procedures have been the subject of several reviews, all of which have included recommendations relating to using computers in translation testing.<sup>3</sup> The most recent review of NAATI's standards, testing and assessment was published in 2012. The authors of the review report *Improvements to NAATI Testing: Development of a conceptual overview for a new model for NAATI standards, testing and assessment* (the INT report) recommended:

*Recommendation 8: That NAATI move to computerised translator tests in the first place. Secondly, that test candidates undertaking computerised translator tests be allowed access to the internet while taking the test, taking into account security considerations.*<sup>4</sup>

Responding to the INT report recommendations in the *INT Project Discussion Paper November 2013* (INTPDP), NAATI stated:

*Keyboarded translator testing is agreed in principle subject to costing and resources. Whether access to the internet during testing will be agreed will require more work.*<sup>5</sup>

Before examining the options for transitioning to keyboarded translation assessment, it is useful to define terms relating to this process. NAATI has observed that different publications use different terms and it is important to clarify exactly what is meant when discussing the implementation of new translator assessment.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.1 Defining terms and envisaging translator e-Exams

Recommendation 8 of the INT report refers to 'computerised translator tests' and access to the internet during testing. The INT report refers more broadly to the role of technology in interpreting and translation tests and includes data from an informal poll of NAATI examiners on their thoughts about computer use, in particular the type of resources that test candidates may be able to access. NAATI's response refers to 'keyboarded translator testing'. This reference to 'keyboarded translator testing' reflects the terminology then used by the American Translator Association (ATA) in relation to the introduction of its *CertSoft* program<sup>7</sup>. The term 'keyboarded' refers to the use of a plain text editor (which lacks spelling and grammar checking capabilities) rather than 'word processing' (which may include spelling, grammar and other features).<sup>8</sup> Within the tertiary education sector, the terms online exams and e-Exams refer to a secure system that allows students to use a computer for writing exam answers in an invigilated environment and e-assessment and online marking refer to the assessment

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<sup>3</sup> See NAATI (2001) *Test Review Translators Group Final Summary*, NAATI, Canberra, pp: 1-24; NAATI (2001) *NAATI Accreditation and testing: A Discussion Paper with proposals resulting from the outcomes of the test format & methodology review*, NAATI, Canberra pp:1-19; J Cook & H Dixon (2005) *Review of NAATI Administrative processes related to testing including quality control processes final report*, AccessMQ, Sydney, pp: 1-46; S Hale, I Garcia, J Hlavac, M Kim, M Lai, B Turner & H Slatyer (2012) *Improvements to NAATI testing: development of a conceptual overview for a new model for NAATI standards, testing and assessment*, UNSW, Sydney, pp: 1-132, available at: <https://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INTFinalReport.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> NAATI (2013) *INT Project Discussion Paper*, NAATI, Canberra, p. 13, available at:

<https://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INT%20Project%20Discussion%20Paper%20-%20November%202013.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> It should also be noted that the INT report (see Hale *et al*, n 3 above) also recommends the development of online language proficiency tests (Recommendations 3 & 4), these will be considered in a subsequent paper. This paper just refers to Recommendation 8 relating to computerised translator tests.

<sup>7</sup> See Doherty & Garcia, n.1 above; ATA (2012) *American Translators Association Keyboarded Exam*, PowerPoint (slides 37 - 45) available at: [www.govtair.org/Publications/ATA2012.pdf](http://www.govtair.org/Publications/ATA2012.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See Doherty & Garcia, n.1 above p. 5.

side of the process.<sup>9</sup> Given the similarities between the aims of the examination process in the tertiary sector and NAATI translation testing it is appropriate for NAATI to adopt this terminology, while maintaining the distinction between tertiary education exams and translator certification tests. Going forward, NAATI will refer to translator e-tests. Similarly, recognising that the proposed changes include more than just the delivery of an e-test, NAATI will refer to the proposed integrated system as the new translator e-test system.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that what is under discussion is more than just whether or not test candidates might have access to a computer keyboard to type their translation. Similarly, just giving candidates the test materials electronically rather than on paper in itself would add no real value to NAATI or the test candidates. At a minimum, NAATI seeks to use information communications technology (ICT) to deliver the assessment, record the candidates' responses, provide candidates with access to translating resources and improve the efficiency of the assessment process. In addition, addressing the INT practicality goal, NAATI's aim for introducing changes to the translator testing process is to provide a more authentic test experience by enabling candidates to complete it in a manner that reflects 'real life' translation practice.<sup>11</sup> However, the need for authenticity does not mean that candidates will have access to *all* of the tools and resources they may use in translation practice. Authenticity will be balanced by the need to ensure that the assessment process appropriately tests the capacity of the candidates to practice as professional translators. The test must be conducted in a secure environment that protects the integrity and confidentiality of the test materials by avoiding unauthorised distribution of both source texts and candidate responses (target text) and providing secure access for examiners. The assessment process must ensure that candidates are not able to contact colleagues and the test is completed without input from individuals other than the translator seeking certification. It is also envisaged that access to resources such as dictionaries will be limited through a 'white list'.

Having defined the terms to be used in this discussion and provided a broad vision of what translator e-tests might involve, NAATI will now focus on how it will use technology in translator testing. This discussion begins with articulating five principles to inform the new testing process.

## **1.2 Principles to inform the use of technology in translation testing**

The KTADP focuses on *how* to move the certification tests from pen and paper to keyboard. NAATI's previous experience relating to changing the mode of delivery of interpreter tests in 2010 from tape recorders to digital playback and recording provides some useful lessons to guide the implementation of the use of technology in translator testing. Given that there are so many potential solutions to the delivery question, comparing the alternatives is difficult and confusing. All will have pros and cons and much of these are bundled into the type of technology that is used and often gets bogged down in complex technical matters, which while important to understand, can also unnecessarily hinder the decision-making process. In 2010, NAATI found that establishing a set of principles to inform the use of technology significantly aided the decision-making process by providing a framework through which to assess the various alternatives.

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<sup>9</sup> Hillier & Fluck (2013) 'Arguing again for e-exams in high stakes examinations', Paper presented at the 30<sup>th</sup> Australasian Society for Computer in Learning and Tertiary Education (ascilite) Conference 2013, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1-4 December, available at: [http://transformingexams.com/files/hillier\\_fluck\\_2013\\_ascilite\\_fullpaper.pdf](http://transformingexams.com/files/hillier_fluck_2013_ascilite_fullpaper.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> This follows from Hillier & Fluck (2013), and is used to refer to more than just the 'technology components and includes elements such as people, processes and policy' p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> See Hale *et al*, n 3 above p. 69.

Principles to inform the use of technology in translator testing:

1. Limited capital investment required.
2. Limited ongoing expenditure involved.
3. Flexibility to deal with changing technology.
4. Enable NAATI to deliver its services reliably and equitably.
5. Ensure integrity of the certification process.

In addition, NAATI's approach to considering the practicalities associated with delivery and testing for translators using computers is and will continue to be informed by engagement with other translating accreditation organisations. The INT report and the KTADP include information about how the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CoIL) in the UK and the ATA in the USA have approached the introduction of computer use in translator testing, and NAATI will benefit from understanding how other organisations including the South African Translators Institute (SATI) are working through this same issue. In addition, as mentioned above, NAATI will also be informed by developments within the tertiary education sector relating to the delivery of e-Exams and online assessment.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.0 Pathway to improving translator testing**

NAATI has identified three steps to improving translator testing: gathering data about current translation practice; identifying the ways in which the various elements of translator testing will need to change and managing the implementation of changes within the context of the broader INT project.

### **2.1 Understanding current translation practice: A national survey**

As one of the aims of introducing new testing procedures is to make translator testing more authentic NAATI has identified a need to collect baseline data relating to current translation practice on a language-by-language basis. As part of the 2011 review, the research team conducted three surveys collecting data from three different groups involved in the translation and interpretation industry (T&I): translation and interpretation agencies; examiners and educators; and practitioners. The practitioners' survey attracted 226 respondents (including 47 translators and 110 people who were both translators and interpreters) and provides some useful insights about the demographic characteristics of T & I practitioners and together with the examiners and educators' responses, the skills to be tested by translator accreditation tests.<sup>13</sup> However, more information about how translators work and the tools and resources they use is required to inform changes to translator testing.

While there may be consensus about a number of aspects of how translators work and what tools and resources they use, there is also likely to be variation both between different language groups and among individuals for the same language. In addition, the range of electronic and online tools and resources available to translators is constantly evolving. NAATI believes that in order to provide a more authentic test experience it requires more detailed information about current translation practice. NAATI will conduct a survey of accredited and recognised translators as a starting point for considering what 'real life' translation looks like. This survey will consider both general and specific information, including aspects like job information/specification, tools used to prepare a translation and the

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<sup>12</sup> In particular the Transforming exams research project based at the University of Queensland (UQ), see the project website for relevant publications and information <http://transformingexams.com/>; see also A Fluck (2011) *eExams for transformation of higher education*, paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference 2011, Hobart, Tasmania available at: <http://www.aare.edu.au/publications-database.php/6159/eExams-for-transformation-of-higher-education>.

<sup>13</sup> Hale et al, n 3 above p. 12 & p. 52. NAATI is also aware of 2007 survey of T&I practitioners conducted by Helen Slatyer.

resources used by translators. This survey will also ask for detailed information about language specific resources used which may help to guide the selection of any list of allowable resources/websites (white list).

## 2.2 Elements of translator testing

As mentioned above the transition to translator e-tests encompasses much more than just enabling test candidates to type their translation responses. Section 3 of the KTADP provides information about the type of resources that candidates may be able to access, comparing existing computerised testing regimes in South Africa, the UK and USA with existing NAATI professional testing. Section 4 of the KTADP then details issues relating to required infrastructure including a useful list of essential user needs. Doherty & Garcia identify the various different types of users as test candidate, test administrator, approved course test administrator, grader and NAATI.<sup>14</sup> Using this analysis, NAATI has identified the different components of the testing process that need to be considered in transitioning to translator e-tests:

- 1) Supervision/invigilation of assessment
- 2) Delivery and format of assessment materials including job/task specification
- 3) Typing of translations (candidate responses)
- 4) Type of keyboard offered to candidate for typing.
- 5) Access to internet-based and/or electronic resources
- 6) Saving/archiving of candidate responses
- 7) Despatch and distribution of candidate responses for marking
- 8) Marking of responses by examiners

The transition from paper and pen to translator e-tests will now be discussed with regard to each of these components.

### 1) *Supervision/Invigilation of assessment*

The current translator assessment format involving paper-based test materials and hand written responses relies on in-person supervision and invigilation of the assessment task. As noted in the KTADP, the use of computerised assessment programs such as *CertSoft* still requires direct supervision of the test taker by an individual(s). NAATI does not feel that the supervision component should be changed in the first instance. As part of designing the translator assessment format for the new certification system, consideration will be given to other possible modes of supervision and the pros and cons of these. For example, the use of 'lock-down' functionality that prevents students from accessing other applications and network devices during testing and something like ProctorU for computer based testing.<sup>15</sup> At this stage NAATI intends to continue to offer testing from centralised testing facilities, thus remote delivery is not at this stage a priority.

### 2) *Delivery and format of assessment materials*

NAATI's current model for the test materials is that they are paper-based. There are other options for the delivery of test materials including: as a word or pdf file (enabling copying of words or passages, as is commonly done in 'real life' translation practice); as an image; or integrated with the system used to record the candidate's translations (as with *CertSoft*). NAATI believes that

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<sup>14</sup> Doherty & Garcia, n 1 above.

<sup>15</sup> See information about ProctorU at: <http://www.proctoru.com/index.php>

while the electronic delivery of the test materials might be achieved independently of other aspects of the assessment process, this would add no real value to NAATI or the test candidate. Ideally, NAATI is seeking to deliver a translator e-test system that integrates the delivery of test materials, with the recording of candidate responses and the delivery of test material to examiners for grading.

3) *Typing of translations*

Currently NAATI test candidates provide hand written responses in an examination booklet. NAATI believes that this is one area where a staged transition might be considered. For example, NAATI could adapt the current test to provide candidates with an option to use a rich/plain text editor to type their translations (although NAATI notes that this option would not be suitable for all languages), but at this stage it would not be integrated into a system covering other aspects of the process. There are also risks associated with this approach and it is unlikely that it would be consistent with a post-INT process as NAATI's goal is an integrated ITC-based solution that addresses all or almost all of recommendations 1-8 of the KTADP.

4) *Type of keyboard offered to candidate for typing*

The type of keyboard offered to candidates for typing is obviously linked with 3 above in that if you offer the typing of translations to a candidate you must provide them with an appropriate means to type languages other than English (LOTEs). This means that the keyboard, as with a standard QWERTY English keyboard, provides accurate information about the result of pushing a key(s). It does not make any sense to provide a rich/plain text typing option without providing an appropriate way to type in a LOTE in the test environment. Recommendation 7 of the KTADP that candidate's sitting the 'from English' exam be allowed to bring their own keyboard is worth consideration, but it is unclear whether, unless NAATI provided a specific option which it knew provided the correct interface with its system, there could still be issues with this approach.

In addition, handwritten testing would have to be available for some languages for some time as NAATI could not enforce a requirement to do the test using a computer for a language until an adequate language input option using a keyboard was available for certification testing. *CertSoft*, or any similar approach, is likely to have this issue for some language combinations. Given the large number of languages for which NAATI currently offers accreditation this would add a layer of complexity to the problem.

5) *Access to internet-based and/or electronic resources*

Enabling candidates to access internet-based or other electronic resources appears to be the most obvious option for a transitional approach. Compared to 'real life' translation practice, NAATI's current approach to the use of resources during testing is extremely restrictive.<sup>16</sup> Any type of transition would require some type of bridging technology and would require a limited list of available resources (white list) to be developed with input from practitioners (through the previously mentioned survey) and language panels. One option might be enabling candidates to use a NAATI provided tablet providing access only to the relevant white listed resources.

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<sup>16</sup> NAATI 2015 Policy for the use of resources in paraprofessional translator and professional translator tests, version 1.2 June 2015, available at: [http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/Misc/Dictionary\\_Policy\\_2TB\\_and\\_3TB.pdf](http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/Misc/Dictionary_Policy_2TB_and_3TB.pdf).

The option of essentially open access to the internet as suggested in the INT report is not considered a viable alternative at this time (but should be a goal worked towards through developments to the system over time). However, the white list approach as outlined in the KTADP (Recommendation 5) would be a significant advance from the current situation. Development of the white list would need to consider whether access to resources is provided offline or online and any costs associated with the use or licencing of these. An offline approach would provide greater security and integrity to the assessment process but would obviously be more restrictive and might require a greater lead-time to add or update the resources available prior to each test sitting (assuming these had to be licenced from the provider).

The white list would need to be a public document, enabling candidates to preview and properly prepare for the assessment by using the resources, and there would need to be a process for reviewing the content of the white list – based on the input of candidates, practitioners and the relevant language panels.

6) *Saving/archiving of candidate responses*

NAATI's current system uses the original paper-based script on which the candidates write their translations. Any transition from hand-written responses to electronic-typed responses would depend on what system candidates use to type their responses and would have broader IT implications (for the storing and backing up of these records). As stated at 2 above, NAATI does not believe that there would be significant benefits in just transitioning from the current approach independent of the implementation of an integrated system for certification testing.

7) *Despatch/distribution of candidate responses for marking*

Currently photocopies of the candidate's script are sent primarily by post to examiners for marking. NAATI could consider an alternative approach, such as scanning the handwritten responses and emailing as a pdf document to the examiner, prior to the roll out of an integrated system and the broader INT Project. The current structure of the marking system – the symbols and other information that is required to be recorded on the candidate's answer – limits the possible approaches to a staged transition. While the evolving nature of onscreen editing programs may largely address this at the technical level, the capacity and willingness of individual examiners to gain competency in and use such software is another issue especially within the context of the likely need for examiners to familiarise themselves with a new marking system as part of the broader INT Project changes. However, electronic distribution to examiners could be trialled and would certainly contribute to cost savings if the use of post to deliver test materials to and from examiners could be reduced. Ideally, as mentioned above, the dispatch of tests for marking would be integrated and potentially automated in the new testing system.

8) *Marking of responses by examiners*

As mentioned above the current marking system limits options for transitioning to online marking or e-assessment. Examiners are required to use a complex series of symbols, which can only really be handwritten, to indicate the type and seriousness of errors as well as record the number of marks deducted for each error. Off-the-shelf software assessment tools would be unlikely to meet the requirements of the current system although this could be investigated and would potentially be useful for informing how the future certification e-assessments might be achieved.

### 2.3 Transitioning to a new translator testing system

The implementation of changes to translator testing processes will be done as part of the broader INT Project; however, it is useful to consider whether it is practical and possible to make some changes to how current accreditation testing is run before implementing the broader changes to the NAATI certification system associated with the INT Project. On one hand, it would be useful for NAATI to understand the implications of changes for candidates being tested under the current system. On the other hand, implementing changes before the roll out of the broader INT project, scheduled for the beginning of 2018, will require a significant re-direction of time and resources away from broader changes associated with the INT Project.

A transitional or staged approach to changing the current testing processes may be an option, retaining some aspects of the current system and changing others. This would enable NAATI to introduce changes to the way these tests are offered before the broader INT changes are implemented. There would need to be significant work done in order to achieve this, implementation would not just take a month or two. As a minimum, the survey mentioned above would need to be completed and analysed, and the broad direction for translator testing under the new certification system would need to be understood.

Although changing aspects of the current testing approach have been discussed, it is important to note that NAATI resources are limited both in terms of internal capabilities and capital to invest in system change. Any investment in the current system, unless carefully managed in conjunction with the broader changes that will result from the INT Project, will mean there are less resources to deliver the INT project. In particular, the following aspects should also be considered:

*a) Timing*

NAATI intends to introduce the new certification system in 2018. Based on this any transitional arrangements would only be in place for a maximum of two years (assuming some arrangements could be implemented early in 2016). Given this short timeframe and the need to provide candidates with certainty around test arrangements, NAATI considers that any transitional arrangements should be implemented at a single point rather than engaging in a series of changes over that two-year period unless those changes do not affect the candidate's test experience.

*b) Learning for the future system*

There is undoubtedly much to learn about how testing might be run using technology. A transitional approach would be very valuable in some areas to ensure that there is the best possible outcome under the new certification system. NAATI agrees in the benefits of pilot testing as proposed in section 5 of the KTADP to test the efficacy of proposed changes.

### 3.0 Options for a new translator e-test system

#### 3.1 ATA's *CertSoft*

Recommendation 10 of the KTADP refers to trialling software developed by the ATA for the delivery of their certification test – *CertSoft*. NAATI is aware that the ATA has invested significant time and resources in the development of *CertSoft*. However, despite this work and investment, the implementation of computerised translator testing using *CertSoft* has not yet been realised on a large scale and the ATA is considering other options for the delivery of their certification assessment.<sup>17</sup> Further investigation is required before any decision could be made on this, but NAATI currently understands that there are several issues that would need to be worked through:

a) *Access to CertSoft*

*CertSoft* is a software developed by the ATA into which they have invested their own time and money. NAATI would need to investigate whether it would be possible to purchase the *CertSoft* source code from the ATA for the purposes of trialling. It is not clear whether it may be available for trialling without the need to purchase it.

b) *Setup of CertSoft for use by NAATI*

While there are similarities between the NAATI test format (Professional Translator) and the ATA test format, there are also some significant differences. This would require the software to be recoded to meet the requirements of the NAATI test. It is not clear what costs might be associated with recoding in order to pilot the software using a NAATI test, but it is not expected that this cost would be insignificant in terms of expenditure on the INT Project.

c) *Ongoing costs associated with maintaining CertSoft*

Once NAATI purchased the *CertSoft* source code and amended this so that it could deal with the NAATI test format, NAATI would be solely responsible for the ongoing maintenance of this software. Given this effectively would become a system unique to NAATI, and one we would have a planned growing reliance on to offer certification testing, due consideration needs to be given to not just the one-off development costs, but also the ongoing costs including the likely lifespan for *CertSoft*.<sup>18</sup>

d) *Hardware required to support CertSoft*

As outlined in the KTADP the latest version of *CertSoft* has been implemented using a three layer architecture (comprising local, exam and server) requiring significant hardware to support delivery. NAATI currently runs about 1,800 translation tests each year and would not be in a position based on current funding to support the necessary terminals across its existing testing venues to offer this number of tests. While tertiary education institutions have large computer laboratories it is not known whether it would be possible to install and run *CertSoft* on these systems or indeed whether NAATI could negotiate access to these facilities in the

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<sup>17</sup> G Bokor (2015) 'Why is the American Translator Association (ATA)'s certification exam still being given on paper?', *Translation Journal* April 2015, available at: <http://translationjournal.net/Featured-Article/why-is-the-american-translators-association-ata-s-certification-exam-still-being-given-on-paper.html>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

way needed to run NAATI testing. The collaborative pilot testing with institutional partners proposed in the KTADP provides an avenue to investigate this option.

NAATI agrees that this option should be further investigated in consultation with the ATA.

### 3.2 Other options

The KTADP considered the option of allowing test candidates to use their own computers (generally known as bring your own device, BYOD) to complete the translator assessment. Doherty & Garcia did not believe this was a viable option for a number of reasons including the rejection of this option by the majority of other accreditation bodies and concerns about security and integrity. However, given the increasing use of e-Exams within the tertiary sector, NAATI will consult more broadly about this option with particular reference to the Transforming Exams research project and BYOD e-Exam trials and practice at the University of Queensland and the University of Tasmania.<sup>19</sup> Enabling test candidates to BYOD would solve some complex and significant barriers to NAATI's ability to offer computer-based testing across 60 languages while meeting current levels of demand.

## 4.0 Summary of responses to KTADP

NAATI sought feedback from stakeholders on the KTADP. To date only limited feedback has been received and most of this has focussed on specific aspects of the KTADP, for example practical issues associated with using GradeMark (an online assessment program within Turnitin) and applying it to the current system for marking translator tests. This feedback has not raised any additional issues that are not addressed in this response.

### 4.1 NAATI responses to KTADP recommendations

1. *That the introduction of computerised testing is considered based on the Professional Level exam; adjustments can then be made (e.g. white listed resources) for Paraprofessional and Advanced level testing.*

NAATI – Agreed, in the event that a decision is made to transition aspects of the current testing before the implementation of a new test format for certification, then this is a sensible approach. Professional level test makes up more than 99% of translator testing annually.

2. *That the option for candidates to sit translation testing on computers is pursued taking into account that, for a period of 5 years, both pen and paper and computerised exams will have to coexist.*

NAATI - In principle agreement that there will need to be a transitional approach but NAATI would like this to occur more quickly than 5 years. The goal should be to phase out any paper-based testing within a two-year period.

3. *That no changes are introduced to the current pen and paper testing and no hard copy resources are allowed in computerised testing as the entire test is conducted on the computer using white listed resources and full digital delivery of all test materials.*

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<sup>19</sup> See <http://transformingexams.com/research.html>; Hillier & Fluck n 9, above; and Fluck n 12, above.

NAATI – Rejected, there is an equity issue here. If a method for access to the white listed resources can be found it must be accessible for all candidates. This may mean considering different methods for achieving this for pen and paper tests.

4. *That the computerised test only allows candidates to work on a plain text editor rather than a full word processor.*

NAATI – Rejected, the goal for NAATI must be for as ‘real life’ assessment scenario as possible. A plain text editor should only be considered as an option where it proves impractical to offer a full word processing option.

5. *That candidates on the computerised test are given access to limited, agreed-upon internet resources.*

NAATI - Agreed and in addition, there should be a way to offer access to those resources for candidates who opt or have to sit a paper-based assessment.

6. *That candidates are not permitted to bring their own computers, rather computers are provided for them.*

NAATI – Rejected, pending further investigation as set out in this paper.

7. *That under certain conditions and for ‘from English’ testing candidates be allowed to bring their own keyboards.*

NAATI – Agreed in principle, if NAATI is unable to provide the keyboards to test candidates, but this needs to be considered in more detail. There is always an issue about the compatibility of the keyboard used and the test environment.

8. *That candidates are allowed to familiarise themselves with the software used for testing prior to testing.*

NAATI – Agreed, candidates must be given an open opportunity to familiarise themselves with how any software used for testing operates prior to sitting the translator test.

9. *That the exam delivery system is implemented on a 3-layer, not a 2-layer, architecture.*

NAATI – Agreed in principle, the information provided of ATA’s experiences indicates that this would be the best option should we go for an integrated IT based approach like *CertSoft*.

10. *That the ATA’s CertSoft system be trialled by NAATI in collaboration with the translating and interpreting community.*

NAATI – Agreed in principle, subject to further investigation regarding the feasibility of adapting the *CertSoft* for use by NAATI. NAATI agrees that trialling *CertSoft* in collaboration with the T&I community would be very useful, if it is found to be the best solution.

### **4.2 NAATI's plan from here**

This initial response provides a general overview of NAATI's current thinking, indicating areas where more investigation is required. NAATI intends to proceed with the following actions and will then publish an update on progress towards a new translator e-testing system. These activities will intersect with work to design assessment tools that is scheduled to begin in 2016 as part of the broader INT Project.

- 1. Conduct a national survey of translation practitioners to provide baseline data about current translation practice in Australia.**
- 2. Investigate the feasibility of adapting the ATA's *CertSoft* program for use by NAATI.**
- 3. Investigate the feasibility of adapting e-Exam BYOD options for use by NAATI.**
- 4. Investigate the feasibility of developing a commercially available and supported e-test solution for use by NAATI.**
- 5. Publish a further paper addressing the findings of these investigations and identifying the best option/s for pilot testing.**

As part of drafting this Paper NAATI sought and received comments from the authors of the KTADP. This has been attached at Appendix A.

*If you have any questions in relation to this paper or have any feedback you would like to provide NAATI please email [intproject@naati.com.au](mailto:intproject@naati.com.au).*

**Appendix A: Authors' Response to NAATI's Response to the Keyboard Translation Assessment Discussion Paper (September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015)**

We find NAATI's Response Document is based on a good understanding of the Discussion Paper (KTADP) prepared at NAATI's request in May 2015. We welcome NAATI's agreement and support of the Discussion Paper and have no objection to its Response Document being published in its current form. In moving forward, we would like to take this opportunity to provide feedback to the Response Document within the window provided.

**1. NAATI Responses to KTADP Recommendations***Recommendation 2*

We support the "in principle agreement" given the expectation that the vast majority of candidates will request keyboarded assessment immediately once it becomes available. It is unlikely that all input difficulties will subside in two years for all of NAATI's testing languages. This is less problematic for the into-English test given the candidates will be typing in English, however, it is likely that the into-LOTE candidates will encounter input difficulties from the onset. Comprehensive testing is therefore required for all of NAATI's languages in the envisaged e-test scenario, after which the exact duration of the transition phase period should be forecasted more precisely (e.g., two, five years, etc.).

*Recommendation 3*

We understand the basis for NAATI's rejection of this recommendation. For practicality and efficiency, we contend that it would be easier for NAATI to follow the recommendation thus allowing candidates to choose freely between pen-and-paper testing and e-testing. The Language Panels can ensure that the 'whitelisted' resources are equitable to the resources available to candidates opting for the pen-and-paper testing. For example, by forming discrete categories so that each language has at least one resource in each, e.g., monolingual dictionary, bi-lingual dictionary, etc., thereby ensuring equity across languages and test formats. Candidates should be able to access detailed information on the resources available in both test formats before making their decision of the test format taken. Presenting candidates with this opportunity for informed choice further negates the risk to equity and thus we believe makes this option defensible.

Rejecting the recommendation forces NAATI to offer e-testing to all candidates, and thus more physical space is required (etc.), as well as the concomitant equity and accessibility issues. Given the statement that "this may mean considering different methods for achieving this for pen and paper tests", we propose that this rejection should be revisited once the envisaged consideration has taken place.

*Recommendation 4*

We defend our recommendation and wish to explain our rationale in other terms in case it was not fully understood.

Using a word processor is problematic for equity. While major languages are well resourced in terms of in-built spelling and grammar checkers, thesauri, and even machine translation functions, other

languages, particularly new and emerging languages, do not have such developed resources, if any at all, and candidates from these groups are thereby disadvantaged considerably.

Allowing for word processors to be used in the e-test will indeed enhance assessment of ‘real life’ practice, i.e., improve the external validity of the test. However, it damages significantly the internal validity of the e-test given that it fails to test if the candidate actually knows how to spell correctly and use basic grammar (etc.) given the presence of the above functions integrated into word processing software. This is analogous to the argument for ‘whitelisted’ resources versus unrestricted Internet access, where the latter is most like ‘real life’ translation, yet the former is chosen by NAATI as a compromise for test conditions. We cite ATA’s CertSoft as an example, wherein a word processor is not available for these very reasons.

Finally, the simple text only option will make it easier to manage the security and integrity of the testing process. An alternative exists in the modification of an existing (commercial or open-source) word processor so that candidates cannot access some, or all, of the above features. However, this will require initial and on-going expenditure and development time to implement and maintain correctly as NAATI does not have the required technical expertise in-house.

#### *Recommendation 6*

While requiring candidates to bring their own laptops may be more financially attractive, it poses considerable, critical security risks to the integrity of the e-test system, its contents, and NAATI’s own systems and databases. NAATI does not have the in-house technical expertise to create the required security measures to reduce this risk. It will therefore require significant investment of resources in outsourcing this task to a highly specialized third-party company and in long-term, ongoing investment in its maintenance. This risk will always exist and cannot be removed from the BYOD approach even with ‘lock-down’ functionalities, direct or online invigilation, or any combination thereof.

Compatibility issues between candidates’ laptops and the e-test system are also likely to result in: additional provision of on-site technical support, delays in test starting times, tests having to be rescheduled, and candidates’ own laptops failing during the exam, etc.

Finally, equity and accessibility are also affected considerably in that candidates may not have access to their own laptops, and indeed laptops with functionality for their language, for practicing and taking the e-test. We invite NAATI to provide details of how such candidates can be accommodated, for instance, with a temporary loan at the NAATI test centre.

## **2. Additional Points**

### *1. Survey*

We believe the value of a survey proposed in 2.1 and 4.2 (1) is very limited, especially in terms of expending resources that NAATI argues are already greatly restricted for such a limited return on investment. We believe this will take these resources away from the priority of this initiative, i.e., commencing piloting of the proposed “e-test system” as soon as it is feasible.

Capturing the diversity of the profession on a self-report survey is not be as simple as it seems and, in any case, such an initiative should combine more than one research method to improve the validity and generalizability of the findings. Such a survey overlaps greatly with the INT Project initiative to work on the “Validation survey for the Job Analyses” (NAATI document dated May 15<sup>th</sup>), which should

already serve the purpose of providing an accurate, representative, and valid account of all aspects of the “job” of professional translators. A second survey should therefore not be required.

We contend that the results for the Job Analyses survey will provide sufficient insight into the role of technology in professional translation, to which input from the Language Panels can be added. Input from the Language Panels should be sufficient, for instance, in the selection of ‘white listed’ resources (point 5, p. 6). All of the Language Panels should be sufficiently informed about the resources used for the languages they represent. Further to this, the Discussion Paper and subsequent documents also provide sufficient timeframes and means for external feedback from all stakeholders to be registered.

Finally, there exists a considerable body of literature, including industry surveys, on professional translators’ (and their clients’, etc.) usage and perceptions of technology that is applicable to, and already contains data from, a contemporary Australian context. We are happy to assist NAATI in this endeavour.

## 2. *Tablet devices*

The tablet devices mentioned in 2.2 (5) create more problems than they will solve. *Touch* and *type* functions are entirely different skills. No study or proof exists that evidences the suggestion that professional translators even make use of tablets while translating on their computers at the same time. Such a process also adds to the cognitive load of the translation task, introduces negative acclimatisation effects in performance, and misrepresents the ‘real life’ translation task that NAATI wishes to test. Unless candidates can prepare for the exam by practicing *touching* on their own tablets or those provided by NAATI, it would be of little help under the time-pressure of an exam. In any case it is not representative of the ‘real life’ translation task and would only serve to introduce additional complexity, risk, and cost to testing and test preparation.

## 3. *Electronic marking by examiners*

We propose that the marking symbols used by NAATI are not an effective means of marking electronically. Rather than consuming resources in customising software to accommodate NAATI’s symbols, which will be problematic and is not likely to be technically feasible given similar initiatives in educational contexts, NAATI should modify its usage of symbols for electronic marking based on the parameters of existing electronic marking systems (e.g., GradeMark in Turnitin) or its e-test system.

As a matter of course, NAATI should provide accessible training to examiners: to ensure consistency and efficiency in marking online, to increase the likelihood of its uptake, and to reduce the probability of technical issues arising throughout the process (e.g., resulting in delays, additional needs for technical support, loss of data, etc.). A large body of existing literature on electronic marking, especially in the context of tertiary education, will provide invaluable advice in informing this approach. The move to electronic assessment also provides NAATI with opportunities to explore assessment analytics (e.g., to improve efficiency in the e-test system), and the means to demonstrate the inter-rater reliability, consistency, and validity of its online marking criteria, all of which are essential components to the established best practice of testing in any format. We are also happy to assist NAATI in these endeavours.