

APPENDIX 1 – AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN SERVICE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATINGS

SPEAKING

Rating	Description
S0+	Able to satisfy immediate needs using rehearsed utterances. Shows little real autonomy of expression, flexibility or spontaneity. Can ask questions or make statements with reasonable accuracy only with memorised utterances of formulae. Attempts at creating speech are usually unsuccessful.
S1	Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversation on familiar topics. Often speaks with great difficulty and is unable to produce continuous discourse except with rehearsed material. Structural accuracy is likely to be weak; vocabulary is extremely limited; time concepts are vague; and pronunciation, stress and intonation are generally poor, often heavily influenced by another language.
S1+	Able to initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversations and satisfy limited social demands. Speech largely consists of a series of short, discrete utterances and will usually be laboured. Accuracy in basic grammatical relations is evident, although not consistent. May hesitate and have to change subjects due to a lack of language resources. Range and control of the language are limited, and may have little understanding of the social conventions.
S2	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements in familiar subject areas. Can handle routine work-related interactions that are limited in scope. Is no longer reliant on formulaic utterances. Can handle with confidence, but not with facility, most normal high-frequency social conversational situations including extensive, but casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family and autobiographical information. Linguistic structure is not very elaborate and not thoroughly controlled; vocabulary use is appropriate for familiar utterances but limited in unfamiliar topics.
S2+	Able to satisfy limited work requirements with language usage that is usually competent and often, but not always, effective. Shows considerable ability to communicate on topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows a high degree of fluency and ease of speech, yet when under tension or pressure, ability to use language effectively may deteriorate. May miss cultural and local references and may require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some ways.
S3	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Has sufficient mastery of structure and vocabulary to convey meaning accurately. Errors may occur in low-frequency and highly complex structures, yet this virtually never interferes with understanding. Although cultural references, proverbs, and the implication of nuances and idioms may not be fully understood, however the speaker is able to comprehend and convey the main meaning.
S3+	Able to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide range of sophisticated and demanding tasks. Demonstrates fluency and may have particular strengths in one or more area. Demonstrates discourse competence in a wide range of contexts and tasks, often matching a native speaker's strategic and organisational abilities and expectations. Despite obvious strengths, may exhibit some hesitancy, uncertainty, effort or errors which limit the range of language-related tasks that can be reliably performed.
S4	Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Language ability rarely hinders performance of any task requiring language. Speaks smoothly and effortlessly and is able to use the language with a high degree of effectiveness, reliability, and precision for all representational purposes within the range of personal and professional experience and scope of responsibilities.
S4+	Speaking proficiency is usually equivalent to that of a well-educated, highly articulate native speaker. Effective application of a native speaker's social and circumstantial knowledge. However, cannot sustain that performance under all circumstances and would not necessarily be perceived as culturally native. Has sophisticated control of vocabulary and phrasing, yet there may be occasional weaknesses in idioms, colloquialisms, pronunciation or cultural reference, or there may be an occasional failure to interact in a totally native manner.

READING AND TRANSLATING

Rating	Description
R0+	Can recognise all the letters in the printed version of an alphabetic system and high-frequency elements of a syllabary or character system. Able to read and translate some or all of the following: numbers, isolated words and phrases, personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations. Some of these are often interpreted inaccurately. Unable to read connected prose.
R1	Able to read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate into idiomatic English simple informative discourse in a standard printed form. Able to read and understand known language elements that have been recombined simply in new ways to achieve different meanings.
R1+	Able to read, demonstrate comprehension and translate into idiomatic English simple informative discourse in printed form relating to social purposes. Can guess at unfamiliar vocabulary if highly contextualised, but with difficulty in unfamiliar contexts. May demonstrate problems in understanding grammatical structure. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors of discourse, and may have to read materials several times for understanding.
R2	Able to read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate into idiomatic English simple, authentic material on factual subjects within a familiar context, which is presented in a standard printed form, in predictable sequence. May misunderstand some details, and in general is insufficiently experienced with the language to draw inferences from the text. Does not have a broad active vocabulary, but is able to use contextual and real-world cues to understand the text.
R2+	Able to read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate accurately into idiomatic English most factual material in non-technical prose as well as some discussions on concrete topics related to special professional interests. Is able to separate the main ideas and details from lesser ones and uses that distinction to advance understanding. Weaknesses include slowness, uncertainty, inability to discern nuance and/or intentionally disguised meaning.
R3	Can read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate into idiomatic English a variety of authentic prose material on unfamiliar subjects. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although not expected to demonstrate thorough comprehension of subject matter which is highly dependent on cultural knowledge or outside general experience and not accompanied by explanation. Can get the gist of more sophisticated texts, but may be unable to detect or understand subtlety and nuance.
R3+	Able to read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate into idiomatic English a greater variety of styles and forms than R3 pertinent to professional needs, with a higher degree of accuracy. Rarely misinterprets meaning in these texts, or experiences difficulty in relating ideas or making inferences. Able to comprehend many sociolinguistic and cultural references, but may miss some nuances and subtleties.
R4	Able to read fluently, demonstrate comprehension of and translate accurately into idiomatic English all styles and forms of the language pertinent to professional needs. Able to relate inferences in texts to real-world knowledge and understand almost all sociolinguistic and cultural references through extensive experience with the written language. Recognises all professionally relevant vocabulary known to the educated non-professional native, although may have some difficulty with slang. Can read reasonably legible handwriting without difficulty; accuracy is often nearly that of a well-educated native reader.
R4+	Nearly native ability to read, demonstrate comprehension of and translate accurately into idiomatic English extremely difficult or abstract prose, a very wide variety of vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, and slang. Strong sensitivity to and understanding of sociolinguistic and cultural references. Little difficulty in reading less than fully legible handwriting. Accuracy is close to that of the well-educated bilingual native reader, but not equivalent.

INFORMAL INTERPRETING

Rating	Description
I1	With initial briefing, able to give an informal two-way (into English and the target language) interpretation of short, simple, familiar phrases or sentences in segments of up to 10 words. Able to successfully convey the information or meaning of these utterances, often without hesitation. Frequently makes errors in pronunciation and grammar in the target language, but can convey concrete information or data and formulaic instructions or questions and answers.
I2	With initial briefing, able to give an informal two-way (into English and the target language) interpretation of standard colloquial familiar conversations, in segments of up to 25-35 words. Observes correct procedures such as impartiality and accurate interpretation of the speaker's essential message. Translation from the target language into English will usually be in an appropriate language form, but translation into the target language may be heavily influenced by forms from the source language. Would have difficulties interpreting outside a familiar range of social and professional areas, and with specialist vocabulary, slang or idiom.
I3	With initial briefing, able to give informal consecutive or simultaneous interpretation of a text of up to 300 words, into English or the target language, as well as two-way interpretation dialogue. Observes correct procedures such as impartiality and accurate interpretation of the speaker's message. Can appropriately interpret changes in register and use appropriate language forms in either language. Hesitations are minimal unless vocabulary lies outside the candidate's field of experience. May experience difficulty with specialised registers or vocabulary, and less familiar slang or idiom.
I4	With initial briefing, able to give informal consecutive or simultaneous interpretation of a text of 300-400 words, into English or the target language, as well as two-way interpretation of dialogue. Observes correct procedures such as impartiality and accurate interpretation of the speaker's message. Can interpret changes in register and use appropriate language forms in either language. Experiences some difficulty with some specialised registers or vocabulary if not prepared. May have problems with culturally bound or eccentric use of language.