



*The PEPNet
Past Posts is a
compilation of
the most
frequently
discussed topics
on the PEPNet
listserv.*

Past Posts

HANDLING REDUCTION OF INTERPRETING HOURS FOR FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME STAFF AND INDEPENDENT INTERPRETERS

Postings in this document reflect the variety of ways colleges and universities handle last minute cancellations, students dropping classes and cancellation policies. Comparisons between staff/full-time and part-time/freelance interpreters are also discussed.

At my college, when a student(s) drops a class(es), we pay the interpreter for the next class. If the student is taking a T/Th class and drops on Tuesday we pay the interpreter for Thursday and that's all. We do not guarantee hours.

*Austin Community College, Austin, Texas
November 2005*

We try to fill as many of our hours as possible with staff interpreters, and we're usually able to cover 75 - 90% of the interpreting needs with staff instead of hourly freelancers.

For the freelancers we do hire, they take the jobs knowing that they might lose the hours if students drop classes or if hours need to be transferred to staff interpreters. We pay them a two week severance, so for example if the class that drops meets once a week for three hours, we pay them for six additional hours.

Getting numerous staff positions took time, but it has really served our students well because we're able to provide more consistency and at the same time provide good jobs with benefits for interpreters. It has saved the university money overall. Any chance your institution would take a look at creating positions?

*University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee
November 2005*

When interpreters are hired for the semester and then a student drops, we pay for the following two weeks only.

*Northwestern Michigan College, Traverse City, MI
November 2005*

We pay the interpreters a two week severance when students drop their courses. I do not move hours around to those who have more seniority. For those who have lost work, I will often go to them first for sub work... Hope this helps..

*Montgomery College
November 2005*

We make sure that interpreters know that their schedule during the first 1-2 weeks of the term should only be considered temporary, since students add & drop classes frequently at the beginning of the term.

We pay interpreters if they get less than 24 hours notice of cancellation - any cancellation. I expect that the interpreter will use the time wisely and work on professional development or prep for another class. If one of my interpreters with seniority loses hours, I do not take hours from another interpreter to boost others' hours; however, these interpreters would most certainly be at the top of my sub list!

Interpreters accept assignments with this knowledge, but I have to admit (being a freelancer myself) that this makes it increasingly more difficult to attract and keep interpreters. We are having a difficult time attracting interpreters with the low pay rate we are able to offer (and that's at the top of the college pay scale), and we are working with our Human Resources dept. to negotiate a way we can pay interpreters the going rate.

*Lane Community College, Eugene, OR
December 2005*

We have six staff interpreters and around 20 contract interpreters serving approx. 45 students. The contract folks are not guaranteed their hours and if a student drops they lose their class. We do guarantee staff interpreters their hours- and if they lose a class we will sometimes bump a contracted person and give the class to the staff person. We hate to do this because the student has to get used to a new interpreter who may or may not know the material for the class, but we have done this.

We are in the process of raising our contract rates. The new rates will pay contract folks at a higher level than staff, in part to attract qualified interpreters but also in recognition of the fact that the contract interpreters don't get full benefits, and are not guaranteed work.

I'd love to have more staff positions.

*Santa Rosa Junior College, Santa Rosa, CA
December 2005*

Aside from the five staff interpreters and close to 30 part time interpreters (referred to as OPS), we also contract with an interpreting agency in order to accommodate the interpreting requests from the 30—45 deaf students attending SPC. Schedules are forever changing.

You raise great questions that I think as coordinators of interpreting services we all face at some point or another. Here at SPC our OPS interpreters understand that having set hours is something the college cannot guarantee. There are times when their hours are reduced for various reasons at various times throughout the semester. If hours are reduced I attempt to contact those interpreters first when additional requests arise. We have no policy in place that addresses severance pay should one lose hours.

Should a senior member of our OPS list lose hours, I do not provide them more hours by pulling another interpreter. SPC has a 24-hour cancellation policy. The interpreter is compensated for the full duration of the assignment if it is cancelled with less than a 24-hour notice.

Just last week a student withdrew from an all-morning class interpreted by a staff interpreter. I had to cut 12 hours/week from an OPS interpreter's schedule and replace the OPS interpreter with that staff interpreter. It has never been easy to make that phone call, but especially when the receiver of the call is a dependable and skilled interpreter. When I am faced with OPS interpreter retention on a day-to-day basis it is even more difficult to make such a call. The high degree of competition in the Tampa Bay area keeps this challenge in the forefront for me as a coordinator.

*St. Petersburg College—Clearwater campus, FL
November 2005*

I am the only staff interpreter at my college; we currently have 5 part time temporary interpreters. Fifty percent of my responsibility is interpreting. Just this semester a student who I was interpreting for withdrew from school - and I lost 12 hours of my required 50%. However, I would not consider taking hours from a contract interpreter and letting them go - I fear they would never work for me again. Instead, I act as a floater. It has made me available to cover when an interpreter is sick or needs the day off.

*Pellissippi State Technical Community College, Knoxville, TN
November 2005*

I've just been reading the posts in this thread with interest as we're always searching for an improved way to handle issues related to our service providers. This term, for the first time, we moved all our less than 29 hours per week sp's to part-time employee status (29 hours is the limit Valencia sets for p/t). All with 30+ hours remained vendors. How many hours someone offers is up to each individual and I try to honor that as best I can given student need. Part-time folks have some benefits - membership in the retirement system after a number of hours worked, access to the college's free workshops for staff, etc. (no insurance, paid time off, etc.). About 5 of our sp's also c-print. We do have a cancellation policy - 2 weeks for permanent loss of contracted hours that cannot be restored (starts as of the first day of classes), 24 hours for cancellation of a one-time assignment or one class. We do not currently have any full-time staff sp's but will probably have a floater next term to whom we will guarantee some hours. I step in to interpret or c-print when necessary but find that my administrative duties prohibit doing too much of that. All sp's sign a contract in which each policy is clearly spelled out. I find that to be crucial in order to minimize misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The p/t contract differs slightly from the vendor contract. There is also a handbook for each. Both the contract and handbook have been mutually agreed upon by my department and by our legal department.

*Valencia Community College, Orlando, FL
November 2005*

This is our policy as well. Everyone who signs on receives the explanation regarding the college environment and the possibility of class cancellations. In the past, this was better tolerated. Currently, it is a real pitfall when trying to hire interpreters.

*Bergen Community College
November 2005*

I have included some information about benefits from the 2005 MCPO Interpreter Demographic/Salary Survey below. It doesn't answer your question perfectly, but gives you something to consider. If you want to see the full survey, go to www.pepnet.org and scroll down the home page for the link to the survey results.

Editor's note: You can find the results in the 2005 MCPO Interpreter Demographic/Salary Survey at http://www.mcpo.org/interp_survey.asp

*University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee
December 2005*

We have 6 staff interpreters with civil service positions here on campus. They are guaranteed 30 hours per semester. Generally they do around 25 hours of interpreting, some of it teamed, and the rest of the time is preparation time.

When we run into a situation in which classes are dropped then I have the option of taking hours from our extra help (part time) interpreters, who begin the semester with the understanding that we sometimes need to do that.

Sometimes there are no hours to be found that way. If that's the case then the interpreter will find themselves with more hours of class prep time during which we'll try to utilize them to assist with other work in the Center for Access-Ability Resources.

*Northern Illinois University
November 2004*

Our policy to the students who use interpreters is that they must let the office know if they will not be attending class. No time limit or means of contact is specified.

We have been having a terrible time with last minute student cancellations for the day. For example, for an 8:30 am class, a student might cancel by text messaging the interpreter at 6:45 am, or worse, 8:15 am. Other times, it may come as a middle-of-the-night e-mail, that may or may not be picked up by the interpreter before class. The student may or may not contact the office at all. We have a TTY, but most of our students don't use it. We have e-mail, but if someone is late or out for the day, it may not be checked in a timely manner. Even as I type this, I received a text on my personal cell phone, canceling a class that begins in 30 minutes!

Historically, our policy has been, if the interpreter is notified at home regarding the cancellation, the interpreter cannot claim the time for pay- the "So Sad, Too Bad" policy. If the interpreter is already en route or on campus, they may be re-assigned to another job, or requested to perform office work in order to claim the time. Understandably, the interpreters are frustrated with this approach, especially if their students are chronic offenders. (By the way, all of our interpreters are part-time, and for most of them, this is their main source of income.) On the other hand, our office does not have a budget that can support paying one or two interpreters per class for weekly (or daily!) cancellations.

Also frustrating is the lack of accountability these students have. They don't seem to realize all the time, effort and people involved in making sure they have access to their education. Our supervisor claims that the Deaf / Hard of Hearing students cannot be held any more accountable than hearing students, and all students must suffer the "natural consequences" of missing class.

I believe that local referral agencies require a 24 - 48 hour notice for cancellations, but am not sure if this is realistic for college students. What is a reasonable expectation for the students to cancel? In what way and to whom are the students asked to contact if they cannot attend class? Also, is there any way to hold the student accountable for his or her actions? How do your campuses handle this situation?

*College of DuPage
December 2005*