

JUST A WEE BIT INTIMIDATED?

Building a portfolio of your very best work for peer review is a wonderful learning experience, regardless of its outcome—but the thought of it can be intimidating, too. Your colleagues at the Board have prepared two guides to lead you step by step through the assembly of your portfolio. If you are feeling even a wee bit intimidated, the application process will seem much more “doable” with this approach:

- Read through *The BCG Application Guide* for an overview, then reread “The Application Process” and “Specific Requirements.”
- For each requirement, refer to the corresponding standards in *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*. Each application requirement is designed to let you showcase your ability to meet these standards.
- Decide what materials you want to submit for Requirements 4–7. You may already have some work samples of this type prepared. Review them. Evaluate them against the *Standards Manual*. Decide which projects will best display your expertise.
- Set aside a block of time for Requirement One and complete it before moving to the next.
- As you complete a requirement, mark it off on the photocopied Category-Application Form.
- Continue this process until you have finished and marked all the items on the form.
- Put your application aside for a week. Then review your entire portfolio in one session. Check punctuation, grammar, and spelling. Is the portfolio complete? Does its presentation follow directions? *Good. Mail it!*

NOTE

This brochure is designed for persons who have filed the preliminary application packaged with *The BCG Application Guide*. The Guide may be purchased separately or as part of the complete Application Packet at the BCG website or by mail from the BCG office. Both addresses appear below.

This brochure offers counsel and suggestions only. For further help:

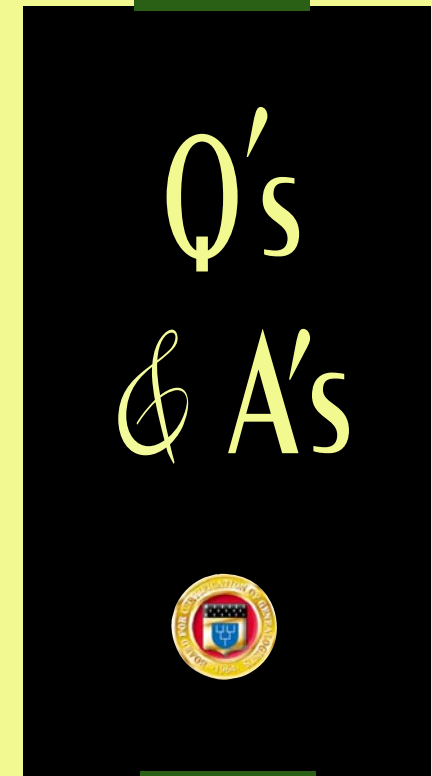
- Full instructions for the certification application are in *The BCG Application Guide*.
- More Q’s & A’s can be found at the BCG website.
- The research, evaluation, and reporting qualities an application should demonstrate are described in *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2000).



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Application Tips



BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF GENEALOGISTS®

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1.

Is formal education in genealogy necessary?

No specific program of education is required. As standards rise, however, genealogists find valuable the educational preparation offered by conferences, institutes, online courses from major societies, and college-affiliated certificate or degree programs. Applicants also benefit from regular study of methodological articles, case studies, and model genealogies published by Board-certified genealogists in the major national journals. BCG's brochure *Educational Preparation* offers other suggestions.

2.

How long does the evaluation process take?

The average is five months. BCG knows you are eager for results, and it makes every effort to expedite the process. However, its portfolio evaluators are among the most-active genealogists in the field. When portfolios arrive on their desks on the eve of a conference, institute, or research trip, the review process can be delayed. Please be patient. The time between submission and final determination bears little or no relationship to the quality of the application.

3.

What qualities do judges look for?

Successful portfolios meet quality standards generally accepted in the field. They demonstrate ample knowledge of resources for the area in which the applicant specializes and a sound understanding of both research methodology and principles of evidence analysis. They attest the applicant's ability to evaluate a research problem, conduct research efficiently and expertly, then report their documented findings in whatever manner is appropriate to the project they have undertaken.

4.

What are some common mistakes to guard against?

- Relying on too few sources.
- Presenting information or conclusions with no supporting evidence—or lumping many statements and sources into a single citation without specifying which data is supported by which source.
- Failing to differentiate between information found in a document and one's own analytical or interpretive comments.
- Using unreliable sources.
- Omitting significant data from abstracts.
- Difficulty in evaluating sources and discussing their research significance. (For your "Document Work," it is important to interpret the records, not just reword the information.)
- Submitting research plans based upon just the most-obvious detail or most-general kinds of sources.
- Not following BCG or client instructions.

5.

What are the most-common problems with research reports?

- Submitting a simple "look-up" assignment.
- Reaching premature conclusions.
- Missing important clues in documents.
- Misreading basic legal language.
- Misinterpreting documents used within the report.
- Failing to advise clients of weaknesses that exist in the material provided
- Failing to cite sources or providing seriously incomplete citations—both in the research report and on attached documents, charts, family group sheets, etc.
- Failing to fully identify and discuss negative findings.
- Presenting a report that is difficult to comprehend, insufficiently proofread, or otherwise unprofessional.
- Omitting the client's letter of instruction.

6.

What are the most-common problems in narrative lineages, genealogies, and pedigrees?

- Failing to prove kinship links between the generations.
- Failing to present at least two proof arguments for kinships that are based on multiple pieces of independently created evidence or evidence that must be otherwise adjudicated.
- Making hasty, unsupported conclusions.
- Limiting research to a few common sources such as censuses, obituaries, and vital records.
- Presenting superficial sketches of individuals and outlines of families, instead of fully reconstructing lives from a variety of sources and placing those lives in relevant social and historical context.
- Neglecting to include all individuals in a narrative genealogy or all direct ancestors in a narrative lineage or pedigree—or, if a line cannot be followed, failing to explain research steps taken and why they failed.

7.

How much material should I submit?

Quality always trumps quantity. As a rule, a well-constructed portfolio that is free of extraneous material will not weigh more than two pounds. Applicants are expected to limit their application portfolios to that weight. A surcharge will be applied to portfolios weighing more than two pounds, to cover additional postal costs in shipping it to judges. Portfolios weighing more than three pounds will not be accepted.