

# KINSHIP DETERMINATION: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

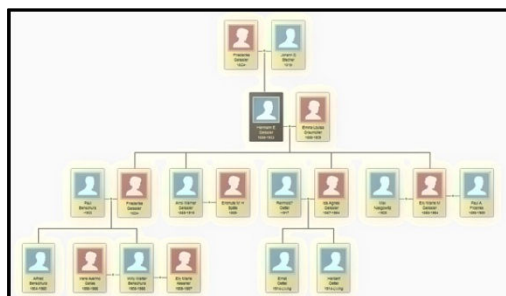
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## BCG CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT 7— KINSHIP-DETERMINATION PROJECT (KDP):

*Submit a narrative genealogy, narrative lineage, or narrative pedigree that documents and explains linkages among individuals through at least three ancestral generations—ascending or descending.\** [\*“Three ancestral generations” means a project should include at least three couples in successive generations. Applicants may provide more extensive genealogies, lineages, and pedigrees if they wish.] Use a documented proof statement, proof summary, or proof argument, as appropriate, to establish each relationship. Include proof summaries or arguments justifying your kinship conclusions for at least two parent-child relationships in different generations.



— Board for Certification of Genealogists,  
*The BCG Application Guide* (2014), at p. 7.

## THE REQUIREMENTS

The seventh and final element of a BCG Application Portfolio is the Kinship Determination Project (the “KDP”). It has four essential components:

- It must be a narrative presentation.
- The narrative must document the generational linkages between the selected generations, and document the kinship of all persons included.
- The narrative must discuss at least three ancestral generations.
- The narrative must include at least two proof discussions justifying the kinship conclusions reached by the applicant that tie family members together from generation to generation.

**Narrative.** The instructions call for a narrative presentation, and permit the applicant to choose among a narrative genealogy, narrative lineage and narrative pedigree, ascending or descending. These terms are defined on the BCG website. [“What is the difference between a compiled genealogy, a narrative genealogy, a narrative lineage, and a narrative pedigree?”, *Certification: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*.] The operative word in the *BCG Application Guide* is *narrative*. Charts, family group sheets, non-narrative pedigrees and the like *will not* satisfy the requirement.

**Document and Explain Relationships.** The key skill demonstrated in the KDP is the ability to document and explain the kinship of the persons included. While a great

deal of discussion focuses on placing the couples and their children into the context of their times, even the very best family history will not meet standards if it does not accurately document the relationships of those persons named, including but not limited to the parent-child linkage from generation to generation.

***At Least Three Ancestral Generations.*** The KDP calls for the inclusion of “at least three ancestral generations” and adds that “a project should include at least three couples in successive generations. Applicants may provide more extensive genealogies, lineages, and pedigrees if they wish.” In reality the applicant must include members of *four* generations because it must include the “names and known vital data of the children *of each couple.*”

***Proof Discussions Justifying Kinship Conclusions.*** As will be discussed more fully below, the KDP must include proof discussions justifying the applicant’s conclusions as to the kinship linkages from generation to generation.

## THE SCOPE OF THE NARRATIVE

The KDP instructions call for the narrative to have six characteristics in terms of scope and qualities:

- Sufficiently broad research to ensure that evidence is adequately tested.
- Accurate placement of each individual within the family.
- Descriptive biographical information for each couple in the genealogy, lineage, or pedigree.
- Documentation of every statement of fact that is not common knowledge.
- Names and known vital data of the children of each couple in the genealogy, lineage, or pedigree.
- A clear, comprehensive format that follows the appropriate style—i.e., *NGS Quarterly*, *Register*, or Sosa-Stradonitz Systems.

***Sufficiently Broad Research.*** The requirement of sufficiently broad research references Standard 17 of *Genealogy Standards*, which notes that: “Thorough research attempts to gather all reliable information potentially relevant to the research question, including evidence items conflicting or consistent with other evidence items. Thorough research, therefore, aims to consult all potentially relevant sources.” The extent of research required to meet standards is further explained by referencing the broad context (Standard 12) and topical breadth (Standard 14) in research planning, the scope of research during data collection in Standard 19, the scope of evidence to be considered in reasoning from evidence in Standard 41, and the genealogical proofs required in the written work in Standard 51. That last standard requires, at a minimum, that:

- “The underlying research was reasonably thorough.”
- “The genealogist used all sources and information items that competent genealogists would use to support the conclusion.”

***Accurate Placement of Family Members.*** The KDP requires that each member of each family be accurately placed within that family based on reliable, source-cited evidence. Key considerations in determining reliability and sufficiency of evidence are set out in Standards 37-50 and focus on reliability and evidence analysis. The standards emphasize reliance whenever possible on original records and reliable information, the recognition that even original records may be unreliable and the need to weigh evidence from independent information items.

***Descriptive Biographical Information.*** The KDP instructions require the applicant to provide more than merely vital statistics on the three ancestral couples selected: for each couple, the KDP must include “sufficient information about each person’s or family’s activities, residences, circumstances, contributions, and lifestyle to identify them uniquely within the context of their historical era, society, and geographic place.” Standard 66. This level of detail may not be required for every person mentioned in the KDP; see below as to details required for the children of each couple.

***Documentation of Facts.*** As with all genealogical writing, source-cited documentation must be provided “for every statement of fact that is not common knowledge.” See *Genealogy Standards*, Standards 1-8.

***Names and Known Vital Data of the Children.*** Full biographical treatment of children not in the three-couple set need not be included in a narrative lineage or narrative pedigree. The names and known vital data of all children must be included, but the depth and scope of background information needed for the ancestral couples is not required. A narrative genealogy however requires full detail on each family member.

***Clear Comprehensive Format.*** The presentation of the KDP must use a clear comprehensive format in one of the standard numbering systems generally accepted within the genealogical community. Standard 65 provides that genealogies “use either *NGSQ*-system or *Register*-system formatting and numbering”; pedigrees “use the Sosa-Stradonitz ahnentafel-based numbering system”; and that lineages that “show descent from one person or couple or ascent from one person [and] highlight only one person, couple, or family in each generation ... need not be numbered.”

## **THE PROOF DISCUSSIONS**

The KDP instructions establish three broad parameters for the proof discussions that must be included linking generation to generation: an applicant must (1) discuss why the applicant believes in the validity of the conclusions offered as to kinship; (2) demonstrate use of the Genealogical Proof Standard while adhering to standards relating to clarity of presentation and quality of analysis; and (3) support all statements with full source citations.

It is important to note that the proofs linking generation to generation need not be complex or contradictory. They may or may not require in-depth treatment.

The *BCG Application Guide* makes it clear that applicants may properly include any of the following to satisfy the requirement: “two narrative-style proof summaries (dealing with direct evidence), two proof arguments (discussing indirect or conflicting evidence), or one proof summary and one proof argument.” The differences between summaries and arguments are summarized in Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof*, at 87-88.

***Discussion of Validity of Conclusions.*** It is not enough merely to state a conclusion as to the kinship linkage from generation to generation. The applicant must include a discussion explaining why the conclusion was reached and why the applicant regards it as valid.

That discussion need not be extensive or lengthy. An analysis to the effect that birth, marriage and death records all identify the same parents and no contradictory evidence has been found despite the requisite reasonably exhaustive search may suffice when it meets all of the elements of the Genealogical Proof Standard.

***Demonstration of Genealogical Proof Standard.*** The proof discussions must demonstrate an understanding and application of the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS), and must be clearly and cogently reasoned and written to comply with Standards 55-64.

The explanation of the GPS itself been amplified in *Genealogy Standards*. The underlying emphasis remains the same, and the five aspects continue to be reasonably exhaustive research; complete and accurate source citations; thorough analysis and correlation of sources, information items and evidence; resolution of conflicts among evidence items; all resulting in “a soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion based on the strongest available evidence.”

***Full Source Citations.*** Full source citations are required throughout the KDP for all statements of fact that are not common knowledge.

## **KEY RESTRICTIONS**

Two key restrictions exist with respect to the KDP. The *BCG Application Guide* specifies that:

- “This project may use your own family but may not include you or your siblings.”
- “Do not include information on living individuals unless their permission is obtained and supplied with the project.”

The former means that the applicant may not use the applicant’s own parents as the third ancestral couple. The latter requires submission of written permission if living persons are included even if only in the last generation child list.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### Citation and Style

1. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16<sup>th</sup> edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
2. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (2d edition revised). Baltimore, Maryland : Genealogical Publishing Co., 2012.
3. —. *Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation & Source Usage*.  
<https://www.evidenceexplained.com/>

### Genealogical Proof Standard

4. Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*. Nashville, Tennessee: Ancestry, 2014.
5. —. *Rubrics for Evaluating New Applications for BCG Certification*. Instructions to judges evaluating new applications for BCG certification, revised 1 March 2014.  
<http://bcgcertification.org/brochures/BCGNewAppRubrics2014.pdf>
6. —. *The BCG Application Guide*. Washington, D.C.: p.p., 2014.
7. —. *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*, millennium edition. Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2000.
8. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. “Fundamentals of Evidence Analysis,” Chapter 1 in *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (2d edition revised). Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2012.
9. Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, Virginia: National Genealogical Society, 2013.
10. Merriman, Brenda Dougall. *Genealogical Standards of Evidence: A Guide for Family Historians*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010.
11. Rose, Christine. *Genealogical Proof Standard: Building a Solid Case* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). San Jose, California: CR Publications, 2014.

### General Resources

12. Clunies, Sandra MacLean. “Writing the Family History: Creative Concepts for a Lasting Legacy.” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (December 2000): 247-265.
13. Colletta, John Philip. “Building Context around Biographical Facts: A Process Illustrated by the Backcounty Birth of George F. Ring.” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (December 2000): 293-298.
14. Finley, Carmen J. *Creating a Winning Family History, Including a Guide to the Family History Writing Contest*. Arlington, Va.: National Genealogical Society, 2002.
15. Greenwood, Val D. “Family History: Going Beyond Genealogy.” *The Researcher’s Guide to American Genealogy*. 3d edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000.
16. Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Producing a Quality Family History*. Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1996, and Kindle Edition, 2013.
17. Kyle, Noeline J. “Rethinking the Writing of Family History: Memory, Interpretation, and Thematic Frameworks.” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (December 2000): 299-308.

18. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "Goodbye Begats? Hello, History!" Editor's Corner, *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (December 2000): 243.
19. Rose, Christine, "Family Histories," Chapter 23, in Elizabeth Shown Mills, editor, *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Editors, Lecturers, and Librarians*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2001.

### Numbering Systems

20. Curran, Joan Ferris, Madilyn Coen Crane and John H. Wray. *Numbering Your Genealogy: Basic Systems, Complex Families and International Kin*. Arlington, Va.: National Genealogical Society, 2008.
21. Ingle, Cyndi. "Numbering Systems," *Cyndi's List*. <http://www.cyndislist.com/numbering/>
22. LeClerc, Michael J., and Henry B. Hoff, editors. *Genealogical Writing in the 21st Century: A Guide to Register Style and More*. 2d ed. Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2007.
23. McDonald, Capers W. "An Ancestral Lines Pairing System: Uniquely Numbering Each Ancestral Line, Generation, Pairing and Sibling," *American Ancestors*, December 2011 online PDF version available at <http://www.americanancestors.org/ancestral-lines/>
24. Pence, Richard. "Numbering Systems in Genealogy." 1986 presentation, revised and reprinted online, 1995. <http://www.saintclair.org/numbers/>
25. Powell, Kimberly. "Numbering Your Family Tree: Common Numbering Systems Used in Genealogy," *About.com Genealogy*. <http://genealogy.about.com/cs/research/a/numbering.htm>

### Sample Writings

26. Bittner, F. Warren. "Without Land, Occupation, Rights, or Marriage Privilege: The Büttner Family from Bavaria to New York." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 100 (September 2012): 165-187.
27. Board for Certification of Genealogists. "Sample Work Products." <http://bcgcertification.org/skillbuilders/worksamples.html>
28. Freilich, Kay Haviland. "Verifying an Ancestor's Words: The Autobiography of Mary (Seeds) Haviland." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 97 (December 2009): 245-264.
29. Graham, Paul K. "A Love Story Proved: The Life and Family of Laura Lavinia (Kelly) Combs of Atlanta and Augusta, Georgia." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 101 (December 2013): 245-266.
30. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. "Mézières, Trichel, Grappe: A Study of Tri-Caste Lineages in the Old South." *The Genealogist* 6 (Spring 1985): 3-84.
31. Quigley, Patrick C. "The Quigley Family Searches for the American Dream." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 98 (December 2010): 301-316.
32. Randall, Ruth. "A Family for Suzanne." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 95 (December 2007): 281-302.
33. Tolman, Richard Lee. "The Life and Times of English Immigrant Priscilla (nee Clark) (Pickett) (Pickett) Wilford." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 94 (December 2006): 267-286.
34. Zublic, June Riedrich. "Biblical Namesakes: The North Country's Enoch Philips and His Tribe." *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 88 (December 2000): 266-292.

*All URLs verified as of 13 October 2014.*