CERTIFICATION

Measuring Yourself Against Standards

Board for Certification of Genealogists®

Service

Founded in 1964 as the recognized U.S.-based certifying body for genealogists, BCG provides leadership standards, conducts qualifying examinations, and promotes profession-wide adherence to a code of ethics.

Address

Board for Certification of Genealogists
PO Box 14291
Washington, DC 20044
http://www.BCGcertification.org   or email: Office@BCGcertification.org

Fees

Preliminary application: $75
Final application: $300
Annual maintenance fee: $75 (Includes online roster listing & *OnBoard* subscription)

Benefits

Recognition as a skilled genealogist who values standards and ethics
Use of distinguished credentials and insignia
Objective evidence for qualification as an expert witness in court
Listing in the online roster
Subscription to *OnBoard*, BCG's educational newsletter, published three times yearly

Publications

The BCG Application Guide (Washington, DC: BCG, 2011). Online for no charge at
    http://www.bcgcertification.org/certification/requirements.html
The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual (Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2000)
Genealogy Standards, 50th-Anniversary edition (Nashville, Tennessee: Ancestry, 2014)
OnBoard (subscription rate, $15)
SpringBoard blog (http://blog.bcgcertification.org/)

Certified Genealogist (CG) and Certified Genealogical Lecturer (CGL) are service marks of the Board for Certification of Genealogists, used under license by those who are Board-certified after periodic competency evaluations. The Board's name is registered with USP&TO.

Who Should Apply for Certification?

Certification is open to every serious genealogist. Among those certified by BCG are genealogists who study their own family history, researchers who specialize in a particular surname, and professionals who conduct research (for a fee or *pro bono*) for other genealogists, attorneys, geneticists, biographers, and academics in many fields. They include teachers at all levels; writers and editors of books, journal articles, and newspaper columns; speakers at local, regional, and national conferences; employees of private and government agencies; lineage and genealogical society volunteers; and librarians and archivists.

What Are the Certification Categories?

The Board for Certification of Genealogists® certifies in one research category and one teaching category that reflect the kinds of work common to the field. The category names and their short forms (initialisms) are service marks owned by the Board and used by Board-certified genealogists under license.

RESEARCH CATEGORY:

Certified Genealogist^{SM}
CG^{SM}

Those who hold the Certified Genealogist credential conduct wide-ranging projects to find, analyze, and interpret evidence; assemble proofs of identity and relationships; and present sound research reports and historical accounts of families, past and present.

TEACHING CATEGORY:

Certified Genealogical Lecturer^{SM}
CGL^{SM}

Board-certified genealogical lecturers, who also hold the underlying Certified Genealogist credential, deliver oral presentations or teach classes that address genealogical sources, methods, and standards.

How Do I Prepare for Certification?

Education and experience are the two main components in preparing for certification. The goal is to acquire and practice the standards articulated in the *Genealogy Standards* book.

The Board sets no formal educational requirement. Surveys of successful applicants show that most have availed themselves of structured learning opportunities well above the introductory level—attending institutes, conferences, and workshops or enrolling in online or distance-learning courses. Self-education, derived from analyzing case studies developed by board-certified persons and published in major peer-reviewed genealogical journals, is also helpful.

Experience comes in many forms. Successful certification applicants are experienced in dealing with the full range of challenges genealogists face. They demonstrate sound, critical judgment when evaluating the work of others. They hone their ability to resolve research problems, develop expertise in specific areas, and strive for excellence in every regard. While it takes a number of years to acquire the education and experience needed for certification, the personal and professional rewards are significant.

What Are the Parts of a Portfolio?

Part 1 Code of conduct
Part 2 Background résumé
Part 3 Document work (BCG-supplied)
Part 4 Document work (applicant-supplied)
Part 5 Research report
Part 6 Case study (a conflicting-evidence or indirect-evidence project)
Part 7 Kinship-determination project

Where Can I See Examples of Portfolio Items?

- The BCG booth in the exhibit hall at major conferences
- The "Sample Work Products" page at the BCG website
  (http://www.BCGcertification.org/skillbuilders/worksamples.html)
- *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*
- The Professional Genealogy track offered every other year at Samford University Institute of Genealogy & Historical Research, which BCG has cosponsored since its founding in 1964

How Are Portfolios Judged?

Three or four highly qualified evaluators review your portfolio materials and measure them against the standards listed in *Genealogy Standards* using the rubrics listed in a link on the "How to Become Certified" page at http://www.bcgcertification.org/certification/index.html. The portfolio examiners look for evidence that you understand the principles of research, documentation, analysis, and writing.

Questions you should ask yourself about your portfolio items include the following:

- Do you show that you understand the nature of the records you use and what those records are saying—in their own time and place, as opposed to the present?
- Have you shown your ability to spot clues in all kinds of records?
- Have you assembled scattered bits and pieces of evidence from many records to arrive at a reliable conclusion?
- Have you demonstrated the capable use of a wide variety of materials?
- Have you used, for each person, enough records to ferret out the inevitable contradictions and errors that exist in the body of records every person creates? How do you handle those contradictions and errors? Do you ignore them, hoping they won't be spotted, or do you address the issues head on with sound reasoning as to why one piece of evidence is reliable when another is not?

Preliminary Application Process

- Returned signed Preliminary Application to office along with fee payment. (Application form available online.)

- Join optional ACTION list when invitation is received. Successful applicants do take advantage of this Google group.
- The preliminary application fee includes a subscription to *OnBoard*.
- If you need an extension beyond the first year, email the office for instructions.

How Do I Know If I Am Ready to Apply?

The following self-scored quiz might help you determine whether you are ready.

1. **How long have you been *intensely* doing genealogical research, writing, and compiling?**
   Score one point for each year you have done at least 250 hours of serious research.
   Score for question 1: _____ (Maximum: 4 points)

2. **How many institutes, conferences, workshops, and courses have you attended during the past five years?**
   Score one point for each one lasting three days or 24 class/contact hours or longer.
   Score for question 2: _____ (Maximum: 4 points)

3. **Have you researched on site at courthouses, archives, and major genealogical libraries?**
   Score one point if you have significant experience with all three types of repositories.
   Score for question 3: _____

4. **How many journals containing peer-reviewed research or case studies do you regularly read? (Examples: NGSQ, TAG, NEHGR, NYGBR, The Genealogist, The Virginia Genealogist)**
   Score one point for each journal read regularly for two years or more.
   Score for question 5: _____ (Maximum: 5 points)

5. **How many reports or articles have you written that resolve a genealogical problem of identity or relationship for which there is no direct evidence or else the evidence conflicts? The reports may be for yourself or a client (paying or pro bono). Count the projects *only* if they fully resolve their problem and are completely documented.**
   Score one point for each report.
   Score for question 6: _____ (Maximum: 5 points)

6. **Review up to five of your reports and articles against *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual* and determine how many meet all applicable standards and how many meet only some of them.**
   Score two points for completing this review, however it turns out.
   Score for question 7: _____

Scoring

If your total score is 20 points or more, you have reached the experience level from which most successful applicants come.