

WHO & WHAT?

The Board for Certification of Genealogists offers two credentials—a core research category and a supplemental teaching category:

Research:

- **Certified Genealogist (CG):** one who is proficient in all areas of genealogical research and analysis. Those who hold this credential conduct broadly based projects whose goals are to find and interpret evidence, assemble proof of identity and relationships, and prepare sound reports and historical accounts of families, past and present.

Teaching:

- **Certified Genealogical Lecturer (CGL):** one who gives public addresses of an educational nature on specific genealogical topics or related subjects pertinent to establishing identity and tracing kinships. The CGL must also pass requirements for Certified Genealogist (CG).

How?

Education and experience are the two main components in preparing for certification. The goal is to acquire and practice the standards articulated in the *BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*. BCG dictates no specific educational requirements, although several valuable programs are cited at the BCG website.

Surveys of successful applicants show that most avail themselves of structured learning opportunities such as institutes, conferences, workshops, and distance or online instruction. Many have advanced degrees in related fields, although advanced degrees are not required. Valuable self-education is also derived by regularly studying the analytical work published by certified persons in peer-reviewed genealogical journals.

Why?

For the genealogist . . .

certification is a symbol of pride in work done well, whether it be personal or professional.

For the consumer . . .

certification offers reassurance and protection, as well as an arbitration service should difficulties arise.

For the field . . .

certification attests that genealogy, correctly practiced, is a valuable discipline that demands a sound grounding in the social sciences, expert knowledge of historical resources, and highly technical research skills.

For more about requirements and standards . . .

- *The BCG Application Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Board for Certification of Genealogists, 2007.
- *The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual*. Provo, Utah: Ancestry Publishing and the Board for Certification of Genealogists, 2000.
- The BCG Website, which offers skill building articles, practice documents, sample research reports, case studies, and other materials by which you can measure your own skills—as well as an online store from which you can order both of the above publications and other non-BCG works critical to the field.



BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF GENEALOGISTS®

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GENEALOGICAL CERTIFICATION

Who?
What?
Why?
How?



BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF GENEALOGISTS®

Since 1964
The hallmark of
QUALITY • PROFESSIONALISM • SERVICE

CERTIFICATION: WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW?

The BCG Mission

Since 1964, the Board for Certification of Genealogists has set the standards for competence and ethics in genealogical research, both personally and professionally. It conducts many educational workshops, cosponsors institutes, administers qualifying tests, and maintains an online register of certified persons. Its credentials are universally recognized. Those who hold them qualify as expert witnesses in the courts of law.

Why Certify?

Certification is an important step in one's personal growth as a genealogist, and it is a vital part of maintaining quality and public confidence in our field. For genealogists—whether they be professionals or family historians—certification says, “I care about the quality of work I produce for posterity.” For consumers, certification offers reassurance and a recourse as they seek professional help in a field that is still, for the most part, free of governmental regulation.

Preliminary & Final Applications

Potential candidates request, complete, and submit the PRELIMINARY APPLICATION that comes with the *Application Guide*. BCG then supplies a copy of its testing materials targeted to the special interests that applicants define. Upon receiving these materials, candidates have twelve months to submit their FINAL APPLICATION in the form of a portfolio of work that demonstrates their knowledge and skills.

Fees

A modest application fee and annual maintenance fee cover the processing of applications; production of educational materials and workshops; and advertising of member services on the web. Volunteer assistance from leaders of the professional community enables BCG to hold fees to a level exceedingly conservative in comparison to those of other professions. For current fees, see <http://www.BCGcertification.org>.

The Standards

Successful applicants demonstrate excellence in research, evidence analysis, and communication. They are thorough, analytical, and innovative.

As researchers: They know the records available within their specialties. They are proficient in reading the handwriting of earlier eras. They know and practice sound practices in abstracting and transcribing records, compiling data, and documenting all work they produce.

As analysts: They are well-grounded in the laws, customs, and terminology of past societies in order to properly interpret the records they find. They understand the principles that differentiate sources, information, and evidence, and they apply these principles critically. They soundly weigh all findings and exercise caution in reaching conclusions.

As communicators: They are articulate. They present problems clearly, identify their resources thoroughly, and provide the rationales for all their conclusions. Their research reports, narratives, and presentations are professional in their construction and well targeted to their audience and purpose.

CG candidates submit work samples for testing in four areas:

- document work, demonstrating their ability to transcribe and/or translate, abstract, analyze, interpret, and develop work plans;
- research reports, demonstrating their knowledge of a wide range of sources and their skills in analyzing and reporting their findings in a professional manner;
- case studies, demonstrating their ability to resolve research problems via indirect evidence or conflicting evidence, when direct evidence cannot be found or is flawed;
- kinship determination projects, demonstrating their ability to prove relationships and assemble family units.

CGL candidates submit recordings of lectures, with outlines, visual aids, and handout materials—to demonstrate their ability to communicate and their knowledge of subject matter.

Judging Process

Each portfolio is carefully examined by at least three judges, including experts in the applicant's area of specialization. All judges serve *pro bono*. To ensure impartial consideration, judges act independently and anonymously. Their written evaluations are supplied to the applicants. Historically, some two-thirds of initial applications and four-fifths of renewal applications are successful.

Entitlements

Genealogists certified by the Board are entitled to use their credentials as postnominals and to affix the appropriate seal to their stationery. Use is limited to the five-year period for which certification is granted. To retain certification, one must submit a satisfactory renewal application that provides material evidence of continued quality and growth.

BCG Publications

The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual, a groundbreaking work issued in 2000, codifies genealogical standards for data collection, evidence analysis, and reporting. Models demonstrate formats for technical reports, case studies, and narrative family histories.

OnBoard, an educational newsletter, is published each January, May, and September. Tightly packed with skillbuilding advice and application guidance, it is complimentary to all who are certified and those who file preliminary applications. It is also available by subscription to libraries, societies, and individuals who wish to stay abreast of the field.

Mediation Service

BCG-certified genealogists agree in advance to submit to the board's dispute resolution procedures to resolve complaints from clients who choose to use the service. The process starts with mediation, but can proceed to final arbitration that is binding on certified individuals.