

**Certification:
Who? What?
Why? How?**



BCG

**BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION
OF GENEALOGISTS®**

**The Hallmark of Quality,
Professionalism, and Service**

Since 1964

The BCG Mission

Since 1964, the Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG) has promoted standards for competence and ethics in genealogical research. It conducts educational workshops and webinars, co-sponsors institutes, certifies qualified applicants, and maintains an online register of certified persons. Its credentials are internationally recognized. Those who hold them may 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 work for others or for their own families—certification says, “I care about the quality of work I produce for posterity.” For consumers, certification offers reassurance as to a researcher's competence and recourse if professional standards are not met.

Preliminary & Final Applications

Potential candidates download *The BCG Application Guide* and the Preliminary Application. Once they complete and submit the Preliminary Application, BCG then supplies a copy of testing materials targeted to the special interests that applicants define. After receiving these materials, candidates have twelve months to submit their Final Application and a portfolio of work that demonstrates their knowledge and skills.

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 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 in the areas where they work. They are proficient in reading the handwriting of earlier eras. They know and apply 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.

CANDIDATES FOR THE CG CREDENTIAL submit work samples for testing in four areas:

- document work, demonstrating their ability to transcribe, 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 involving 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.

CANDIDATES FOR THE CGL CREDENTIAL submit recordings of lectures, with outlines, visual aids, and handout materials, to demonstrate their ability to communicate and their knowledge of their 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. The judges individually and independently use rubrics based on the standards defined in *Genealogy Standards* to objectively evaluate the work samples. Their written evaluations are supplied to the applicants.

Entitlements

Genealogists certified by the Board are entitled to use their credentials as postnominals and to use BCG's logo on their stationery. Each certification is for a five-year period, and genealogists must renew their credentials every five years by submitting a satisfactory renewal application that demonstrates that the associate's work continues to meet standards.

BCG Publications

Genealogy Standards, the 2014 update of BCG's groundbreaking manual first issued in 2000, codifies genealogical standards for documenting, researching, writing, teaching and continuing education.

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.

Who & What?

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

RESEARCH

The Certified Genealogist (CG) credential is awarded to 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

The Certified Genealogical Lecturer (CGL) credential is awarded to one who is proficient in public addresses of an educational nature on specific genealogical topics or related subjects pertinent to establishing identity and tracing kinships. A candidate for the CGL credential must also pass requirements for the Certified Genealogist (CG) credential.

How?

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

Surveys of successful applicants show that candidates who participate in institutes, conferences, workshops, and distance or online instruction typically submit applications exhibiting deeper knowledge and stronger skills. Many have academic credentials in related fields, although such training is not required. Successful applicants also prepare through self-education, by regularly studying major guides to sources, methods, and repositories as well as the analytical work published in peer-reviewed genealogical journals.

Why?

FOR THE GENEALOGIST, certification is a symbol of pride in work done well, whether personal or professional.

FOR THE CONSUMER, certification offers reassurance and protection, as well as a dispute resolution 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, current edition.
- *Genealogy Standards*. Nashville, Tennessee: Ancestry, 2014.
- The BCG website, which offers skill-building articles, sample research reports, case studies, and other materials by which you can measure your own skills—as well as downloadable versions of *The BCG Application Guide* and preliminary application and a link to order *Genealogy Standards*.

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