



Certification Maintenance

Panel Discussion and Q&A Town Hall
November 14, 2023 • 6 PM CST

Agenda

- Welcome and “housekeeping” 5 min
- Introduce panelists 5 min
- Overview of BELS certification maintenance program 10 min
- Panelist perspective questions (1 each) 10 min
- Open Q&A from attendees (submitted via chat) 30 min
- Program close —

Welcome

Tom Gegeny, ELS, MWC
Chair, Certification Maintenance

Lisa Kisner, ELS
BELS Secretary

Panelist introductions

Marianne Mallia, ELS, MWC, has worked as a medical editor and writer for more than 45 years. She is senior scientific/medical editor in Scientific Publications at Mayo Clinic and assistant professor of biomedical communications at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science. Previously, she was manager and senior medical writer in the Section of Scientific Publications at the Texas Heart Institute in Houston. She is certified by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences and the Medical Writing Certification Commission. She has been involved in all aspects of the Medical Writer Certified program since its inception in 2011 and served as co-chair or chair of the Certification Commission for 6 years; she was chair when the program launched in 2015 and remains a current member.

Jeanne McKane, ELS(D), has been a medical editor for over 25 years, working for journal publishers, university presses, individual researchers, nonprofits, and government agencies. She holds an ELS(D) from BELS and Certified Professional Editor (CPE) status from Editors Canada. She is also an Advanced Professional Member (APM) of the Chartered Institute of Editors and Proofreaders in the United Kingdom. Jeanne has volunteered for BELS on the Diplomate and Certification Maintenance committees, and she co-chaired Editors Canada's certification steering committee from 2015 to 2018.

Stephen Bublitz, ELS, is a BELS Board member and co-chair for the Professional Development Committee. He cut his teeth as a copyeditor at a large nonprofit geophysics publisher in Washington, DC, and, after a decade-long foray into freelance editing, is currently a senior medical editor at a MedComms agency that specializes in conferences and publications. He resides in the Detroit metro area and is a foster parent, musician, and recreational pugilist.

ELS Certification Maintenance: What is it?

- Certification maintenance ensures that editors remain up-to-date through various professional development activities.
 - The life sciences, the practice of editing, and the English language itself are all in constant evolution.
 - Certification maintenance allows certified editors to demonstrate that their skills and knowledge are current and relevant.
- Certification maintenance is a recognized component of credentialing programs around the world.
 - Shows clients and employers that editors with an ELS credential are keeping their skills and knowledge up to date.
 - Encourages certified editors to engage in ongoing professional development.

Why is BELS starting Certification Maintenance?

- Newer certification programs consider Certification Maintenance a **best practice**. For example, credentialing programs from sister organizations AMWA and ISMPP have this requirement.
- BELS contemplated the possibility of Certification Maintenance for several years. A task force, and later a committee, conducted research on the certification programs of peer organizations and other professional groups.
- The task force recommended to the BELS Board of Directors to adopt Certification Maintenance as a core component of the ELS certification program, and the Board approved the program.

When will Certification Maintenance begin?

- **January 1, 2024**, starts the renewal cycle for anyone who has earned the ELS credential before that date.
 - This means that certification maintenance for these individuals will be due in 5 years (by December 31, 2028).
 - The next 5-year renewal cycle will begin January 1, 2029, and run through December 31, 2033.
- For all future ELS certificants, the renewal deadline will be December 31 of the 5th year from when certification was earned.

What will Certification Maintenance involve?

- Certification Maintenance will be required every 5 years.
- Individuals may renew certification by
 1. **Credits:** Earn at least 50 credits through various qualified activities over the 5 years.
 - 4 categories: **Education and Professional Development, Service, Contributions, and Experience.**
 - Each activity is worth a specified number of credits. For example, educational activities are granted 1 credit per hour of learning activity.
 - At least 25 of these credits (and no more than 40) must be earned through editing-related education and professional development.
 - Remaining credits may be earned in any of the other categories: Service, Contributions, and Experience.
 - Earning the Diplomate designation, ELS(D), will count for certification renewal (this option is available to a certificant only once; once applied, the usual renewal process shall be followed).
 - Maintenance requires a renewal application and fee (\$100 for members, \$200 for others)
 2. **Retaking the BELS exam:** Those who choose to recertify by taking the examination will pay the current examination “retake” registration rate but not the fee for initial application.

Example activities

Category	Subcategories	Annual Max	Total Max
Diplomate	Diplomate Status	50	50
Education and Professional Development	Presentation (Attendee)	30	40
	Academic Course (Attendee)*	30	30
	Self-directed Study	3	15
	Mentorship (Mentee)	3	6
Professional Service	Committee Volunteer	6	25
	Portfolio Review	6	25
	Exam Proctor	3	15
	Membership	1	5
	Recognition	1	5
Contributions to the Profession	Mentorship (Mentor)	4	20
	Presentation (Presenter)*	25	25
	Writing Article*	25	25
Professional Experience	Work Activity	5	25

- *Note: Each academic course is worth 10 points for a typical semester-long course. Also, each instance of writing an article for newsletters, trade publications, or peer-reviewed journals is worth 5 points. Being a presenter is worth 3 points per presentation.
- For the category "Educational and Professional Development", eligible activities include seminars/webinars, workshops, conference sessions, etc. offered through BELS or other allied organizations that are relevant to the work of editors in the life sciences.
- For the category "Professional Service, subcategory Membership", 1 credit will be granted per year of membership in a professional organization.

“Early Bird” reduced requirements

When renewing for the first time, certificants who are dues-paying BELS members and who earned their ELS or ELS(D) before January 2024 may submit their renewals early for both a discounted fee and a reduced credit requirement (for eligible activities from within the previous 5 years to the renewal application, i.e., activities from January 1, 2020, for a renewal application made by December 31, 2024), as follows:

- 25 credits submitted by December 31, 2024, for \$50 (next 5-year renewal cycle begins January 1, 2025)
- 30 credits submitted between January 1 and December 31, 2025, for \$60 (next 5-year renewal cycle begins January 1, 2026)
- 35 credits submitted between January 1 and December 31, 2026, for \$70 (next 5-year renewal cycle begins January 1, 2027)
- 40 credits submitted between January 1 and December 31, 2027, for \$80 (next 5-year renewal cycle begins January 1, 2028)

Where can I get more information?

BELS
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

Member Login Search our site...

Home About Find a Board-Certified Editor Become a Board-Certified Editor Diplomat **Certification Maintenance** Contact Us

Promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences

Welcome to BELS!

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with

Quick Links

- Become a Member
- Member Resources
- Earn Your Certification
- Certification Maintenance**
- Find an Editor

BELS.org has the following resources:

- Certification Maintenance program details
- FAQ document
- Educational resources page
- Case scenarios
- Credit tracker (requires log-in) – *coming soon!*

You can also email info@bels.org with additional questions.

Panelist perspectives (1 question each)

- **Marianne:** Tell us about your experience with AMWA's certification for medical writers. What does certification maintenance/renewal look like for the Medical Writer Certified (MWC) credential?
- **Jeanne:** You have experience with other professional organizations in editing that also offer certification. What similarities and differences do you see between those programs and BELS?
- **Steve:** You are co-chairing the Professional Development Committee for BELS. What do you envision for the future that will expand opportunities for ELS-certified professionals to obtain credits toward certification maintenance/renewal?



Q&A with panelists

- Enter your questions into the chat area.
- In the interest of time, we likely will avoid repeat questions or topics already covered.

Thank you!

For more information and resources on certification maintenance, visit www.bels.org or write us at info@bels.org

