

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

# Diplomate Program Portfolio Guide

The examination for diplomate status in the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences consists of the evaluation of a submitted portfolio, which comprises

- material that you have edited,
- your description of the circumstances of your editing of the material, and
- 2 essays that you have written about editing.

The portfolio is the means by which you exhibit your mastery of editorial skills in material of your choosing.

This guide explains how to prepare the portfolio. Section 1 sets out the substance of a portfolio and the procedures for preparing and submitting it, Section 2 describes the examiners' portfolio review procedure, and Section 3 explains how to appeal a decision of the portfolio examiners. Appendix A lays out the various fees associated with the diplomate examination, and Appendix B is a checklist for portfolio preparation and submission.

## Section 1 The Portfolio

The specifications for each element of the portfolio are described in the subsections that follow. Portfolio components on the checklist in Appendix B are keyed by subsection number to these descriptions.

Prepare your portfolio carefully. If specifications are not met, the portfolio will be returned to you for revision. If you choose to continue with the examination, you will then resubmit the revised portfolio with a resubmission or re-evaluation fee (see Appendix A).

### 1.1 The Portfolio Manuscript

Prepare the portfolio manuscript to demonstrate your proficiency in substantive editing of manuscripts in the life sciences at the level of a master editor.

#### *1.1.1. Statement of Circumstances of Editing*

The statement of circumstances is your opportunity to orient the examiners. It may be as short as you like, but it must not exceed 250 words. Describe the setting and circumstances in which the manuscript was edited, its intended audience, special conditions related to the editing (such as the author's expectations), and why you selected this particular material to submit as evidence of your editorial proficiency. Include with your statement any formal instructions for manuscript preparation from the journal, publisher, or agency for which the manuscript was edited. If you did not work with such instructions, describe any directives that you did receive in your statement of circumstances.

#### *1.1.2 Composition of the Manuscript*

The manuscript you submit to exhibit your editing must meet the following specifications. (For simplicity, "manuscript" herein refers to text, tables, and graphic elements in a variety of formats, word processed or typeset; "the author" may refer to more than one author or a client other than the author.)

- Submit editing that shows your expertise in **all** the facets of editing detailed in section 2.2.
- Select material in a field in or related to the life sciences.
- Select material that is written in legible English and show editing that is in legible English.
- Select 15 to 30 pages of manuscript that you have edited for an employer or client OR 15 to 30 pages of published material that you edited after publication. (Note: editing on the computer may increase the

number of pages you submit; that is acceptable. Make certain that the manuscript you start with meets these page limits.)

- Submit a complete manuscript (if its length allows), or select excerpts from several manuscripts of the same or different types.
- You may submit manuscript for material from any type of publication or document so long as the subject is in the life sciences (e.g., journal articles, book chapters, protocols or practice guidelines, grant proposals, educational or instructional materials, slide presentations with lecture scripts, film presentations).
- Show your editing in such a way that examiners can readily see what you did to the original material.
- Include at least 1 table with data; a table consisting of a simple list of items does not pose editorial issues complex enough to satisfy this requirement. You may include other graphic elements as well.

When you have chosen material that demonstrates your skills, organize your portfolio in a way that will convey to the examiners your rationale for editorial changes. Include queries and revisions, and include correspondence with the author if you think it will help to clarify your editorial decisions. The more editorial issues you address successfully in your portfolio, the higher your score is likely to be.

### ***1.1.3 Permission of the Author***

Portfolio materials are held in strict confidence by BELS. Nevertheless, we suggest that you obtain written permission from the author of any unpublished material that you submit for consideration in the portfolio. BELS is not responsible for claims or damages of any kind that result from any candidate's submission of a manuscript for consideration by BELS examiners.

## **1.2 The Essays**

Your 2 essays give you an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a practical, ethical, or policy issue related to research and publishing in the life sciences. Each essay must be 500 to 1000 words long and must be typewritten or word processed. The following is a list from which you must select two topics. Be sure to mask anything in your essays that might reveal your identity to the examiners.

- How do you reconcile an editor's emphasis on clarity on behalf of readers with an author's need to be recognized as knowledgeable, as represented, for example, in specialized vocabulary, or long and complex sentences?
- What are the most serious flaws in the writing you are called on to edit? How do you handle these as editor?
- What is meant by "substantive editing"? How does it differ from "copy editing" or "technical editing"?
- What, in your view, is meant by "duplicate publication"? Is it justified? Under what circumstances?
- What are your criticisms of style manuals you use?
- What is the role of the editor of scientific manuscripts in helping an author to rebut reviewer criticisms and to revise a paper for resubmission?
- Discuss the impact of the computer on the author-editor relationship.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of structured versus narrative abstracts.
- Discuss the art of querying.
- Discuss the reference works that you consider essential for editing in your field, explaining and defending your choices.
- Discuss the serial comma.
- How much does punctuation matter?
- Discuss the role of "ghostwriting" in science.

- What limitations, if any, should editors place on their helpfulness to authors?
- Discuss the use of abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms.
- Does the “gray literature” have a legitimate role in science publishing?
- Discuss neologisms.
- Should an editor omit all needless words? Why or why not?
- Is there such a thing as an absolute or universal editorial rule?
- Discuss the role of the editor in explaining science to nonscientists.
- What would you tell an author who assumes that he or she is the owner of the copyrights to anything he or she wrote originally?

### **1.3 The Request for Evaluation Form**

Fill out the Request for Evaluation (a final sheet) completely and use it as the cover page of the **first copy** of your portfolio. It should be the only page in the entire portfolio that shows your name and other information that identifies you.

### **1.4 Clerical Preparation**

Submit each section of your portfolio in both hard copy and as a Word or scanned document on a CD. Ship both copies to the diplomate registrar (see Appendix B for the current address). The use of a trackable delivery service is recommended.

Make certain that your name and any other information that might identify you is removed from all parts of the portfolio. Check especially carefully the copies of all e-mails and other correspondence with authors.

Whether you edited the manuscript by hand or on a computer, you must present it in such a way that the examiners can readily evaluate your work. Otherwise, your manuscript will be returned immediately with a request that you submit a new manuscript and a resubmission fee.

## **Section 2 Evaluation of the Portfolio**

### **2.1 Examiners**

A panel of three BELS diplomates will evaluate your portfolio to determine whether it meets the standards for BELS diplomate status. All examiners are professional editors and are volunteers in this program.

To the extent possible, your examiners will be selected on the basis of familiarity with the particular fields in which you edit, as shown on the Request for Evaluation. If you are employed by an academic, commercial, or other enterprise, no fellow employee will be appointed as your examiner.

Portfolios under evaluation are identified only by an assigned number. Examiners are not told the name of the candidate whose portfolio they are evaluating, nor will you be told the names of your examiners. If you fail the diplomate examination and decide to appeal the decision, the BELS Committee on Appeals has the discretion to tell you the names of your examiners if it believes that a question of bias warrants investigation.

### **2.2 Review of the Manuscript**

Your editorial changes and queries (or lack thereof) on the manuscript are the focus of the review. Editorial changes or queries that show exceptional creativity, insight, or skill in presentation of scientific concepts or information are noted. The edited manuscript is judged according to specific standards, which are summarized

below. **The absence of clear evidence that you have attended to issues in any of these categories is grounds for deductions from the total score and even for rejection of the portfolio.**

### ***2.2.1 Logic, Flow of Ideas, and Scientific Soundness***

The text makes sense scientifically, especially with regard to the evidence, and the overall organization and the language support the sense. The narrative is coherent, expressing the underlying logic. Referencing is apparently appropriate, complete, and consistent.

### ***2.2.2. Style, Readability, and Clarity***

The manuscript is readable, its level of conciseness is appropriate for the intended audience, and it is consistent in tone, logic, expression, style, format, structure, and level of information. Meanings of terms are unmistakable, distractions are eliminated, and solid, precise thought is consistently conveyed.

### ***2.2.3. Organization and Structure***

All aspects of the manuscript's organization, format, and structure are appropriate to the purpose and intended audience. All elements, from headings and graphics to lists and footnotes or endnotes, are consistent, in parallel forms, and supportive of overall structure.

### ***2.2.4 Editorial Skill, Sensitivity, and Realism***

The manuscript is skillfully edited with care to preserve the author's meaning and style to an appropriate extent. The editing reflects sensitivity to nuance, to internal evidence, to distractions that might divert the reader's attention, to the scientific and literary integrity of the manuscript, to the needs of the reader, and to the limitations imposed by schedules and budgets.

### ***2.2.5 Editor's Interaction with the Author***

The tone of the author-editor interaction, as revealed by the editing, querying, and correspondence, is professional, appropriate, and constructive. The editor's decisions or suggestions are judicious and conveyed clearly and constructively.

### ***2.2.6 Sentence and Paragraph Structure, and Syntax***

Grammar and punctuation are standard and correct, sentence and paragraph structure is correct and effective, and sentences and paragraphs are constructed to be clear and unambiguous.

### ***2.2.7 Spelling, Usage, and Diction***

Spelling and usage are standard and correct. Diction is precise and appropriate to the intended audience. Choices of words and phrases are appropriate, effective, concise, and correct, and they show sensitivity to connotation. Vague or puzzling abstractions, redundancies, and issues of scientific nomenclature and semantics in the unedited manuscript are recognized and resolved effectively.

### ***2.2.8 Data, Numbers, and Correlations***

Conclusions are consistent with the data, results are consistent with the methods, and numbers and data agree throughout the manuscript. Calculations are complete and accurate. Inconsistencies and discrepancies are detected and corrected or queried.

### ***2.2.9 Tables, Graphs, and Other Illustrations***

Tabular and illustrative material is presented in appropriate form. Inappropriate or flawed material is noted, and deletions, revisions, or corrections are suggested. All elements are accurate, internally consistent, and properly

labeled. The principles governing specific graphic types (e.g., bar graphs, circle graphs, and photos) are observed.

## **2.3 Review of the Essays**

Your essays will not be evaluated on the basis of your views, beliefs, or choice of topics. Rather, they will be evaluated on the basis of your ability to state a position and support it rationally and lucidly in literate, persuasive, and idiomatic prose; on the evidence you provide of your knowledge of or research into a subject; on the breadth or depth of your explication of the role of the manuscript editor in publishing in the life sciences; and on your choice of appropriate references or your originality of thought without the use of references.

## **2.4 Scoring**

Each examiner scores your portfolio independently according to a point system. A score of 86% or higher on your portfolio is required for successful completion of the diplomate examination. The edited manuscript accounts for 80% of your portfolio score. The essays account for 20%.

## **2.5 Notification of Outcome of Review**

You will be notified of the examiners' decision approximately 8-12 weeks after BELS receives your portfolio. Portfolios are not returned to candidates.

## **2.5 Request for Re-evaluation**

If, in the opinion of the examiners, your manuscript or one of the essays (or both) failed to meet BELS standards for diplomate status, you will receive a written report of the reasons. You may submit a new portfolio or new component for consideration at any time within the 2-year candidacy period. (Candidacy can be renewed.) The fees for re-evaluation and renewal are listed in the fee schedule in Appendix A.

## **Section 3 Appeals**

If you want to appeal an unfavorable decision of the examiners, you may do so by submitting, within 30 days of the date when you receive notice of the decision, a request for appeal to the Councilor for Appeals, whose name and address will be included with the report of the examiners' decision. In the request, you must specify your reasons for appealing the decision.

## **Appendix A Fees for the Diplomate Examination**

Fees submitted to BELS must be paid in one of the following ways:

- With a check or money order drawn on a US bank.
- By credit card.

## **Diplomate Process**

Application	\$100.00
Portfolio Evaluation	\$300.00

## **Resubmission**

Resubmission fees apply when the registrar or the examiners find any of the following faults with the portfolio and the candidate wishes to correct the fault and pursue diplomate status.

Incomplete	\$25.00
Not properly masked	\$25.00
Illegible	\$25.00
Too long	\$25.00

### Re-evaluation

Re-evaluation fees apply when examiners find a part or parts of the portfolio unacceptable and the candidate wishes to revise or submit substitutions and pursue diplomate status.

New manuscript	\$110.00
New essay	\$20.00

### Renewal of Candidacy

A renewal fee applies when a candidate who has not completed the examination within 2 years wishes to extend his or her candidacy for another 2 years. There is no limit to the number of renewals per candidate.

Each renewal	\$100.00
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## Appendix B Checklist for Portfolio Preparation

Note: Subsection numbers in parentheses refer to detailed descriptions in the text.

- \_\_\_ Completed Request for Evaluation form with payment of fee—1 hard copy. (1.3)
- \_\_\_ Edited manuscript: 15 to 30 pages, including at least one table—1 hard copy, 1 electronic copy. (1.1)
- \_\_\_ Statement of circumstances: description (in up to 250 words) of when, where, why, and for whom the manuscript was edited OR why a published text was selected for the portfolio—1 hard copy, 1 electronic copy. (1.1.1)
- \_\_\_ Instructions for manuscript preparation from journal, publisher, or agency (or include a summary of directives, such as house style, in the statement of circumstances)— 1 hard copy, 1 electronic copy. (1.1.1)
- \_\_\_ Two essays of 500 to 1000 words each on topics from among those listed—1 hard copy, 1 electronic copy. (1.2)

**No identification of the candidate may appear anywhere in the portfolio except on the Request for Evaluation.** (1.3)

All correspondence about the diplomate examination should be directed to the BELS office:

**BELS, 2345 Rice Street, Suite 220, St. Paul, MN 55113 USA**

**phone: 651-925-5528, e-mail: [info@bels.org](mailto:info@bels.org)**

## ***Board of Editors in the Life Sciences***

### Request for Evaluation of Portfolio

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Name e-mail

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Mailing address

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City State/Province Postal code Country

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Employer Title

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Highest degree earned Year

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Field(s) of life science in which I edit

The portfolio I submit with this request for evaluation by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences contains my work and only my work, performed with no help from another person. I edited the portfolio manuscript(s) and conceived, developed, and wrote the essays.

I enclose a portfolio evaluation fee of \$300 (US) or provide credit card information below.

I affirm that all the information provided on this page is true.

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Signature Date

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Credit card number Expiration Security code

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Portfolio number  
(to be inserted by the Registrar)