

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 and a description of the circumstances of its editing. The portfolio is the means by which you exhibit your mastery of editorial skills in material of your choosing.

This guide describes what the portfolio must contain and how it will be reviewed. Section 1 describes the guidelines and requirements for the contents of the portfolio and the procedures for preparing and submitting it, Section 2 describes the procedure used by examiners to review a portfolio, and Section 3 explains how to appeal a decision of the portfolio examiners. The Appendix presents the various fees associated with the diplomate examination.

For information on applying for candidacy and submitting your portfolio, visit www.bels.org.

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1 The Portfolio

Prepare your portfolio carefully. If the requirements described in this section are not met, the portfolio will be returned to you for revision; if you choose to continue with the examination, you will have to submit a revised portfolio with a resubmission or re-evaluation fee (see the Appendix).

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, and special conditions related to the editing (such as the author's expectations). Include with your statement formal instructions, if any, for manuscript preparation from the journal, publisher, agency, or other entity. If no such instructions were provided, describe in your statement of circumstances other directives, if any, that you did receive.

1.1.2 Composition of the Manuscript

The manuscript you submit to exhibit your editing must meet the following requirements (for simplicity, *manuscript* herein refers to text, tables, and graphic elements; *the author* may refer to more than one author or a client other than the author):

- The manuscript must be in English.
- Submit editing that shows your expertise in **all** the facets of editing detailed in Section 2.2.
- Select material related to the life sciences.

- Select material that is legible and that shows your editing in a legible (not handwritten) form
- Select 4,000-7,500 words of manuscript that you have edited or of published material that you edited after publication.
- You may submit a complete manuscript (if its length allows) or select excerpts from several manuscripts of the same type or different types.
- You may submit material that has been published and that you have modified to enable you to show your editorial skills.
- You may submit any type of material that would be appropriate for print publication, whether it has been published or not, as long as the subject is in the life sciences.
- Include at least one table with data; a table consisting simply of a list of items does not pose editorial issues complex enough to satisfy this requirement. You may include other graphic elements as well.
- **MOST IMPORTANT: Show your editing in such a way that examiners can readily see what you did to the original material.**

When you have chosen material that demonstrates your skills, organize it 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 that 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 and destroyed after evaluation. 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 Diplomat Portfolio Submission

Fill out the submission form completely. Upload each section of your portfolio into the appropriate area. Make certain that your name and any other information that might identify you are removed from all parts of the portfolio file submissions. Check especially carefully all e-mails and other correspondence (if any) with authors.

You must show your editing in such a way that the examiners can readily see what you did to the original material and evaluate your work. Otherwise, you will be asked to submit a new manuscript and a resubmission fee.

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 diplomat status. All examiners are professional editors and are volunteers in this program.

If you are employed by an academic, commercial, or other enterprise, no co-worker 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 apply for reversal of the decision, BELS 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 criteria in 11 categories, as 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.**

2.2.1 Scientific Soundness

The whole manuscript makes sense scientifically. If descriptions of methods (or citations of references for methods) are needed to explain facts or results, such descriptions (or citations) are present and are appropriate for obtaining the results or facts presented.

2.2.2 Development and Flow of Ideas

Development and flow of ideas are logical and scientific, and flow of ideas is concise and clear. Transitional (linking) words and phrases are appropriate and clear.

2.2.3 Scientific Style

The level of complexity is appropriate for the readership. Appropriate tone (such as formality or informality) is maintained consistently. Standards of fairness that are expected in scientific publications are followed. Appropriate conciseness is practiced. Actions are attributed appropriately to the actors or causes. References are complete and are cited consistently.

2.2.4 Editor's Interaction with the Author or Client

The author's meaning or intended meaning and author's style are preserved whenever possible. The tone of the editor's communications to the author is professional and constructive. Textual and substantive revisions are suggested and not dictated. Communications from the editor are unambiguous and straightforward.

2.2.5 Manuscript Structure and Organization

Structure of the manuscript is appropriate to the publication and its readership. All parts mandated by the instructions to authors (if any) have been included and are in the correct order. Organization of the manuscript is clear and consistent.

2.2.6 Paragraphing

Paragraphing is appropriate and conducive to readability, and paragraphs are structured logically.

2.2.7 Sentences

Sentences are structured for maximum clarity. Grammar in each sentence is correct, and punctuation is correct and consistent. Grammatical parallelism is applied to such elements as lists. Statements of comparison (such as "X is greater than Y") are concise, grammatically and mathematically correct, and scientifically sound.

2.2.8 Words

Vocabulary is appropriate to the topic and the readership. Terminology and nomenclature are correct and consistent. Ambiguous words and phrases are absent, and unfamiliar words are explained or absent. Usage of words and phrases is correct and consistent. Publisher's preferences, if any, are followed.

2.2.9 Format

Format of the manuscript (such as fonts and vertical spacing), references, and headings is consistent and appropriate. The publisher's instructions, if any, about format are followed.

2.2.10 Numerical Information and Statistics

The use and formatting of numerical information are consistent within the manuscript, and comply with any instructions from the publisher. Units of measure are appropriate, abbreviated correctly or not at all, and formatted correctly. Reporting of statistical tests is apparently appropriate and correct or is queried.

2.2.11 Illustrations (one table with data is required, but neither it nor any other illustration needs to come from the same manuscript)

The structure of the table(s) and the choice of illustration types are appropriate to the manuscript content. The publisher's requirements, if any, for tables and figures are met. All elements of the tables and figures are internally consistent and properly labeled. Data (if any) in tables and figures are consistent with data in text.

2.3 Scoring

Each examiner scores your portfolio independently according to a point system. An average score of 86% or higher on your portfolio is required for successful completion of the diplomate examination.

2.4 Notification of Outcome of Review

You will be notified of the decision of the examiners about 6–8 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 failed to meet BELS standards for diplomate status, you will receive a written report of the reasons. You may submit a new portfolio 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 Appendix.

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 BELS executive director, whose name and address will be included with the report of the examiners' decision. In your request, you must specify your reasons for appealing the decision.

Appendix Fees for the Diplomate Examination

All of the fees stated below are in US dollars. Fees submitted to BELS must be paid in one of the following ways:

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

Diplomate Processing Fees

Application for candidacy	\$ 100.00
Portfolio evaluation	\$300.00

Resubmission

Resubmission fees apply when the registrar or an examiner finds 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 blinded	\$25.00
Illegible	\$25.00
Too long	\$25.00
Too short	\$25.00

Submission of a New Portfolio

A candidate whose portfolio did not receive a passing score may submit a new portfolio.

New portfolio	\$150.00
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Renewal of Candidacy

A renewal fee of \$100.00 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.

Renewal of candidacy	\$100.00
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