

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

Distinguished Editor Program Portfolio Guide

The examination for Distinguished Editor 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
- your description of the circumstances of your editing of the material.

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 reviewers' portfolio review procedure; and Section 3 explains how to appeal a decision of the portfolio reviewers. Appendix A lays out the various fees associated with the Distinguished Editor 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 the 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 reviewers, but keep it short (up to 300 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). Provide details (name, version, etc.) of any AI tools, particularly generative AI tools based on LLMs (large language models), and the purpose for which you used them. 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

Your manuscript 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 and comprise 4000–7500 words of text that you have edited.
- Your editing must show your expertise in all the facets of editing detailed in Section 2.2.
- The material must be related to the life sciences.
- The material must be legible and show your editing in a legible form.
- You may submit a complete manuscript (if its length allows) or select excerpts from several manuscripts of the same or different types that you have modified and that showcase your editorial skills. Papers (or excerpts

from them) published in fully open-access journals—so long as they are listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ; <https://doaj.org>)—are also acceptable. DOAJ offers a wide range of content in the life sciences for those seeking freely available materials to edit for a portfolio.

- You may submit any type of material—published or unpublished—that would be appropriate for print publication as long as the subject is in the life sciences.
- If selecting a paper from the DOAJ, under Menu → Search → Journals → Subjects (as listed on the left-hand side of the web page), choose any of the subheadings under “Agriculture” or “Medicine” or any of the following subheadings under “Science”: Biology (General), Botany, Human anatomy, Microbiology, Natural history (General), Physiology, or Zoology.

When you have chosen material that demonstrates your skills, organize your portfolio in a way that will convey to the reviewers 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 reviewers.

1.2 The Request for Evaluation Form

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

1.3 Clerical Preparation

Submit each section of your portfolio as a Word or scanned document to the Distinguished Editor registrar (see Appendix B for the current address).

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 and any identifying information included automatically by Microsoft Word.

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

Section 2 Evaluation of the Portfolio

2.1 Reviewers

A panel of two or three BELS Distinguished Editors will evaluate your portfolio to determine whether it meets the standards for BELS Distinguished Editor status. All reviewers are professional editors and are volunteers in this program.

To the extent possible, your reviewers 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 reviewer.

Portfolios under evaluation are identified only by an assigned number. Reviewers are not told the name of the candidate whose portfolio they are evaluating, nor will you be told the names of your reviewers. If you fail the Distinguished Editor examination and decide to appeal the decision, the BELS Committee on Appeals has the discretion to tell you the names of your reviewers 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 the 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 Scoring

Each reviewer 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 Distinguished Editor examination.

2.4 Notification of Outcome of Review

You will be notified of the reviewers' 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 reviewers, your manuscript failed to meet BELS standards for Distinguished Editor status, you will receive anonymous comments from the reviewers stating the reasons for their decision.

You may then choose to submit either

(a) a previously reviewed portfolio after revising it

or

(b) a new portfolio.

You need to choose one of these two options within 2 years from the date your candidacy was accepted. After 2 years, you will need to renew your candidacy. The fees for re-evaluation of the portfolio and renewal of candidacy are listed in Appendix A.

Section 3 Appeals

If you want to appeal an unfavorable decision of the reviewers, 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 reviewers' decision. In the request, you must specify your reasons for appealing the decision.

Appendix A Fees for the Distinguished Editor 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.

Distinguished Editor Process

Application \$100.00

Portfolio Evaluation \$300.00

Resubmission of a Previously Deficient Portfolio

Resubmission fees apply when the registrar or the reviewers find the portfolio to suffer from any of the defects listed below and the candidate wishes to resubmit a previously reviewed portfolio after revising it to correct the defect(s).

Each Defect: \$25:

Incomplete

Not properly masked

Illegible

Too long

New portfolio: \$110

Renewal of Candidacy

A renewal fee applies when a candidate who has failed to submit a portfolio within 2 years of acceptance of the candidacy for the examination wishes to extend the candidacy by 2 more years. There is no limit to the number of renewals per candidate.

Each renewal \$100.00

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 (1.3)
- _____ Edited manuscript: 15 to 30 pages, including at least 1 table and at least 1 graphic (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 (1.1.1)
- _____ Instructions for manuscript preparation from journal, publisher, or agency (or a summary of directives, such as house style, in the statement of circumstances) (1.1.1)

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

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

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

Telephone: 651-925-5528, e-mail: info@bels.org