

## What is BELS?

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1991 for the purpose of evaluating the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences. Proficiency is determined by means of a written test, and the credential Editor in the Life Sciences is awarded to successful candidates.

## Certification

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences has established a standard of proficiency for manuscript editors in the life sciences by testing candidates according to internationally recognized editorial principles.

Certification provides employers and clients an objective way to identify proficient manuscript editors in the life sciences. Because editors have different backgrounds, it is not always easy for an employer to determine whether a promising job candidate would be a good editor. Employers must rely on personal references or their own ad hoc tests. A credentialed Editor in the Life Sciences has proved his or her proficiency against a professional standard.



CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

[www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org)



BOARD OF EDITORS  
IN THE LIFE SCIENCES

*Certification Program*



## The Examination

The certification examination is an English language, 3-hour, multiple-choice test of scientific editing. It tests the candidate's ability to

- Ensure clarity and internal consistency in a manuscript's form, usage, logical flow, and organization.
- Detect and correct errors in punctuation, grammar, word choice, syntax, stylistic consistency, and numeric content and data.
- Adhere to publishers' instructions.
- Understand the principles and ethics of scientific inquiry, writing, and publishing in the life sciences.

The examination is offered several times each year, often in conjunction with professional writing and editing association meetings.

BELS always schedules examinations at the annual meetings of the Council of Science Editors and the American Medical Writers Association. Other examinations are scheduled in cities across the United States and Canada and in other countries as demand requires. Visit [www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org) for the current schedule.

The logo for BELS (Board of Editors in the Life Sciences) features the word "BELS" in a bold, serif font, enclosed within a thin, dark oval border.

## The Candidate

Certification provides qualified candidates with a way to demonstrate their editorial skills and abilities.

To be eligible for candidacy, an applicant must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited academic institution and 2 years of experience as a manuscript editor or the equivalent. Contact the Registrar at [www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org) for exceptions. A manuscript editor is one who is concerned with the expression of the content as well as the form of a manuscript.

Once an applicant is accepted into candidacy, he or she may register for a scheduled examination. Candidates who pass the examination receive the credential Editor in the Life Sciences and may use the initials ELS after their names.

## The Process

**Application.** Download and complete the application form. Send the form, your resume or curriculum vitae, three letters of reference, a copy of your college transcript or your diploma, and a check for US\$50 payable to the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences to the BELS Registrar. The application form and Registrar's address are available at [www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org).

**Candidacy.** Once the information has been reviewed and your eligibility is confirmed, you are admitted into candidacy. You will receive an examination study guide and the examination registration form. Your candidacy is valid for 2 years. During that time, you may register for any scheduled examination.

**Registration.** When you have selected an examination, send the examination registration form and a check for US\$200 payable to the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences to the BELS Registrar. You will receive an admission ticket to the scheduled examination. No one will be admitted to an examination without a ticket. Registration closes 3 weeks before the examination. Once the deadline has passed, you will not be allowed to register for the examination.

**Results.** You can expect your results by mail within 6 weeks of taking the examination.

We encourage you to print a copy of the application checklist, available at [www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org), as a way to track your application process. If you use the U.S. Postal Service, allow 5 weeks for the application and registration process. If you are applying from outside the United States, you may need to allow more time. Direct any questions to the Registrar.