



**The Open Group[®]
Professional Certification Program**

Board Member Handbook

April 2020

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The Open Group[®] Professional Certification Program: Board Member Handbook

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1. Program Overview

The Open Group Professional Certification Program validates the skills and experience of professionals that enable them to perform effective work in their area of specialization.

The Program is skills and experience-based and does not include validating the mastery of any specific bodies of knowledge.

The Program covers multiple Professions: currently Architect, Data Scientist, Technical Specialist, and Trusted Technology Practitioner.

Two different routes to certification are supported:

- The first route is Direct Certification by The Open Group
- The second route is Indirect Certification through third-party (employer) programs accredited by The Open Group

The Conformance Requirements for each of the Professions in the Program apply equally to Direct and Indirect Certification.

This document provides guidance to Peer Review Board Members in carrying out their work reviewing applications for Milestone Badges and certification.

The foundation of the Program is The Open Group Professional Certification Program Certification Policy, which sets out the policies and processes by which a professional may achieve certification.

Each of the Professions then has a Conformance Requirements document which defines the skills and experience that a person must possess to achieve certification in that Profession, including:

- Core Basic skills
- Profession Basic skills
- Discipline skills
- Experience requirements
- Professional Development requirements
- Community Contribution requirements

Each Profession also has a Configuration Document that defines which criteria apply to each Milestone and certification level in that Profession.

These documents are all publicly available from The Open Group Library at www.opengroup.org/library.

2. New in this Version of the Program

New for this version of the Program is the stepwise approach to certification.

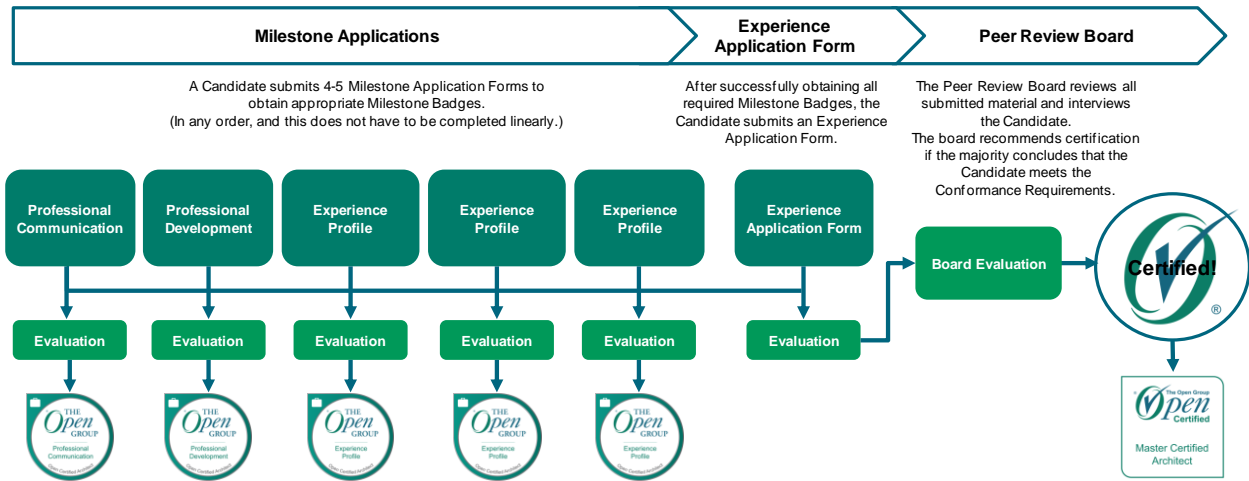
Originally, the Program required Candidates to provide all information for the Certification Package at one time. The revised Program allows for Candidates to provide information in a stepwise manner for defined subsets of the Conformance Requirements, called Milestones, for which Milestone Badges (Digital Credentials) are awarded.

Candidates are eligible for certification after achieving the required set of Milestone Badges and a successful review of their Experience Application Form.

Milestone Badges do not replace any part of the certification process; they merely provide a means for Candidates to gain credit for completing sections of their Certification Package and having them reviewed. Successful achievement of a Milestone Badge indicates the successful validation of a part of the full set of Conformance Requirements needed for certification.

For each of the Professions to which the Certification Policy applies, a Configuration Document defines the levels of certification and the Milestone Badges available to Candidates, and refers to the Conformance Requirements that must be met to achieve the badges and certifications at the different levels.

3. Certification Process Overview



4. Peer Review Board Member Pools

Peer review is key to the operation and value of the Program that distinguishes it from examination-based certifications.

The Peer Review Board Member pool is the group of professionals who have volunteered to carry out reviews for Milestones and for certification.

There is a separate Peer Review Board Member pool for each of the Professions in the Program.

When the Certification Authority has an application for a Milestone Badge or certification, they will ask members of the relevant Profession's Peer Review Board Member pool to volunteer to:

- Evaluate Experience Profile Milestone Application Forms
- Evaluate certification applications, or
- Evaluate re-certification application forms

4.1 Eligibility for the Peer Review Board Member Pool

For Level 1 and Level 2 reviews, all Peer Review Board pool members must be certified at Level 2 or Level 3 in their Profession.

For Level 3 reviews, all Peer Review Board pool members must be certified at Level 3 in their Profession.

To be invited to join the Peer Review Board Member pool as a Level 2 certified professional, you must have been certified by a unanimous decision of your Peer Review Board, and recommended by them to serve as a Peer Review Board Member.

All Level 3 certified professionals are invited to join the Peer Review Board Member pool.

Those who serve on Peer Review Boards within Accredited Certification Programs are also eligible to serve on Direct Certification Peer Review Boards.

4.2 Invitation

To participate, you must be invited by the Certification Authority, and you must be willing to serve!

You must also agree to follow the rules of the Program by signing the Board Member Agreement. The agreement is personal between you and The Open Group. It provides for confidentiality for Candidates and requires you to evaluate Candidates fairly and objectively, as well as to declare any conflict of interest.

The Program pays Board Members an honorarium (which you may choose to donate to charity) for reviewing Milestone Application Forms and for serving on Peer Review Boards for certification.

The Program does not pay travel or subsistence expenses.

Those who are invited are expected to serve as part of their Community Contribution.

4.3 Board Member Community

As a Board Member you may wish to contact other Board Members in your region or globally, for support; e.g., questions about the process.

The Open Group provides email aliases/lists to enable such communication, and helps facilitate such communication and the development of a Board Member community.

5. Reviewing Experience Profile Milestone Application Forms

When an application for an Experience Profile Milestone Application Form is received, the Certification Authority will ask for a volunteer to review it. If you are selected, the Certification Authority will make the Milestone Application Form available, as well as a link to the reporting tool.

There is no interview involved, so the focus is solely to evaluate written material against the Conformance Requirements. Any decline of a Milestone Application Form must be accompanied with a written rationale including the criteria the application fails to meet.

Be sure to evaluate applications only on the merit of the submitted document against the Conformance Requirements.

There may have been updates to the Program since you were certified – or last served on a board – so please refresh your knowledge of the Conformance Requirements, including the list of any Interpretations provided by the Certification Authority.

If you are unsure about anything, ask the Certification Authority or the Peer Review Board Member community for assistance.

To help you recall the Conformance Requirements, they are written in the peer review report forms and are presented to you as you complete the form online.

Remember to:

- Review the written material for completeness
- Verify there are no areas of contradiction within the material
- Verify that the answers respond fully to all parts of each question
- Review the written material for compliance and verify that the answers demonstrate compliance with the Conformance Requirements

The reporting tool will prompt you to respond against all the applicable Conformance Requirements.

It is easy to be critical and to find reasons to fail people. If you find a non-compliance, challenge yourself:

- Look through the whole application form to try to find evidence that the Candidate does demonstrate the required skills and experience
- Do not jump to easy conclusions
- Hold your judgment until you have read and understood the whole application

Applications are supposed to stand on their own and be evaluated without any discussion with the Candidate, but if you have a question of clarification, you are permitted to contact the Candidate – the Certification Authority will provide contact information on request.

Note that this is *not* a means to allow you to interview the Candidate!

Remember that your task includes completing the peer review report form on the Certification Authority's website, and you are strongly advised to complete the form at the same time as you review the Candidate's responses to questions. This will help to ensure that you consider all of the Conformance Requirements that must be evaluated, as well as help to ensure that your reasoning fits within the boundaries of the Conformance Requirements.

Although the Experience Profile (EXP) requirements are associated with specific questions, your decision regarding EXP compliance should take into account the whole Experience Profile Milestone Application Form.

After your review, complete and submit the online peer review report, which includes space for you to provide comments and suggestions for the Candidate's further development as a professional should you choose to do so.

6. Reviewing Certification Applications

The Certification Authority will ask for volunteers to review a certification application.

If you are selected, the Certification Authority will make the Certification Package available, and also a link to the reporting tool.

The Certification Authority will also make the Candidate’s contact information available to you.

For remote interviews, Peer Review Board Members are required to make their own arrangements for interviewing the Candidate (e.g., telephone, VoIP, A/V over IP, etc.).

For face-to-face interviews, the Certification Authority will provide the venue.

Section 6.2.2 of the Certification Policy says:

The process for evaluating conformance starts with a review of the Candidate’s Certification Package by the Certification Authority and the members of the Peer Review Board.

This is followed by interview(s), as shown in the following table:

| Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|--|---|---|
| Remote (telephone or video) or face-to-face interview by a single Board Member. If the Board Member recommends to decline, a second Board Member conducts an interview. If the two Board Members disagree, a third Board Member is appointed to break the tie. | Separate face-to-face or video interviews of the Candidate by each of the three members of a Peer Review Board. | Separate face-to-face or video interviews of the Candidate by each of the three members of a Peer Review Board. |

6.1 Peer Review Board Objectives

The Peer Review Board’s objectives are to objectively evaluate each Candidate against the applicable Conformance Requirements of the Profession as described in the Experience Application Form that forms part of the Certification Package. This is done by reading and evaluating the Candidate’s Certification Package, by ensuring that the Experience requirements criteria are met, and by interviewing the Candidate to:

- Validate the claims in the package
- Fill in any gaps between the Conformance Requirements and the written package

And to arrive at a recommendation by reviewing each Candidate’s application – with the other Peer Review Board Members at Level 2 and Level 3.

The Peer Review Board is also responsible for providing developmental recommendations that will guide the Candidate towards successful certification at the next level, and guide their continued growth and development in their Profession.

Finally, the Peer Review Board is responsible for identifying prospective new Peer Review Board Members.

If a certification application is to be declined, ensure that you have a clear rationale as to which of the Conformance Requirements are not met. **There are NO other grounds for a Decline.**

In the case of a Decline, the Peer Review Board is responsible for providing the Candidate with guidance in working towards successful certification in the future.

6.2 Evaluating an Application for Certification

Your role as a Peer Review Board Member is to evaluate the Candidate against the Experience (EC) requirements using the Certification Package as the primary source of information, supplemented by the interview.

The EC requirements are defined to represent a holistic view of the breadth and depth of the Candidate's professional experience.

Be aware that the Certification Package contains previously evaluated Milestone Application Forms, and **it is NOT your job to re-evaluate individual Milestone Application Forms or the skills and experience requirements that are covered by them.**

Ensure that the Experience Profiles refer to different projects (or significant discrete work efforts).

Some Professions may also have explicit criteria that must be met by one (or more) Experience Profiles, in which case you are required to validate that such criteria are met.

6.3 The Peer Review Board Chair

The Certification Authority will appoint one of the three members of a Level 2 or Level 3 Peer Review Board as Chair.

The additional responsibilities of the Chair are to ensure that:

- The other Peer Review Board Members have reviewed the Candidate's package
- The consensus meeting takes place
- The Candidate is reviewed against the correct criteria only
- The Peer Review Board Members complete the peer review report forms to record their evaluations and decisions

The Chair must also provide the final summaries and recommendations that the Certification Authority will send to the Candidates when they are informed of the result.

The Chair must:

- Ensure that a fair and objective decision is reached about each Candidate
- Ensure that the discussions in the consensus meeting focus on the Candidate's compliance to the EC requirements

- Ensure that any decision to decline a Candidate is supported by majority agreement that one or more of the Conformance Requirements have not been met

But remember: Fairness is the responsibility of all Board Members. Your task is only to evaluate the evidence. Beware of bias and preconceptions about language or cultural aspects, etc.

7. Interviewing the Candidate

You may need to place the Candidate's responses into context if their background and experience is different to yours. Strive to determine if they meet the intent of the requirement based on their responses.

Your questions should be focused on experience and capabilities, not the person, as this helps keep the session professional, non-biased, and minimizes the risk of discrimination.

After reviewing the Certification Package, you must contact the Candidate to agree a time for the interview, which should normally be 15 to 30 minutes.

Use the interview to:

- Validate the breadth of experience described in the package
- Attempt to close any gaps you have identified in the package with respect to the EC criteria
- Make sure the two/three Experience Profile Milestone Badge Applications do not represent the same experience described in a different way (but note that we do allow a long project to be used for more than one milestone – see the Certification Policy wording)
- Use the online peer review report form as a guide and to record your findings during the interview

Remember: Each individual Experience Profile Milestone Application Forum within the Certification Package has already been reviewed and accepted, so you should not be looking for compliance with criteria beyond those identified in the Experience Application Form.

7.1 Prepare for the Interview

Make yourself familiar with the EC requirements by reading the questions in the peer review report form.

Read the Candidate's Experience Application Form as soon as it is made available to you.

Consult the Milestone Application Forms in the Certification Package when clarification is needed.

Identify areas that need clarification during the interview.

7.2 Prepare Questions

Prepare appropriate questions to address your areas of concern:

- Did the Candidate do the work?
- Are the experiences duplicated/overlapping?
- Are there inconsistencies within the package?
- Are there any gaps that need to be filled?

Open-ended questions can be useful in moving the discussion forward and helping to answer the above. Here are some suggestions for topics:

- Complex situations where the Candidate took a leadership position
- Difficult domain-related decisions or compromises they had to make
- A difficult client or team situation they had to deal with
- Something they are particularly proud about within the submitted projects
- Something they learned most from

Quality and objectivity are paramount, so be sure to conduct your interviews in a professional and courteous manner, and do not engage in informal discussions about Candidates with other Peer Review Board Members – limit discussions about Candidates to the consensus meetings.

Remember: You are evaluating the Candidate, not the Certification Package.

7.3 Do's and Don'ts

- **Do** remember to refresh your memory about the Candidate and the package just before the interview
- **Do** use the interview time for the Candidate and their quest for certification only
- **Do not** directly discuss, reveal, or imply your potential decision with a Candidate, whether it be positive or negative
- **Do not** discuss with the Candidate their package quality or whether they should have applied

8. The Interview

Try to establish some rapport with the Candidate and place them at ease. They are likely to be nervous!

For Level 2 and Level 3, if you are the first to interview them, remind them of the logistics – 3 x 15-30 minute interviews (with breaks in between if it is face-to-face).

Ensure they know that results and conclusions will be communicated by the Certification Authority at a later date.

Let the Candidate know how the interview will proceed and what to expect: “We will spend the next 15 to 30 minutes going over questions I have prepared after reviewing your package ...”.

Advise them to listen to your questions and be specific with their answers.

Mention that you may interrupt their answer because you have heard what you needed to answer the question, and that they should not read anything into such an interruption.

Make sure they know when you are starting the interview.

If it is a face-to-face interview, check that they know where to go afterwards.

8.1 During the Interview

Ask specific questions to close any gaps or contradictions you have identified.

Avoid leading or general questions except for “ice breakers”.

Allow the Candidate time to think before they respond. If they draw a blank, encourage them to take their time and think about their response.

Allow for periods of silence. Questions are only of value if you wait for the answer, but if the Candidate cannot respond, move on.

Maintain control – remember that the person asking the questions is the one in control!

If the Candidate starts rambling, regain control by politely interjecting and advising the Candidate that the interview time is short and you have many questions yet to ask, then ask your next question to take control again.

Once you hear what you were probing for or your question has been answered, move on to your next question.

8.2 Reaching your Decision

Use the peer review report form to guide your thinking and record your responses and decision.

Remember that each individual Experience Profile Milestone Application Form within the Certification Package has already been reviewed and accepted, so you should not be looking for compliance with criteria beyond those identified in the peer review report form.

For each requirement you believe the Candidate did not meet, you must identify in the peer review report form specifically how they did not meet the requirement.

Even though a Candidate may rate themselves higher than you agree with (e.g., Deep), all they must do is meet the requirement (e.g., Applied).

If in doubt, err on the side of the Candidate, as you must be certain about a non-conformance to deny certification. If you are not certain, give the Candidate the benefit of your doubt.

At **Level 1**, the decision to certify is made by the first Board Member to interview the Candidate. A second interview is arranged only if the first Board Member Declines.

If you find out that you are the second or third Board Member to interview the Candidate, do not let that affect your decision – your decision should be based only on the Certification Package and your interview with the Candidate.

The Certification Authority will manage converting the decisions of the Peer Review Board Members into an Accept or Decline of the Candidate.

At **Level 2 and Level 3**, make a preliminary decision on your own, then work with the other Peer Review Board Members to reach a unanimous or majority decision.

Your preliminary decision should be one of Yes, Yes?, No?, or No:

- “Yes” means that you are confident that all the requirements are met
- “Yes?” or “No?” mean that you need discussion at the consensus meeting
- “No” means that you are confident that one or more requirements are not met

8.3 Peer Review Report Form – All Levels

As soon as possible after the interview, complete the peer review report form on the Certification Authority’s website.

For each gap or deficiency you identified in your review of the package, put a comment into the form explaining whether the gap was or was not covered to your satisfaction during the interview.

There may not be time to fill in the form before the consensus meeting, but it *must* be completed while the interview is still fresh in your mind.

Completed forms are essential for the Certification Authority to inform the Candidate and complete the certification process.

8.4 Level 2 and Level 3 – Consensus Meeting Process

For Level 2 and Level 3, all Peer Review Board Members *must* participate in the consensus meeting, which should take place as soon as possible after the interviews.

The consensus meeting for face-to-face interviews will normally take place immediately after a day of interviews. Exceptionally, the meeting may be delayed or may need to extend beyond the time available. Face-to-face is preferred, but telephone conferences are allowed.

The consensus meeting for telephone or video interviews will take place by telephone conference.

Remember to be open-minded, listen to the views and comments of the other Board Members, and focus on the requirements.

To be certified, a Candidate needs to have two (2) “Yes” votes.

If there are several Candidates to be discussed, start with those with three (3) “Yes” preliminary decisions, moving to those with one (1) or more “Yes?” or “No?” preliminary decisions, and finally those with three (3) “No” preliminary decisions.

Peer Review Board Members should discuss their observations on how the Candidates did or did not meet the certification criteria, keeping the discussion focused on the criteria the Candidate did not meet.

For a Candidate to be Declined, at least two Peer Review Board Members must agree that a given Conformance Requirement is not met.

Once discussions have completed or upon decision of the Chair/facilitator, a final vote will be taken. Each Peer Review Board Member must answer “Yes” or “No” only.

For Candidates obtaining three (3) “Yes” votes, the reviewers will be asked if there is a nomination of that Candidate to the Peer Review Board Member pool. The responses must be a unanimous “Yes” for Candidates to be nominated.

Remember: Every Candidate must be discussed!

8.5 Level 2 and Level 3 – Consensus Meeting Decisions

8.5.1 Guidance to Candidates

If the Candidate is to be certified, the Peer Review Board Members should provide recommendations to guide the Candidate in their future development in their Profession, including recommendations for achieving the next level of certification.

8.5.2 Guidance to Decline

The response to the Candidate *must* clearly identify which requirements were not met. Each Peer Review Board Member *must* contribute their findings.

Each Board Member must provide:

- General observations about the Candidate relative to the requirements
- A positive statement
- Statement of the specific requirement(s) not met, with rationale
- Developmental recommendations

The reasons for Decline must match those you stated in the consensus meeting (for Level 2 and Level 3).

Make sure the “Recommendations” tie back to your observations and the specific requirement(s) you cited as not being met.

8.5.3 Communicating Guidance and Results

For Level 2 and Level 3, the Chair is responsible for:

- Gathering developmental recommendations for successful Candidates
- Gathering Decline justification and recommendations from the other Board Members and getting their agreement on the final text

Only the Certification Authority communicates results and guidance to Candidates, be they Accepted or Declined.

9. Evaluating for Re-Certification

Certified professionals showed that they met the Conformance Requirements when they were originally certified. They are not required to do so again.

Re-certification only requires evidence of continued practice in their Profession, professional development, and community contribution.

To evaluate a re-certification application a single Peer Review Board Member will be allocated, with a second being assigned if the first result is to Decline.

You should review the re-certification package, and answer the questions in the online peer review report form.

10. Meaning of “Significance” (Level 3)

Each Experience Profile Milestone Application Form should involve some complexity and “significance”. As a Peer Review Board Member you will need to decide whether a Level 3 Candidate’s project or engagement was “significant”.

Significance and complexity may be manifested in many ways: politically, technically, financially, logistically, environmentally, etc.

Here are some factors to consider in deciding a project’s significance:

- The project/engagement may have had minor significance from a technical perspective, but if the business impact was large it can qualify as significant
- What was the degree of the business/technical challenge involved, as validated by the client/business stakeholder?
- The “degrees of freedom” or latitude the Candidate had
If the Candidate had only one choice for the solution, then it could be argued that the complexity factor would have been minimal. The same is true if he/she did not have to make any key decisions. If there was only one obvious choice or constraints were such that they had no freedom to create a solution, then think carefully as to whether it can be considered significant.
- The business impact to the client/business stakeholder
- The scale – size, number, and/or complexity – of solution components
- Successful delivery of a less complex solution under tight deadlines or extenuating circumstances could be considered enough to make it significant
- Time necessary to perform a quality design as a solution to the business problem
- There are also factors that would indicate a lack of significance, such as personal projects used by the Candidate to develop their skills or knowledge, or training projects, but just because a project is a proof-of-concept does not on its own mean it is not significant