



# Review of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences certification examination

Yunhoe Kim

Research Institute of Asian Women, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) certification examination was held by the BELS at the University of Seoul on December 1, 2018 (Fig. 1). It has not been conducted in last 4 years since 2014 in Korea. BELS is a specialized institution established in the United States in 1991 to evaluate the quality of manuscript editors (MEs) in the field of life sciences. It has fostered professional MEs in the life sciences by holding examinations in the United States, Asian countries, and European Medical Writers Association.

Since May, the Korean Council of Science Editors has conducted elementary and intermediate-level training course for MEs, and some of those who completed the course took this examination. Those who took the exam had to solve 106 questions within 3 hours. There were various types of questions, ranging from knowledge of academic journals overall to manuscript-editing practices, but most of them were about substantive editing. Above all, the BELS examination requires academic knowledge of the life sciences, a thorough understanding of English grammar, and training in scientific writing. Therefore, those who are only responsible for the administrative tasks related to academic journal publication and reviews, but who entrust a specialized agency with editing and proofreading despite being an associate editor or ME, would not be able to take the examination. The BELS examination concentrates heavily on editing ability, so it requires specialized training and effort from domestic MEs who do not speak English as their native language.

While preparing for the examination, I had to read a vast amount of data and relevant books, which were helpful to me, personally, regardless of the examination result. In particular, the intermediate-level course for MEs, which was hosted by Korean Council of Science Editors, made me address the necessities of grammar, such as rules for editing, punctuation for style, and the composition of tables and graphs, which were very useful. I would recommend this examination for those who manage the editing and proofreading at a society or specialized institute and want to be recognized as a certified international ME expert in the field of life sciences. Unfortunately, however, it is not guaranteed that the BELS examination will be held annually in Korea, despite its popularity with both domestic MEs and foreigners, many of whom took it in Korea because it was unavailable in their countries. Thus, even if you want to take this examination, you cannot assume that you can register for it in Korea whenever you want. You should check the schedule calendar carefully on the BELS website and see the country and region you can visit (Table 1).

**Received:** January 25, 2019

**Accepted:** January 31, 2019

**Correspondence to** Yunhoe Kim  
gyusoo@sm.ac.kr

**ORCID**

Yunhoe Kim

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4075-8268>



**Fig. 1.** Photo of Board of Editors in the Life Sciences examinees in Korea (December 1, 2018).

**Table 1.** Board of Editors in the Life Sciences BELS Certification Examinations in 2019

Date	Day	Time	City	Site	Register by
February 3, 2019	Sunday	1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Mumbai, India	M. L. Dahanukar College, Dixit Road, Vile-Parle (East), Mumbai – 400057 Maharashtra	January 13, 2019
March 16, 2019	Saturday	1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Dallas, TX	Meadows Conference Center, 2900 Live Oak Street	February 23, 2019
May 4, 2019	Saturday	1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Columbus, OH	Hyatt Regency	April 13, 2019
November 6, 2019	Wednesday	9:00 a.m.–12:00 noon	San Diego, CA	Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina	October 16, 2019

Adapted from <https://bels.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/2019%20Calendar%20v.6.pdf>.

While preparing for the BELS examination, I encountered the following sentence: “Remember that, as writers and editors, it’s our job to make our materials clear, not the readers’ job to figure out what we meant.” In other words, it can be editors’ fault rather than readers’ fault if readers of an academic journal do not understand articles. If you are preparing for the BELS examination, you should remember that the role of the ME is to make articles clear and easy to understand.

## Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.