Introduction of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences exam to Korea and its significance

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Introduction

In October 2013 and September 2014, the Korean Council of Science Editors (KCSE) organized the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) certification examination in Korea. The total number of BELS examinees was 30 in 2013 and 27 in 2014. They comprised of domestic and foreign editors, manuscript editors, society staffs, and librarians. Nine of the examinees (2 in 2013, 7 in 2014), six of whom were Koreans, passed the exam. I had worked for preparation of these exams for two years as a general manager of KCSE. I would like to describe the process up to its introduction, exam registration process, and the significance of implementing the first BELS examination in Korea.

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences Certification Examination

In the early 1980s, ten editors, who were responsible for the editorial and publication functions in various organizations, came to an agreement that there was a need for a program that would strengthen the professionalism of editors by evaluating their editing abilities, and hence enhance the quality of academic journals. With this in mind, they developed a qualification certification program and, with the establishment of BELS in 1991, conducted the first BELS certification examination [1]. The BELS examination is a holistic evaluation of the professional knowledge in the fields of life sciences, English proficiency, and manuscript editing proficiency. Applicants are required to solve 100 to 110 multiple-choice questions within three hours, and must achieve 65% or higher to pass. From 1991 to 2014, there had been 148 BELS examinations. Those exams have contributed to improve the professionalism of over 1,200 manuscript editors in 23 countries in the field of life sciences (personal communication with Leslie Neistadt).

Motivation for Implementation of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences Examination in Korea

KCSE launched in September 2011, with the goal of “promoting the quality enhancement of scientific journals and contributing to scientific and technological development.” The KCSE started educating journal editors as the first step towards enhancing the quality of academic
Once the date was fixed, the KCSE established an eight-week BELS exam in Korea would be performed on October 19, 2013. Wishing to take the exam, which led to the confirmation that the first exam if it were conducted in Korea. Exactly 20 of the attendees were to see how many people would be willing to take the BELS needed to take the exam. “A survey was done after her speech how the BELS examination was established, and what is “What kind of committee BELS is, with what history, why and how the BELS examination was established, and what is needed to take the exam.” A survey was done after her speech to see how many people would be willing to take the BELS exam if it were conducted in Korea. Exactly 20 of the attendees were willing to take the exam, which led to the confirmation that the first BELS exam in Korea would be performed on October 19, 2013. Once the date was fixed, the KCSE established an eight-week manuscript editors’ intermediate level education course in preparation for the exam. The course attendees were editors, manuscript editors, and those responsible for editing academic journals, who fulfilled the eligibility requirements for taking the BELS examination. The curriculum content was the subject matter of the expected BELS exam questions, as set out in the “topics tested” outlines in the BELS study guide. The subjects covered grammar, punctuation, statistics, unit of measure, scientific terms, and publishing requirements. The KCSE invited tutors for each part of the course. They had taught the examinees for two months prior to the exam.

**Registration to the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences Exam and Taking the Exam**

Eligibility requirements and exam processes were explained in detail. The registration period for the BELS exam is up to two weeks before the exam date, and applicants were permitted to take the exam only upon successful registration. Applicants must meet all the eligibility requirements before they can register. Those requirements are a bachelor’s degree or higher and at least two years’ editing experience.

In addition to the application form, BELS requests some supplementary documents during the registration in order to assess whether applicants meet these eligibility requirements. A copy of a certificate of graduation or report card must be submitted to satisfy the first criterion. Three letters of recommendation from the editor of a relevant academic journal, a fellow editor at work, and his or her employer must be submitted to satisfy the second criterion. The application form can be downloaded from the BELS home page [2]. There is no set template for documents other than the application form. Documents must be written in English and be submitted to a BELS officer by mail or email, along with 50 US dollars for registration. It takes a week for confirmation of successful registration, so it is preferable to register in advance. If the applicant receives a registration form from BELS after submitting documents, he or she is eligible to take the exam. The registration form is not available to the public on the BELS website. The likely reason for this is to enable BELS to maintain control over who is eligible to take the exam. Upon receiving the registration form, applicant must fill out the form and submit it to BELS, along with the fee of 200 US dollars. Once the registration is confirmed, BELS sends the applicant an admission slip and a receipt (Fig. 1). The application fee of 50 US dollars and the registration fee of 200 US dollars are payable through mail transfer, credit card payment, or wire transfer.
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First Board of Editors in the Life Sciences Examination Held in Korea

On October 19, 2013, thirty applicants gathered at the Seoul Center of College of Medicine, Hallym University to take the exam. BELS officer checked the test papers and reorganized the seating plan. Ten minutes before the start of the exam, the examinees, who were sitting in the waiting room, were asked to move to the exam room. Their admission slips and identification documents were verified when they entered room. Before the exam began, a BELS officer explained the caution during the exam. Once all the examinees sat down, the three-hour BELS exam officially began. Thirty examinees successfully finished the exam, two of whom passed (Fig. 2).

Conclusion

By implementing the BELS examination in Korea, I can learn more deeply about manuscript editing and professionalism of manuscript editors. This is significant since it creates a pool of human resources needed to improve the level of manuscript editing in Korea. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate that manuscript editors are important professionals whose expertise has been validated through professional training and education. When much number of academic journal editors demand their services, they will be able to contribute to the development of scientific, technological, and medical journals from Korea. Furthermore, BELS exam in Korea will provide more opportunities for editors in other Asian countries to get familiar with the BELS exam. Ultimately, it could be the cornerstone for enhancing the quality of Asian science journals.

Conflict of Interest

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

Acknowledgments

This work is supported by a grant from the Korean Council of Science Editors (2013).

References


http://www.escienceediting.org