The Open Group®
Professional Certification Program

Board Member Handbook

June 2021

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 mandate or validate 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 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 using Milestones.

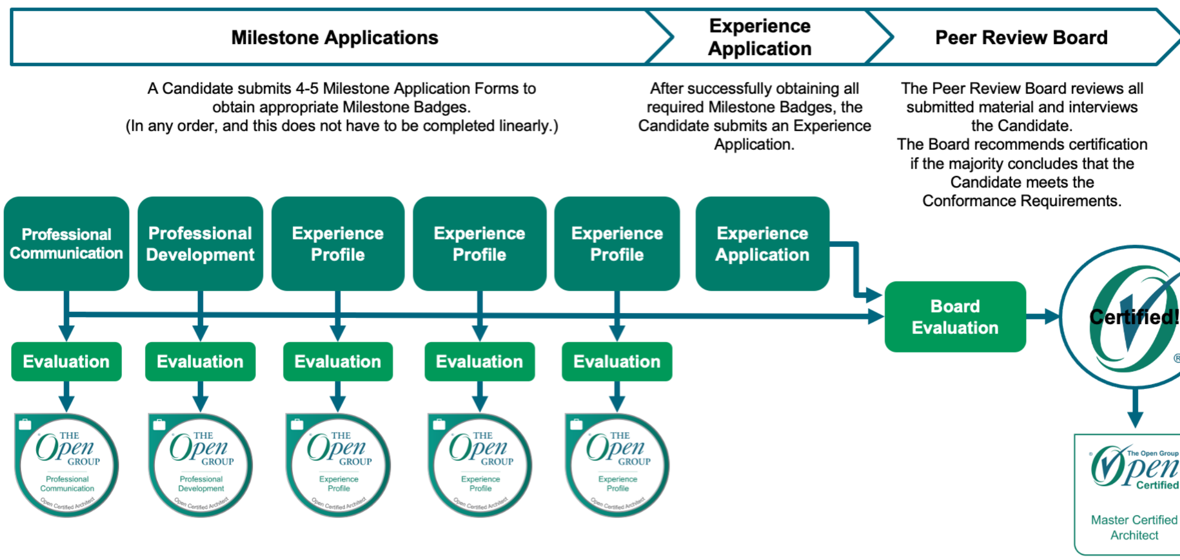
Originally, the Program required Candidates to provide all information for the Certification Package at one time. In the revised version of the Program, Candidates provide information in a stepwise manner for defined subsets of the Conformance Requirements, called Milestones, for which Milestone Badges (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.

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

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

The Peer Review Board is the group of professionals selected by the Certification Authority who have agreed to carry out reviews for Milestones and for certification.

Each Profession in the Program has a dedicated group of Peer Review Board Members.

When the Certification Authority has applications for Milestone Badges or certification(s), they will ask for members of the relevant Profession's Peer Review Board to evaluate:

- Experience Profile Milestone applications
- Experience applications
- Re-certification applications

4.1 Eligibility for a Peer Review Board

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

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

To be invited to join the Peer Review Board 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.

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 Applications 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 Applications

To evaluate an Experience Profile Milestone application, a single Peer Review Board Member will be assigned to conduct the review, provide a report, and provide either an Accept or Decline verdict to the Certification Authority.

When an application for an Experience Profile Milestone is received, the Certification Authority will ask for a volunteer to review it. If you are selected, the Certification Authority will make the Candidate's application 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 an Experience Profile Milestone Application must be accompanied with a written rationale including identification of 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 included in the Peer Review Board 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 to try to find evidence that the Candidate does demonstrate the required skills and experience
- Do not jump to 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 Board Report form provided by the Certification Authority, 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 requirements are associated with specific questions, your decision regarding compliance should take into account the whole Experience Profile Milestone Application. *In other words, if you think a requirement is not met, please read the whole application before taking a final decision.*

If, in your professional opinion, the application does not demonstrate compliance with one or more criteria, then you should Decline the application.

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. Video (preferred) or audio (Level 1 only), using any tool / solution agreed by the Board Member and Candidate.

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 (video preferred) 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 must objectively evaluate each Candidate against the applicable Conformance Requirements of the Profession as described in the Experience Application that forms part of the Certification Package. This is done by reading and evaluating the Candidate's Certification Package (Experience Application plus required Milestone Badge applications), by ensuring that the applicable Conformance Requirements are met, and by interviewing the Candidate to:

- Validate the claims in the package, particularly whether the Candidate did the work described
- Fill in any gaps between the Conformance Requirements and the Certification Package
- 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.

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 requirements in the Experience Application using the Certification Package as the primary source of information, supplemented by the interview.

These requirements are defined to represent a holistic view of the breadth and depth of the Candidate's professional experience, and in some professions/levels may include skill requirements as well.

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.

Be aware that the Certification Package contains previously evaluated Milestone Applications, and **it is NOT your job to re-evaluate individual Milestone Applications 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.

The only grounds for a Decline are:

1. **One or more of the Conformance Requirements are not met, or**
2. **The Candidate did not do the work described in the Milestone Applications and Experience Application, or**
3. **The Experience Profile Milestone applications do not describe projects that are sufficiently distinct, as defined in the Conformance Requirements**

The Board Report form asks clear questions to help you consider each of the requirements and prompts you to record your views on each one.

Remember that the Conformance Requirements mean only what they say. They represent the solid consensus of the working group and wider membership of The Open Group. Please do not add additional interpretations based upon your personal history or preferences.

Please also try to be sensitive to the possibility of unconscious bias. We find that Board Members in a particular vertical or with particular hard-won experience may unconsciously use this to inform their thinking.

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 Board Report form 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 decision.

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 requirements covered in the Board Report
- Ensure that any decision to decline a Candidate is supported by majority agreement on which one or more of the 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 should 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. Be aware also that terminology varies across different organizations, and you may need to ask what a particular deliverable's purpose was rather than assume you know because of its title.

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 be no less than15 and may be up to 30 minutes. Be prepared to allow the Candidate to explain/educate you if their field of work is not familiar to you.

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 applicable Conformance Requirements
- Make sure the two/three Experience Profile Milestones 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 – the questions in the Board Report form provide you with guidance on this point
- Ensure that the Candidate did the work described in the Experience Profile Milestones
- Use the online Board Report form as a guide - and to record your findings during the interview

Remember: Each individual Experience Profile Milestone 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 Board Report.

7.1 Prepare for the Interview

Familiarize yourself with the applicable Conformance Requirements by reading the questions in the Board Report form.

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

Consult the Milestone Applications 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 of within the submitted projects

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 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 Board Report to guide your thinking and record your responses and decision.

Remember that each individual Experience Profile Milestone within the Certification Package has already been reviewed and accepted. You should not be looking for compliance with criteria beyond those identified in the Board Report.

For each requirement you believe the Candidate did not meet, you must identify in the Board Report specifically how they did not meet the requirement.

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.

At Level 1, 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.

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 Yes or No. If you have any concerns, enter a "No" and note your concerns in the comments field in the Board Report. This will ensure there is a discussion in the Consensus meeting.

During the Consensus meeting, you may change your mind. The Chair is able to amend your decision recorded in the Board Report on your request.

In all cases, feedback to the Candidate should be discussed and agreed in the Consensus meeting.

8.3 Board Report– All Levels

As soon as possible after the interview, complete the Board Report 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.

The Board Report must be completed and submitted within 3 business days of the interview.

Submitting your completed Board Report is essential for the process to operate!

8.4 Level 2 and Level 3 – Consensus Meeting Process

For Level 2 and Level 3, all 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 audio or video conferences are allowed.

The consensus meeting for audio or video interviews will take place by audio or video 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 "No" preliminary decisions, and finally those with three (3) "No" preliminary decisions.

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 Board Members must agree that a given 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 be invited to become a Peer Review Board Member. The responses must be a unanimous "Yes" for a Candidate 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 Board Member *must* contribute their findings.

Each Board Member must contribute:

- 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 Decision

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

- Finalizing the Board Member decisions in the Board Report
- Gathering developmental recommendations from the other Board Members 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 the decision and guidance to Candidates, whether the application is Accepted or Declined.

If you are asked for the result by the Candidate, please ask them to contact the Certification Authority.

9. Reviewing Re-Certification Applications

In all Professions, Candidates may re-certify by obtaining the relevant Milestone Badges, in which case, the normal process for evaluating each badge applies. The Milestone Badges required for re-certification are the following badges at or above the level of the current certification:

- Professional Development Milestone Badge
- Experience Profile Milestone Badge

In some Professions, a Candidate may complete a Declaration of Continued Practice instead of earning an Experience Profile Milestone Badge. The Declaration of Continued Practice is focused solely on whether the Candidate has continued to practice in their profession at the current level of certification. It simply asks the Candidate to:

i. Assert their continued conformance to the applicable skills requirements for their Discipline / Specialty (where applicable) and level of certification, and
ii. Provide examples of contributions the Candidate has made in their profession over the prior 3 years demonstrating that they have continued to practice in their profession at their current level of certification

9.1 Evaluating Declaration of Continued Practice

At re-certification, a Certified Professional may choose to submit a Declaration of Continued Practice.

To evaluate a Declaration of Continued Practice, a single Peer Review Board Member will be assigned to conduct the review, provide a report, and recommend either an Accept or Decline. If the recommendation is to Decline, the Certification Authority will assign a second Board Member and if the first two Board Members disagree, a third will be assigned to break the tie.

There is no interview, so the focus is solely to evaluate the written material to determine whether the Candidate has continued to practice in their profession at the level at which they are certified. There is no requirement for the Candidate to document a full three years of activity; there is no minimum duration of activity. The activity may be in any Discipline / Specialty within the Profession.

Use your professional judgement to determine whether the written material provides sufficient justification of continued practice.

- At Level 1, look for evidence that the person is performing profession-related work
- At Level 2, look to ensure the person is leading the professional work
- At Level 3, look for work that has a significant impact on the business

If you are not convinced there is sufficient information in the application, then your decision must be to Decline.

The Board Member provides their recommendation to the Certification Authority.