

Upgrading to Professional Membership

When you are considering an application to upgrade, think about the length of time you have been working in copy editing and proofreading. You may not be ready to upgrade immediately after training; it usually takes around 18 months to 2 years of practice before competence is achieved. If you have worked full time in proofreading and/or copy-editing for the past 5 years, there is probably no need to go back further than that in detail. If your work history is patchy or less conventional, it might help your application if you can go back further or you are able to include more history.

Key requirements

The key requirements for Professional Membership are:

- Professional recognition from a specified editorial body (see section 1)

OR

- Training (see section 2) – a minimum of 10 points
- Experience (see section 3) – a minimum of 5 points (500 hours)
- References (see section 4) – a minimum of 5 points (1 reference)
- Other elements that may appear in your application include:
 - delivering editorial training (see section 2)
 - mentoring or being mentored (see section 5)
 - a pass in the SfEP editorial test (see section 6)

The total number of points you need is 25. The final 5 points may be made up from any of the above categories.

REMEMBER

You do not need to upgrade to Intermediate Membership before applying for Professional Membership.

If you are already an Intermediate Member, the points you already earned can be carried forward to your application for Professional Membership.

Information we need

The Admissions Panel would like as much information as possible about your editorial background so that they can make an informed judgement about your eligibility. Please include everything that is or could be relevant.

To make the process as fair and equitable as possible, the Panel uses a points system to assess eligibility for the different membership grades, but there are many possible ways in which you might satisfy the criteria.

Please note that we focus on **copy-editing** and **proofreading** – the core editorial skills – as outlined in the SfEP [Code of Practice](#) and the [Editorial Syllabus](#).

Related editorial skills, such as project management and development editing, will also be considered. Note, however, that other publishing skills that are less closely related to editorial work – such as indexing, typesetting, design, marketing, copy writing, translating, and so forth – are **not** included in our criteria.

You will find it helpful to get together all the details (names, dates, hours, type of work) on your background before you start to complete the online form. If you have paper certificates from your training courses, mentoring or conference attendance, we will need you to scan the documents and supply them electronically with your application form.

A note on detail

If you do not provide sufficient detail in your application, the Admissions Panel will not be able to assess your experience fairly and your application will fail. Saying 'Years of experience for a large number of clients' is not sufficient. The Panel allocates experience points on the basis of hours worked, so for freelance work please provide the number of hours spent on each job, rather than its overall duration e.g. '52 hours', rather than '2 weeks', or '5.5 hours' rather than '1 day'. The Panel applies a formula for full-time working in-house to produce the hours figure.

As a professional editor, you will have been maintaining detailed records (for HMRC purposes, for example) of your clients and the hours you have worked. The Panel needs to see this level of detail to assess your application fairly.

1. Professional recognition

If you can provide evidence of professional recognition by one of the editorial bodies listed below, you will be awarded Professional Membership without the need to provide any other evidence to the Panel.

The qualifications we recognise for this purpose are:

- Board of Editors in the Life Sciences/Editors' Association of Canada certification
- accredited editor (AE) or distinguished editor (DE) status awarded by the Institute of Professional Editors, Australia
- South African Translators' Institute accreditation in language editing.

Note that these are the only qualifications that apply for this purpose. All other relevant qualifications should be listed under Training.

Procedure

If you hold one of the above qualifications, you do not need to complete the application form or pay an upgrade fee. Simply scan your certificate and email it to the Upgrades Coordinator at the SfEP office.

2. Training

You need to have been trained in proofreading and/or copy-editing (the core skills); this might have been as an employee (in-house) or with an external training provider (or a mixture); it could be formal or informal. For Professional Membership, we expect to see detailed training in one or both of these skills.

You need a minimum of 10 point for training to upgrade to Professional Membership.

IMPORTANT: All training submitted must be fully completed. No post-dating of courses will be accepted. If you have not yet finished a course, please do not submit your application until you have done so.

In-house training

If you work or worked as an employee (in-house) for a company, please supply details of any training you have received from that company.

If you have 2–5 years of in-house editorial experience, but have no formal training, you can nevertheless show us that you have reached the required standard for Professional Membership in the core skills by taking the online [Basic Editorial Test](#) (see section 6).

Independent training

There are a number of external providers of editorial training, which vary enormously in terms of the range and depth of training they provide. The Admissions Panel rate these courses according to a points system, and some **examples** of courses can be seen in the *Training Course Examples* document, which is available in the members' area of the website. There are far more courses available than are listed in this document, so please include all training that you think might be relevant even if it is not on the list. If you gained a merit, distinction or the like, say so; this will usually help your application.

If the course is new to the Panel, they will need to spend some time assessing the course to see where it fits with other courses that we already know about, so that a fair points total can be awarded. We may also need to request further information from you or the course provider about the course. We may therefore take a little longer to assess your application, so please be patient.

Information we need

When supplying your information, please tell us:

- Who were you working for?
If it is not a well-known company, it would be helpful if you could supply more information, such as the type of publication it produces and where the office was located.
- When was this training?
Give exact dates if you can.
- Who trained you?
Please supply details of their name, if possible, along with their position within the company and any other details you think will demonstrate their competence to train you. If the training was delivered to the company by an external provider, please identify them if possible.
- What did your training cover?
For example, BSI symbols, grammar and punctuation, onscreen techniques ... please be as detailed as possible.
- What form did your training take?
For example, classroom-based course; on-the-job training.

Notes for applicants

- How long and how intensive was your training period?
For example, a one-week course; one hour a week for three weeks.

Certificates

We need to see certificates of the successful completion of all courses you are including as evidence. If you do not have a certificate, please ask the training provider to supply one. If you cannot contact the training provider, please explain this on the form (there will be space at the end for your additional information). Please scan any paper documents and supply them electronically with your application form.

You can add your certificates at the end of the application form.

PLEASE DO NOT REDACT YOUR NAME FROM ANY CERTIFICATES SUBMITTED. We need to confirm that the certificate is yours, so just scan it and submit it. All documents will be anonymised in the SfEP office before being sent to the Panel.

Delivering editorial training

Please tell us about any editorial training that you have prepared and delivered.

3. Experience

We want to see that you have experience of putting your training into practice and that you have enough experience to provide a competent service to your clients.

This experience might have been gained from working as an employee (in-house) or as a freelance (for companies, public bodies or private individuals).

For Professional Membership, you will need to have worked for at least 500 hours on copy-editing and/or proofreading (as a guide, probably 2–5 years of in-house employment, depending on what else your role involves).

In-house

We need to know what sort of work you carried out and how much of it. Please tell us:

- What company were you working for?
If it is not a well-known company, it would be helpful if you could supply more information, such as the type of publication it produces and where the office is located.
- How long did you work there?
- Did you work full time? If it was part-time work, how many hours a week?
- What sort of work did you do? Was it all proofreading and/or copy-editing or did you do other things, such as project management, picture research or applying for permissions?
- Roughly how much of your working time (as a percentage or fraction) was spent on proofreading and/or copy-editing?

If you have significant in-house experience over a number of years, you may only need to provide references and pass the editorial test to upgrade your membership. As a guide, significant experience is around 5 years of employment for PM grade.

External

A note about external experience: not all your experience of working for clients will have the same value to you. For the purposes of the application procedure, we have divided clients into two categories: publishers and non-publishers.

Publishers

In general, if you work for companies whose main product is publications or who produce a large quantity of published material as a by-product, you will be working for someone who knows what good proofreading or editing looks like and will only give you more work if you do a good job for them. This type of client also provides useful feedback to help you to improve your work and the service you offer. The company is likely to be an organisation that falls into one of these categories:

- book or journal publishers (**except** self-publishing organisations; see *Non-publishers* below)
- newspaper or magazine publishers
- market research companies who produce a large volume of reports
- government departments or quangos.

Please give us details of the work carried out for these clients. We will want to know:

- the name of the client, together with the projects completed for them
- the type of work done; we are mainly interested in proofreading and copy-editing but you can also include some project management, development editing or commissioning work (estimate what proportion of your time was spent on this other work)
- an estimate of how long was spent on each project.

Many people work for set fees rather than an hourly rate but keeping track of how long each job is taking is an important part of a professional approach to time management, efficiency and budgeting, so we want to see that you are monitoring this.

Non-publishers

Many editors and proofreaders offer their services to a wide range of clients who do not themselves have publishing experience. This is very worthwhile work and these clients are often justifiably grateful for the added value that a professional editor and/or proofreader can bring. We do, however, have to consider that this type of client may not be in a position to judge whether or not a good job has been done. Many of these projects will be one-off, so the lack of repeat work is not an indicator of a bad job. There may be very little by way of useful feedback from this sort of client.

In this category might be:

- academics (including those for whom English is not a mother tongue) preparing articles or monographs for submission to publishers
- students wanting editorial input on their essays, dissertations, theses, and so on (with their supervisor's consent)
- commercial firms engaging editorial services for their marketing materials, websites or similar
- self-publishing organisations (or individuals self-publishing their books) and 'vanity' publishers
- translation agencies.

If you want your experience of working with this category of client to be counted, you will need to provide the same sort of information about work carried out for these clients as that requested for publishing clients (above), including an estimate of time taken for projects.

If you are including work for non-publishers to meet the minimum experience requirement for Professional Membership, we will also need you to have successfully completed the Basic Editorial Test (see section 6), because of the difficulty that this category of client causes in terms of assessment, as

mentioned above. If you are not sure which of your clients qualify as 'publishers', it might be a good idea to take the test anyway. See section 6 below for further details.

4. References

For Professional Membership, we need to see one or more references from a satisfied client for whom you have worked for 50 hours or more. You will need to provide contact details of at least one referee. It will add more weight to your application if you can provide two. These should be **different clients** – not different people within the same company.

If possible, choose as a referee someone who is well qualified in our core skills of copy-editing and proofreading. An editorial professional is more suitable than, for instance, an academic journal editor.

For all referees, we need you to:

- provide contact details (including an email address) for your referee and the name of the client, with their position (for example, production editor, project manager, head of publications) at the time during which you worked for them (it does not matter if they have moved on or retired)
- list the work completed for this client, together with how long each project took; we will want to see that you have completed a significant amount of work for this client, defined as around 50 hours for upgrading to Professional Membership
- contact the referee before you apply to upgrade, to check with them that they are willing to be your referee and that they are expecting us to contact them.

We will not inconvenience your clients; please be reassured that the reference sheet we send them is a simple tick-sheet (with space for additional comments should they want to add anything) and should take them no longer than 5–10 minutes to complete.

If you are applying for Professional Membership and you want to supply a reference from a client who falls into the 'non-publisher' category described in section 3, you will also need to have passed the Basic Editorial Test (see section 6).

5. Mentoring

We will need to know about any mentoring you have undertaken.

If you have completed the SfEP Mentoring Scheme in proofreading or copy-editing, please give the date, details of your mentor and the mark awarded to you at the end of the scheme. You may be asked for your certificate.

Successful mentoring is worth up to 12 points towards upgrading. You may claim the same number of points as shown on your certificate.

Mentoring points are counted separately from training and experience points. You will still need to meet the minimum criteria for training, experience and references.

6. Editorial test

For Professional Membership, if some or all of your work is for non-publishing clients (see section 3), a pass in the Basic Editorial Test will be needed for work for these clients to count towards your minimum hours of experience.

This is a straightforward online test, which shows us that you have the necessary skills, knowledge and judgement. It is not a difficult test, but the pass mark is set high (75%).

Details of the [test syllabus](#) are available on the SfEP website.

Points awarded for basic editorial test

Score (%)	Points awarded
	Basic
95–100	12
90–94	11
85–89	10
80–84	9
75–79	8
0–74	0

7: Further information

There will be an opportunity on the form for you to give any other information that you think might add weight to your application. This could include awards received, for example. Please note:

- Only include information related to your editing and/or proofreading; information about indexing, writing (i.e. generation of original content), translating, and other related fields will be disregarded.
- Please alert the Office to anything which identifies you so that the material can be anonymised before being passed on to the Admissions Panel.