Applications for the Forms Challenged
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forward to the 2015 update:

This article was originally prepared in 2010 in response to a variety of difficulties being experienced by applicants in completing the application form in use at that time. In 2015, the application form was been updated to include the newly formalized requirement of three years of experience in a position(s) of responsibility.

Originally I wrote this article in a lighthearted fashion and attempted to toss in a little humor in an effort to keep your eyes from glazing over and possibly breaking your nose on the table. Thud! I leave it that way for the same reason some of the airlines have gone to video safety drills with substantial silliness in the background. It keeps your attention focused on the subject matter and I hope to do the same. Thank you for your attention. Lawrence M. (Larry) Austin

We have requirements and we’re sticking to them. However, what should be a relatively simple process is not and often is made more difficult as more people get involved. So, my objective here is to help both our applicants and our membership in the promotion of and assistance with the application process. I’m going to concentrate on the CPG application process although, to a great degree, the comments also apply to our other categories of membership.

First of all, let me introduce myself. I’m one of the gate keepers. My official position is that of chairperson of the National Screening Committee (NSC), a position I’ve enjoyed for several years now. I work with a team of your colleagues who are endowed with phenomenal patience and unswerving dedication. They contribute untold hours to the process. Herein I hope to lessen that load a bit.

Let’s start with Article 2.3.1 of the AIPG Bylaws:

2.3.1 Requirements to be a Certified Professional Geologist

Any person whose application for certification as a Certified Professional Geologist was received prior to May 14, 2005 and who has met the requirements for such certification as they existed on the day that such person’s application was received shall be categorized as a Certified Professional Geologist upon approval pursuant to the procedures in effect on the day prior to the date the application was received.

Beginning on May 14, 2005, the requirements for certification as a Certified Professional Geologist shall be:

1. a baccalaureate or higher degree in a geological science, and a minimum of thirty-six semester hours or fifty-four quarter hours in geological sciences as recognized and approved by the Executive Committee; and at the discretion of the Executive Committee; acceptable continuing education to demonstrate a currency with technical, regulatory, and economic factors affecting the profession, and

2. eight years or ninety-six months of experience in the practice of geology acceptable to the Executive Committee. A master’s degree in a geological science shall credit the applicant with one year or 12 months of professional experience, or a doctorate in a geological science shall credit the applicant with three years or thirty-six months of such experience. In lieu of 1 and 2 above, evidence satisfactory to the Executive Committee of the applicant’s sound knowledge and proficiency in a field of geological science may be substituted.

Applicants for Certified Professional Geologist shall affirm their adherence to applicable professional and ethical standards and shall provide acceptable references from either (1) at least three professional geologists who have personal knowledge of the applicant’s qualifications, integrity, and conduct, at least two of whom are Certified Professional Geologists, or (2) a professional society that is specifically recognized for this purpose by the Executive Committee. In extraordinary circumstances, as an alternative to all or part of the foregoing, the Executive Committee may require acceptable references from no fewer than six professional geologists who have personal knowledge of the applicant’s qualifications, integrity and conduct.

These are the requirements for CPG certification. There are somewhat different requirements for other categories of membership and the reader is referred to Articles 2.3.2 through 2.3.4 for those other requirements.

And Section 2.3.1.4,

Three years of the required experience in the practice of geology shall be in (a) position(s) of responsibility defined as one in which the individual was depended on for significant participation, management and decision making, and that the applicant is capable of scoping, supervising, and checking relevant work to ensure it meets industry standards acceptable to the Executive Committee.

Now let’s look at the process of assembling the information, filling out the forms and actually submitting an application for CPG with the expectation that it will be acceptable. The forms are available on-line in a package intended to provide the applicant with everything he/she needs to submit a complete package. They’re under “Member Forms” and available in both .PDF and MS Word formats. I’d recommend the Word format if you intend to fill it out on the computer unless you have a .PDF editor available. There’s also a flow chart if you wish to see how the process unfolds. Note to members: If you’re assisting someone in the application process, be sure to have them send you, preferably via email, whatever they have at the time the question(s) arise. Now, if you’re like me, print all 10 pages so you have something in front of you to review. Just remember, if you’re
looking over a partially completed application, destroy your copy when done to ensure confidentiality.

Very important note! The application MUST be filled out in ENGLISH! If you are not able to fill it out in English, it is your responsibility to get it translated into English before it is submitted for review!

We start on the cover page, **Section I:** Most of this is relatively straightforward personal and current employment data. We need it for purposes of contacting the applicant should any questions arise - and they do. Just let us know how and where to best contact you, the applicant. Note that if you have licensing data to report in Section V, you should be sure the name entered here matches the name on your license(s) reported there.

One item that’s a little more confusing is the “Major Fields of Geologic Practice.” For brevity we use a series of abbreviations given on the second to last page of the packet. Pick the three that best apply to what you’re doing.

Now let’s go to Page 2, **Section II,** Record of College Training. This is where you list your education so that we can compare it to the requirements of the Bylaws and the college transcripts. The applicant should list each college or university attended in order beginning with the most recent. They should include all studies, even those that did not involve geological sciences as we’ll delve into any gaps we perceive in the history. Just note on the form that the major subject was something else. Hours of geology can be provided in either Semester hours or Quarter hours but tell us which units you’re using. And do the same for post-graduate continuing education courses although here we don’t need a record of non-career related courses.

Official transcripts must be submitted for all geological sciences education and come directly from the educational institution to AIPG Headquarters as proof of your education. If your list includes non-geological educational work at a different educational institution, simply indicate on the form or submit a statement with the application that your studies at that institution did not include any applicable coursework and that a transcript is therefore not being submitted for those studies.

**Section III** concerns documenting the record of experience for the individual. On the application form we require a complete record of your work history from college onward. And yes, this includes non-geological work experience although we do not need verification of the non-geological work experience. Please double check this history for continuity in dates and make sure all relevant experience summaries are requested. And yes, we need to know if you took a six month stint as a cashier at the local grocery store one time when you were out of work. Otherwise we’ll assume you were in prison for securities fraud or some similar nonsense and you’ll end up explaining it seven ways from Monday. Save us all the grief, **BE THOROUGH!**

Experience Verification forms are extremely critical yet poorly understood. There is a portion for the applicant to fill out and a portion for the person verifying the experience to fill out. As an applicant, only fill out the part that pertains to you on Page 2 and the header, name and address on Page 1, for the person who will verify the information. When you describe your experience on Page 1, please tell us what you did in terms of geologic analysis, what tools you used (i.e. cross sections, geologic mapping, borehole logs, etc.), what documentation you created (reports, correspondence) and whether you had review/supervisory authority along with what level (technical review responsibility over report(s) (supervised a team of 2 geologists and 3 technicians), etc. We don’t need to know specifically what projects, clients or sites were involved and we don’t need your thesis or 3 reports attached as examples as we’re likely not going to read them anyway unless we have a particular interest in the subject or suspect something is amiss. Be concise. Your verifiers should review the information you provided. Is it accurate? Please note that the verifier does not have to be your immediate supervisor although we’d prefer they be if appropriate. However it should be someone who is familiar with your work and preferably has the geologic knowledge that is necessary for a qualified review. It does not have to be someone from within your employer, and often is not in the case of self-employed consultants. However, avoid using subordinates or relatives as this seriously detracts from the credibility of the verifier and likely will be rejected.

Please avoid the temptation to list all your career responsibilities on one experience form and then forward it for verification of the appropriate portion from several employers. Unless you’ve taken the time to clearly indicate who should verify what portion and advised each verifier to clearly state what portion they are verifying, it leads to confusion for both the verifiers and the reviewers. Often it results in denial of verification of at least some portion of each form by each verifier. If a screener is pressed for time at that point it may be easier to just say no and let you go back and re-do it, adding weeks or months to the review process. Again, spare all the grief. Make extra copies of the form and separate each position so that each verification is for all and only the data on that form. It may take a little more time to do it this way but it saves time for the screeners later and thus, processing time for the application.

**Section IV** requests a listing of sponsors. For CPG, two must be AIPG members and one can be another geologist who meets the criteria for a professional geologist sponsor as indicated on the sponsorship form (Baccalaureate degree or higher with 30 semester...
hours or equivalent in geological sciences and at least 5 years of post-degree experience in the practice of geology as a vocation.) This is often a major stumbling block for potential applicants. However, it's mostly because we haven't yet enacted a requirement to have AIPG branded into our foreheads. There are likely a considerable number of your colleagues that are members but don't consistently advertise it. A quick call or email to Member Services at HQ will get you a list of section members in your area and contact information. If you contact the NSC chairman, they'll try to put you in touch with anyone they know from the Institute in your general area and arrange a meeting. For the most part, we'll do whatever we can to make it easy for you to procure the appropriate sponsors.

Again, some common sense is in order when selecting sponsors. No more than two may be from the same organization at the time of submission. Please refrain from using close relatives or subordinates as these will not be acceptable. It becomes a “do over” that comes back to screeners whose attention is now focused for any little typo on your application. Don’t do it!

In Section V we ask if you’ve held any state certification, license or registration and, if so, to list them. Also, to indicate if any have been refused, revoked, suspended or otherwise acted against and, if so, to provide an explanation. How you respond to this question is extremely important. The NSC members will check up on claimed licenses, certifications or registrations. Much of this information is on-line. Proof is required for current ones. Make sure the name in Section I and the name on the licenses matches or is explained here along with the name shown on the license as it will not be found if the name is spelled different. Very important, if you’ve held a temporary work permit, be sure to list it as such as not all states list temporary permits on-line. If we check for a license and the state doesn’t have it listed, we’ll have to investigate as to why it was claimed or the application may be denied.

We ask for your legal history in Section VI. We’re not particularly interested in speeding tickets but we are interested in any crime or action related to geology, subject to investigation, injunction, fines or penalties related to consumer, investor or securities fraud or indicted or convicted of a felony. If so, be sure to add an explanation, the final judgement and why the charge(s) and judgement(s) are not pertinent to the application.

Sections V and VI relate to items AIPG considers extremely important relative to ethics. If you have any questions at all regarding these specific questions, contact us, either the current-National Screening Committee chairman or the current chairman of the Ethics Committee. We’d rather clear them up ahead of time than have to deal with sensitive questions and bruised feelings later.

Section VII asks for a list of geologic societies and organizations of which you are an active member and
Larry Austin has been involved with the practice of geology since 1975. He has been actively involved in AIPG's National Screening Committee (NSC) for many years and is the current Chairperson. He has also served two terms on the Executive Committee.