

Paralibrarian Recognition of Achievement CERTIFICATION



Revised and updated 04/14/2016

BRIEF HISTORY

In 1994, the Paraprofessional Section of the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) met with several groups of paraprofessionals to discuss the topic of a certificate of achievement program, based on that of the New York State Library Assistants' Association. After many meetings, the Section requested that a subcommittee be formed to examine the possibility of a voluntary award program. Work continued intermittently over the years as members changed and the section went through a transformation. The MLA Paraprofessional Section wishes to express its gratitude to the New York State Library Assistants' Association for their assistance and particularly to Dorothy Morgan, whose encouragement and input were invaluable.

In 2004, the newly formed and renamed MLA Paraprofessional Section began work on the program again. The focus was clearly defined as a voluntary recognition of achievement program. The program's purpose was to recognize paraprofessionals who continue to increase their job knowledge through workshops, conferences, continuing education, committee involvement, cross-training and writing.

In May of 2006, at the MLA Annual Meeting held at WPI, the first Paraprofessional Recognition of Achievement (PARA) was awarded to three paraprofessionals.

In 2012, representatives of the Paraprofessional Section of the MLA approached the Executive Board of the MLA and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) requesting that this very successful voluntary program be given approval to remain a voluntary program but as a state approved Certification.

In May of 2014 we awarded the first Massachusetts state approved PARA Certificates.

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PARA CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The PARalibrarian Recognition of Achievement Certification is a voluntary program designed to recognize the involvement and contributions of paralibrarians (library support staff), in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who continue to increase their knowledge and skill-set through participation in workshops, conferences, continuing education, committee involvement, cross-training and writing. Paralibrarians (non MLS library staff) support the mission of school, public, academic and special libraries located throughout the state by providing important support services and a professionalism and commitment to their work. It is not a substitute for a Master of Library Science degree, or any other degree or certificate. It is important to note that the terms *paralibrarian* and *library support staff* are interchangeable. PARA Certification is not a requirement for using the term. Rather, certification is an official recognition of the achievements of library support staff in the state of Massachusetts.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This program is comprised of four levels of certification based on the applicant's achievements as a paralibrarian. Each level is reached by accumulating points from among *Areas of Library Service: Youth Services, Public Services, Reference and Information Services, Technical Services, Technology, Administration /Management and General*. These points will come from one of three *Sources of Experience or Training: Employment, Education and Professional Activities*. At least half of the points required for any level must have been earned within the five years immediately preceding the application. In addition, there are maximum point allowances in each of the four levels.

PARA LEVELS

Each level requires an increased breadth of knowledge, demonstrated by earning points from among the seven *Areas of Library Service* (refer to page 8). Level I requires points from at least three areas; Level II requires points from at least four areas; Levels III and IV require points from at least five areas. Choosing to specialize in an area does not exempt the participant from showing the required breadth of knowledge.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for the highest level PARA which he/she believes can be supported through documentation of their credentials and experiences. Applicants need not start at Level 1. All points must be documented and verified to the satisfaction of the PARA Review Board.

REGISTRATION and FEES

A completed Form A Registration/Application, a non-refundable registration fee made payable to the Massachusetts Library Association, completed Forms C, D and E, and all supporting documentation/materials must be sent together in a notebook or portfolio.

MLA member \$20.00

Non-MLA member \$50.00

APPLYING FOR A HIGHER LEVEL

To apply for a higher level, the applicant must submit a new Form A and pay the registration fee. In addition to the forms and documentation being submitted for the higher level, the following documents must be included: a copy of the previously earned PARalibrarian Recognition of Achievement Notification or Certificate, a copy of the corresponding *PARA Point Summary* and a copy of the *PARA Master Tally*.

Points in excess of the minimum required for the level applying for cannot be applied to the next higher level.

PARA REVIEW BOARD

The PARA Review Board consists of at least three members of the MLA Paralibrarian Section, one of whom is the Chair of the Career Development Committee. The PARA Review Board meets as necessary, but at least semi-annually, to review submissions and to conduct business related to PARA Review Board matters. Members of the PARA Review Board are available to answer any questions about the program.

For a list of current PARA Review Board members, go to <http://www.masslib.org/paralibrarian>

The PARA Review Board will exercise discretion with regards to the awarding or denying of points. This discretionary power will be used in good faith. All decisions will be made for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the PARA Certification Program.

APPLICATION REVIEW

The PARA Review Board will meet to review applications. Once the Board approves an application, it will be sent to the MLA Executive Board and the MBLC for approval and signatures. The applicant will be notified by the PARA Review Board, in writing, of the status of their application.

Approved applicants will be issued a *PARalibrarian Recognition of Achievement Certificate* signed by the current chairs or a designee of the MLA Paralibrarian Section, the PARA Review Board, the MLA Executive Board and the Commissioner of the MBLC. Recipients will be recognized at the MLA Annual Conference.

APPEALS

A candidate may appeal the decision to the PARA Review Board in writing within 10 business days of the decision. No new information may be submitted during the appeal process. Appeals may only address the issues identified in the letter of denial. The PARA Review Board will review its decision and provide the candidate a final decision in writing. All decisions of the PARA Review Board are final.

AMENDMENTS

Recommendations for amendments or revisions to the PARA program should be submitted to the PARA Review Board. Recommendations for change must be approved by the Executive Board of the MLA Paralibrarian Section.

ASSEMBLING YOUR NOTEBOOK/PORTFOLIO FOR SUBMISSION

The process of putting together a PARA Certification notebook/portfolio involves gathering and assembling documentation of employment, education, and professional training and related activities to meet the requirements of one of four PARA Levels, as outlined on page 9. Using the charts and information provided in this program guide, determine point values for your employment, education and professional activities. In addition, you will need to determine under which *Area of Library Service* each of the training/activity falls.

A notebook or portfolio containing all paperwork is required. Loose pages submitted in a folder or envelope will not be accepted.

Refer to the following outline when preparing your documentation:

1. Determine the *Source of Experience or Training* (refer to pages 4-5)
 - a. Experience (Form B)
 - b. Education (Form C)
 - c. Professional training/activity (Form D)
2. Refer to the *Guidelines for Points* to determine point value (refer to page 7)
 - a. Experience (Form B)
 - > attach letter from Director/Supervisor
 - > points in excess of the maximum allowed for the level you are applying for cannot be held over or resubmitted for a higher level. List only those months/years of employment for which you are able to use the points.
 - b. Education (Form C)
 - > attach copy of diploma, certificate or transcript
 - c. Professional Activity (Form D)
 - > assign points to one of the five *Areas of Library Service*
 - > in lieu of a signature of verification, attach a certificate of attendance
 - > A signature by the speaker/sponsor of the event is not enough proof of attendance. You must include the program description showing location, speaker's name, date/time, notes or handouts, email confirming registration and attendance, or the like.



SOURCES OF EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION or TRAINING

>>> EMPLOYMENT (requires a **FORM B** and a letter of verification)

Points for employment are based on Full Time Equivalency (FTE) as defined by your institution for paid employment, internship or volunteer work. Work in media centers, special libraries, and other areas may be considered.

Verification of both the number of hours per week worked and the length of time at that rate must be provided. A letter from each employer must be included, which fully verifies the employment. Points are granted for time on the job and do not consider the level of difficulty of the position.

Points in excess of the maximum allowed for the level you are applying for cannot be held over or resubmitted for a higher level. Only include months/years of employment on Form B for which you are able to use the points.

>>> EDUCATION (requires a **FORM C** and additional documentation)

Points are awarded for degrees from an accredited college or university. These may include a non-MLS graduate degree, Bachelor's degree, or Associates degree, verified by a copy of the transcript, diploma or official statement from the institution. In addition, points may be awarded for a professional certificate provided ample documentation of the scope of the requirements for the certificate are provided, along with a copy of the certificate.

If an applicant received points for an Associate's Degree and in a subsequent application for the next PARA level, requests points for a Bachelor's degree, the total points earned will be 50; 25 for Associates and 25 for Bachelor's. Likewise, if an applicant received points for a Bachelor's Degree and in a subsequent application for the next PARA level, requests points for a non-MLS Master's degree, the total points earned will be 60; 50 for the Bachelor's and 10 for the Master's Degree.

>>> PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (requires a separate **FORM D** and additional documentation)

This category includes participation in workshops and programs, experience gained from special projects and assignments, college courses taken for non-credit, and other experiences that broaden the participant's skills and knowledge as outlined below. If the topic is not of a library related nature, participant must give a clear explanation of how or why this contributes to their skill set for library work.

All points requested on each Form D must be assigned to the appropriate *Area of Library Service* (refer to page 8) and must be accompanied by a certificate of attendance/completion or a signature verifying attendance/completion on Form D. A signature by the speaker/sponsor of the event is not enough proof of attendance. You must include the program description showing location, speaker's name, date/time, notes or handouts, email confirming registration and attendance, or the like. Applicant is expected to briefly summarize, on Form D, the training topic and value of the training as it relates to their work as a paraprofessional.

The following is a list, with examples, of the main types of professional activities from which points may be requested. It is up to the applicant to determine the appropriate activity type and provide adequate documentation/explanation in order to be awarded the points requested.

A. Library related workshop/program/webinar

Instructional programs which bring library workers together for training and for which academic credit is not offered.

B. Conferences

Applicant may request points for *each session* attended at a conference and/or may request points for attending the conference exhibit hall.

C. Basic Library Techniques (BLT) courses

Four courses offered through the Massachusetts Library System and required by the MBLC for certain non-MLS degreed Library Directors, but also available to library support staff as space allows.

D. College courses

College courses, either in person or online, taken in a non-matriculating capacity which are not part of a degree program. A copy of the course description and/or syllabus and final grade statement/proof of completion must be submitted. Undergraduate and graduate level courses qualify for different point values.

E. Non-credit/Adult Ed./Short Courses

Non-credit instructional programs or learning activities offered through adult and continuing education departments, online learning venues and similar learning events. A copy of the course or program description including number of hours, proof of attendance/completion, and a statement of learning must be submitted.

F. Membership in a Library Association

Points will be granted for each year of paid membership in a library association. Verification of membership is required.

G. Officer/Director/President/Chairperson etc.

Points will be granted for positions held in a library related organization. Proof/verification must be supplied.

H. Meeting attendance

Points may be granted for attending library related meetings, excluding regular/mandatory in-house staff meetings. If applicant requested points for holding an office/position in an organization, points will not be awarded for individual meeting attendance as it is customary that meeting attendance is a requirement of holding that office/position.

I. Merit/Performance /Scholarship Awards

Applicant may request points for Merit/Performance Awards which are given to recognize exemplary service and/or performance beyond the basic requirements of an employee's job description. Verification of a Merit/Performance Award is required.

J. Publications (print, e-publications, online magazines and blogs)

Points may be claimed for an article or review published in a recognized information, library or media publication, print or electronic, or for blog posts. Length and breadth of article determines point value. Points may be claimed only for the first publication of the article. Verification must include a copy of the published piece showing publication name and date.

OTHER LEARNING/TEACHING/PARTICIPATION EXPERIENCES (requires a separate **FORM E** for each)

Form E is used for events which do not easily fit into one of the ten types of professional activities listed above and for which a Form D is used. Generally, Form E is used when the applicant is the program designer, speaker, author of an article, rather than a student, participant or audience member.

For each Form E submitted, you must attach a typed narrative describing the event/training/presentation, your involvement and how it relates to your present position or career development goals. Also explain how you determined the number of points you are requesting.

You must also obtain the signature of your director/supervisor or whomever can verify your involvement with the event.

A. Presentations and Teaching

Credit may be given for first time presentations, exhibits or teaching in library, media-related or educational programs, conferences and workshops. Credit may not be claimed for events which are part of your regularly required duties. For repeat presentations, the subject matter presented requires proof of additional study, research or preparation. Documentation should include a copy of visuals created or articles written. Verification that the class or workshop was held must be included.

B. Grant writing

If you have written a grant proposal and submitted it for consideration, a copy of the grant should be included along with Form E and your narrative. It is not necessary that your grant proposal was approved in order to request points.

B. Uncategorized

For use when an activity or experience doesn't clearly fit into one of the two examples above. You must include a detailed narrative of the event/training/experience explaining your role in the event and how it relates to your current job or career goals. Verification may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following: a letter of commendation, a letter of corroboration, samples of work produced, an explanation of tasks performed, copies of flyers and publicity, and newspaper or magazine clippings.



GUIDELINES FOR POINTS

SOURCE OF EXPERIENCE/EDUCATION/TRAINING	UNIT OF MEASURE	POINTS
LIBRARY EMPLOYMENT Form B	For each 12 months	60
EDUCATION Form C	Non-MLS graduate degree	60/10
	Bachelor's degree	50/25
	Associates degree	25
	Professional certificate	20
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES Form D		
A. Library related workshop/program/webinar	per hour	5
B. Conference Sessions	per session or exhibit hall	4
C. Basic Library Techniques (BLT) courses	per course	25
D. College Courses	per credit or CEU undergraduate level	5
	per credit or CEU graduate level	6
E. Non-credit/Adult Ed/ short courses	per course	5
F. Membership in Library Association	per year of membership	4
G. Officer/Director/President/Chairperson...	per year in office	15
H. Meeting attendance	per hour	2
I. Merit/Performance Award	1 award nomination	5
	1 award	10
J. Publications	Short article/blog/review	5
	Full length article	10
OTHER LEARNING/TEACHING/PARTICIPATION Form E		
A. Presentation and/or Teaching	Based on written narrative and documentation provided	5-25
B. Grant writing	Based on written narrative and documentation provided	5-25
C. Uncategorized	Based on written narrative and documentation provided	5-25

AREAS OF LIBRARY SERVICE

Each participant must demonstrate knowledge of library skills in up to SEVEN service areas. These lists are not all-inclusive but serve to demonstrate the types of knowledge and skill that are considered appropriate for each type of library service.

YOUTH SERVICES

Youth Services	Programs and Activities	Collection Development
Young Adult Services	School/Community Outreach	Stacks Maintenance
Readers' Advisory	Information Literacy	

ADULT SERVICES

Readers' Advisory	Stacks maintenance	Community Outreach
Programs and Activities	Collection Development	Book Talks
Customer Service	Circulation Policy	

REFERENCE and INFORMATION SERVICES

Interlibrary Loan	Database Use/Access	Online Learning Resources
Government Documents	Genealogy/Special Collections	Community Resources
Local History	Medical/Legal Assistance	Copyright Law

TECHNICAL SERVICES

MARC/RDA	Metadata	Processing	Bindery
Microfilm/microfiche	Preservation	Acquisitions	BISAC
Digitization	Periodicals/Serials		

TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technologies	Word/Publisher/Excel	Power Point/Multimedia	Networking
Web Design	Systems analysis	Library automation	Data Security
Tech Troubleshooting	Social Media	Digital Media	

ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT

Accounting/Recordkeeping	Staff/volunteer supervision	ADA Compliance
Fund-raising	Staff/Volunteer Training	Public Safety/Patron Privacy
Library Marketing	Library Policy	Emergency/disaster planning
Public Relations	Long Range Planning	Committee membership

GENERAL

Public speaking	Technical writing	Book review/Short Article
Research Article	Conference Attendance	Merit/Performance Award
Inventory/ordering	Association membership	

SUMMARY OF PARA LEVELS AND REQUIREMENTS

	1 st time applicant	continuing applicant
PARA Level 1	100 points maximum in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i>	
200 points	Applicant must have points in at least three of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>	N/A
PARA Level 2	175 points maximum in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i>	PARA Level 1 plus 150 additional points
350 points	Applicant must have points in at least four of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>	of which 75 points maximum will be allowed in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i> Applicant must have points in at least four of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>
PARA Level 3	300 points maximum in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i>	PARA Level 2 plus 250 additional points
600 points	Applicant must have points in at least five of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>	of which 125 points maximum will be allowed in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i> Applicant must have points in at least five of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>
PARA Level 4	500 points maximum in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i>	PARA Level 3 plus 400 additional points
1000 points	Applicant must have points in at least five of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>	of which 200 points maximum will be allowed in any one <i>Source of Experience/Education/Training</i> Applicant must have points in at least five of the seven <i>Areas of Library Service</i>

*****At least half of all points earned in a level must be from the previous 5 years.**





**MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION-PARA CERTIFICATION
FORM A - REGISTRATION/APPLICATION**

Please print legibly in ink or type. Fill out completely.

Name _____

Title/position: _____

Library/Institution: _____

Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Ext: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Type of Library: Academic _____ Public _____ School _____ Special _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I am applying for: PARA Level 1 _____ PARA Level 2 _____ PARA Level 3 _____ PARA Level 4 _____

_____ Yes, I would like my Library Director or immediate supervisor to be notified that I am receiving a PARalibrarian Recognition of Achievement Certification.

Library Director's Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ No, I would not like my Library Director to be notified.

_____ I am a member of MLA. I have enclosed my \$20.00 registration fee.

_____ I am not a member of MLA. I have enclosed my \$50.00 registration fee.

Please make check payable to the Massachusetts Library Association and mail notebook/portfolio and check to:

MLA PARA Program
c/o Karen Horn
Sturgis Library
PO Box 606 3090 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630



MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION - PARA Level ____

FORM B – REQUEST FOR EXPERIENCE POINTS

NOTE: A separate form is required for each 2 years of full-time or 1 year of part time employment for which you are requesting points.

A letter of verification must accompany this document.

Name: _____

Job title or position (at time of this employment) _____

Place of this employment: _____

If employed **full time** based on your library’s definition of full time, please use this formula for each year employed:

I worked ____ months during the year 20____ x 5 pts/month = _____ pts

I worked ____ months during the year 20____ x 5 pts/month = _____ pts

Therefore I have earned ____ points for full time employment.

Use the following formula to determine your points **if employed part time** based on FTE (full time equivalency).

I worked (a) ____ hours per week in 20____

(b) ____ hours per week is considered full time at my library.

So..... (a) ____ divided by (b) ____ = (c) ____ % of FTE.

FTE earns 60 points per year and (c) ____ % of 60 = (d) ____

Total points requested (on this form): _____

*** Please refer to the chart on page 9 to be sure that you are within the limits allowed for the PARA level for which you are applying.

Points in excess of the maximum allowed for the level for which you are applying cannot be held over or resubmitted for a higher level.

Only include months/years of employment for which you are able to use the points.

Approved _____ Needs Clarification _____ Denied _____

PARA REVIEW BOARD MEMBER: _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____



MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION - PARA Level ____

FORM C – REQUEST FOR EDUCATION POINTS

NOTE: A separate form is required for each degree or professional certificate and requires that verification/documentation be included.

NAME: _____

Non-MLS/MLIS graduate degree 60 pts _____

Non-MLS/MLIS graduate Degree 10 pts _____

(if points were previously awarded for a Bachelor's Degree)

Bachelor's Degree 50 pts _____

Bachelor's Degree 25 pts _____

(if points were previously awarded for an Associate's Degree)

Associate's degree 25 pts _____

Professional certificate 20 pts _____

Type of verification attached (copies only, no originals please)

Diploma _____

Transcript _____

Certificate _____

Approved _____ Needs Clarification _____ Denied _____

PARA REVIEW BOARD MEMBER: _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____



MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION - PARA Level ____

FORM D – REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES POINTS

NOTE: A separate form is required for each activity/training.

A signature by the speaker/sponsor of the event is not enough proof of attendance. You must include the program description showing location, speaker's name, date and time, notes or handouts, email confirming registration and attendance, or the like.

EVENT/ACTIVITY: _____ Date: _____

Sponsor/presenter: _____ # of hours: _____

Type of Professional Activity (refer to pages 4-5): _____

Please indicate the number of points you are requesting in the appropriate Area of Library Service (refer to page 9)

Justification of the number of points must be clearly indicated in the supporting documentation.

_____ Youth Services	_____ Technical Services	_____ General
_____ Adult Services	_____ Technology	
_____ Reference Services	_____ Administration/Management	

VERIFICATION/DOCUMENTATION: to be filled in by the event coordinator/presenter or your Director/Supervisor. Or attach your certificate of attendance.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Library/Institution/Organization: _____

Contact info: _____

Signature: _____

**** REQUIRED: summarize the event or topic and explain how it relates to your present position or career development**

Approved _____ Needs Clarification _____ Denied _____

PARA REVIEW BOARD MEMBER: _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____



MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION - PARA Level ____
FORM E – NARRATIVE STATEMENT

NOTE: A separate form is required for each request.
You must include the signature of your director/supervisor or whomever can verify your involvement with the event, your typed narrative or explanation and any supporting documents.

EVENT/ACTIVITY: _____ Date: _____

Sponsor/Location: _____ # of hours: _____

Please indicate the number of points you are requesting in the appropriate Area of Library Service.
Justification of the number of points must be clearly indicated in the supporting documentation and narrative.

_____ Youth Services _____ Technical Services _____ General
_____ Adult Services _____ Technology
_____ Reference Services _____ Administration/Management

LIST DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED: _____

VERIFICATION: to be filled in by your director/supervisor.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Library/Institution/Organization: _____

Contact info: _____

Signature: _____

*** Please attach a typed narrative describing the event/training/presentation, your involvement and how it relates to your present position or career development goals. Also explain how you determined the number of points you are requesting. A copy of your program description showing location, date and time, sponsor, presentation notes/agenda, copy of power point, flyers or promotional materials, copy of article/blog or similar documentation is required.

Approved _____ Needs Clarification _____ Denied _____

PARA REVIEW BOARD MEMBER: _____ Date: _____

Comments: _____



PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (list each Form D and include dates)	Youth Services	Adult Services	Reference Services	Technical Services	Tech.	Admin Mgmt.	General	POINTS APPROVED	BOARD INITIALS
Totals for this page:									
Totals from previous page:									

TOTAL POINTS REQUIRED FOR LEVEL ____ **	TOTAL EXPERIENCE POINTS THIS LEVEL	TOTAL EDUCATION POINTS THIS LEVEL	TOTAL PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES POINTS THIS LEVEL							GRAND TOTAL (# must be equal to or more than # entered in column 1)

**** REFER TO CHART ON PAGE ____ FOR LEVEL REQUIREMENTS**



MLA PARALIBRARIAN SECTION

PARA Level ___ **Checklist**

NAME _____

Please keep for your records

	Completed
Form A Registration/Application completely filled in	
check written out to MLA for registration fee and attached to Form A	
Form B Request for Experience -- one form for each 1 or 2 years of employment	
Letter of verification attached to each Form B	
Form C Request for Education (if applicable) completely filled in	
copy of diploma/certification attached	
Form D Request for Professional Activities – one for each request	
selected Area of Library Service contains # of points requested on each Form D	
signature of verification or Certificate of Attendance included for each Form D	
short narrative included on each Form D	
Form E NARRATIVE Statement (when applicable) – one for each request	
selected Area of Library Service contains # of points requested on each Form E	
list of documentation provided for each Form E	
listed documentation attached to each Form E	
signature of verification included on each Form E	
typed narrative attached to each Form E	
PARA Point Summary completely filled in including correct number of points	
PARA Point Master Tally (from previously earned PARA) copy included	
Prior PARA Notification/Certification (if applicable) copy included	
Prior PARA Point Summary (if applicable) copy included	