

## PARA CERTIFICATION FAQs

The following list of FAQs was compiled from questions asked by PARA applicants in preparing their documentation and notebook for submission. Please read through them before contacting a member of the review board with your question as it may already be answered here.

Before starting to assemble your documentation, please read and understand the entire contents of the Guidelines. Part of the process of applying for this professional certification is the ability to read, understand and follow these Guidelines. Please pay careful attention to point limits, level requirements, documentation expectations, and accuracy of your information on all of your forms.

1. Are town timecards or time sheets with workshop names and hours listed and acceptable verification? **Yes, as long as it clearly shows the workshop title and your attendance at it and was compiled by your director, supervisor, HR, administrator and not yourself.**
2. Are workshop handouts acceptable forms of documentation? **Handouts alone are not sufficient proof of attendance. Likewise, an email confirming registration is not adequate.**
3. How do I document prior membership in a library association? **An email or receipt of payment would be adequate. Most organizations are willing to send an email that lists your past years of memberships.**
4. I do displays in our library, which is completely voluntary. Can I submit a form D for this? **No, this does not fit the intended types of professional activities suited for inclusion. We are looking for evidence of continuing education, attendance at workshops, or other avenues for increasing one's library skills toolbox.**
5. A few of our staff have gotten together to work on our documentation in preparation for submitting our application and notebook. Can we count these meetings? **No, these would not be approved for points toward certification. But we love that staff are working together on this.**
6. Are you still conducting classes for certification as a paralibrarian? **We do not conduct classes. We do offer mentoring assistance for putting together a portfolio/notebook for submission. We also host Roundtables and Q and A sessions throughout the year. If this is something you would be interested in, please contact one of the Review Board members.**
7. Is it true that only workshops and other professional development events from the past 5 years qualify for points? **No, that is not correct. As stated in the Guidelines under *Certification Overview*..... "**at least half of the points** required for any level must be from Education, Employment or Professional Activities **within the five years** immediately preceding the application.**
8. Each time I submit documentation for another level, do I need to have all the different areas of library service? For instance, for level 2, I need 4 areas and for level 3, 5 areas. Does that mean I need to have one *additional* area for level 3, or do I need to submit points in *all five* areas for level 3? **You would need to satisfy the level requirement for the total number of Areas of Library Service. So in this case, you would need to show points in 5 areas.**

9. It has been suggested that I submit more points than I need for the level I am applying for, in case some are disallowed at review time. If those “extra” points aren’t needed, can they then be used when applying for the next level? *When you put your portfolio of documentation together, we expect you to have adequate points for the level you are applying for. Going over the required number of points by a little is encouraged. Our process as a Review Board is to take what you submit, as is, with the expectation that you have followed the guidelines and requirements carefully. We don't have the time it would require to figure out which points you can or should use. You have the option of including a few extra Form Ds or Es with documentation at the back of the notebook, apart from the actual portfolio. In the event you fall short of the required number of points because some were denied we would use the extras. When we say extra points can't be resubmitted, we are referring to those you included with the actual Level application.*

10. Do I need to submit my job description with my binder of documents? *It is not required but we certainly encourage you to do so as it can be helpful during the review process. .*

11. I write a monthly blog post for a book group I run that is part of my workday , though it is outside my department. If I want to submit this for points, do I need to print out all the posts, or is providing a link sufficient? Also, how many points is something like that worth? Does it have to do with the length of the post, and/or how much time I spent researching and writing it? *Because this is part of your workday, regardless of which department it falls under, this would not qualify for points toward your PARA.*

12. If something is worth 10 points per year and I’ve done it for 1 ½ years, is that worth 15 points, or 10 points (because I haven’t hit 2 years yet)? *You can certainly request points for a partial year, so in this case, yes, you would request 15 points.*

13. How is the Area of Service determined? Can the applicant make that call? Sometimes things have components of more than one area. *It is up to the applicant to decide which **one Area of Library Service** to apply points. Be sure your documentation and explanation clearly indicates the reason for your choice, in the event there might be a question. Occasionally, we have moved points from the Area the applicant chose to one that seems more appropriate to the Review Board. That said, we would not do this if it causes the applicant to be short an Area, provided the explanation clearly shows why that particular area was chosen by the applicant.*

14. If my library has an institutional MLA membership. Do I still need to purchase a membership for myself? *No. However, you would need to show documentation of membership for your library.*

15. I've attended countless workshops and conferences. How do I provide documentation of attendance, especially for workshops? *Most consortiums keep a record of attendance for all the workshops they offer, so you could inquire of them for proof of attendance. For proof of attendance at a conference, a copy of your registration and a letter from your director stating you attended would suffice. After you have written up a brief narrative or summary of the session, have your director or department head sign and verify the Form D, **one for each session** at the conference.*

16. I understand that extra employment points that I include in an application cannot be transferred to the next level. Is that also the case for the Professional Activities points. **That is correct. Only include months and years of employment for which you need and use the points toward your current PARA Level. See the answer to question 7 above for the rest of your inquiry about extra points.**

17. At the workshop, it sounded like I would be able to use the blog I write for points. I've written many posts and don't want to print them all out—I printed the most recent one and it was 6 pages, so I'd rather not waste that much paper! Is it OK if I submit the link to past posts? **Yes and no would be the answer to being able to use Blog posts for points. Firstly, it will require using a Form E, which requires a thorough narrative of explanation. The points wouldn't be for each post but for the process of setting up the blog and getting it "out there" so to speak. That said, there is a 25 point maximum for any Form E submission. Including a print copy of one post is certainly adequate and yes, please include the link for the blog itself.**

18. Is there a limit on the number of points you can get from any one activity? I know that on Form E activities the maximum is 25 points, but what about Form D activities? There's no stated limit in the guidelines. **The *Guidelines for Points* chart shows points per hour, course, meeting, article etc. So your points requested will be based on the number of hours of the event, workshop, or training as shown on your Form D..**

19. In November 2016, I attended a Children's Literature of New England symposium. There were several sessions/lectures, all based on the overall theme of the symposium. Do I have to fill out a separate form for each session, since in many ways each author covered the same topic? I think there were 11 or 12 sessions total. **Yes, each would require a separate Form D. Again, please refer to the Guidelines. Depending on the total number of points you have documented thus far, and the total number you need for this next level, you could select a few of the best sessions to include.**

20. Do you have any suggestions on how to assign point values to grant writing? I'm inclined to base it on the complexity of the grant, but realize this is a bit subjective. Any insight is appreciated. **Yes, complexity is subjective, but the hours spent working on the grant application is quantifiable, though you need documentation to verify time spent and meetings attended. An attached copy of the grant application you submitted is helpful to let the PARA Review Board assess the complexity. Also, your statement should include an overview of the time spent, the time involved or consulted during the process, as well as how it applies to your current job, and whether the grant was awarded. Assign a number of points that you believe is appropriate, and based on your narrative and documentation, the Review Board may approve, deny or modify the number of points you have requested. Also, remember that there is a 25 point limit.**