

# **The Vanguard Certification and Proficiency Examinations**

**Syllabus**

# Introduction to the Vanguard Proficiency and Certification Program

In most fields that deal with human behavior, legal standards exist to govern professionals and protect the interests of clients. In the professional practice of handwriting analysis, however, there is no licensing, no regulations, no formal means to ensure the ethical behavior of its practitioners.

In the absence of state or federal licensing, the unsuspecting public needs a reliable way to distinguish between the specialist who has spent years building a solid foundation through education, research, and experience, and the unscrupulous con artist who reads a book and subsequently sets up a website touting himself as an expert.

Currently, the most effective means by which to make this distinction is proficiency testing and certification by an unbiased panel of judges who are not tied to a particular course of study or organization.

Such a program has been developed by a team of highly skilled and experienced handwriting and mental health professionals who have set competency standards for the field.

In reality, under present circumstances, only those who wish to be regulated will be, but if graphology is to achieve recognition as a serious profession, ethical practitioners must shoulder the responsibility of policing themselves.

An advanced testing program has been developed under the auspices of The Vanguard and is available to all persons engaged in the practice of handwriting analysis who are willing to put themselves to the test. Challenged to cultivate and hone their analytical abilities and competencies, these professionals are able to demonstrate mastery of the academic fundamentals demanded by their discipline. Equally important, their clients are afforded a high degree of confidence in their abilities.

## What is The Vanguard?

**T**he *Vanguard* was born in 1992 as a newsletter offered to professional members of the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation. Shortly thereafter, the newsletter became a private enterprise that has continued to be edited and published quarterly by Sheila Lowe.

With the burgeoning interest in graphology around the world and the ready availability of information through the Internet, in the mid-1990s, a listserv—the Vanguard2 Forum Online—was created. In the twenty-first century *The Vanguard* continues as a newsletter, but it has grown into far more than just a quarterly publication.

The Vanguard2 Forum Online operates independently of the newsletter, but holds the same goals—to elevate the profile of handwriting analysis in the professional world. The listserv has grown into an international network of hundreds of handwriting professionals and serious students, many of whom are actively pursuing a career in handwriting analysis.

Administrators of the Vanguard Proficiency and Certification Program are committed to raising professional standards for the field, and because the Vanguard operates as an arm of a private practice, it is able to remain independent of the political wrangling often found in membership organizations.

## Testing

**T**he Vanguard examinations provide a benchmark by which to gauge the applicant's skills in various areas of expertise. Although proficiency and certification testing is strictly voluntary, successful completion of a rigorous examination is a satisfying reward for years of dedicated study and practice.

The Certification examination comprises three tests: forced choice, true/false, and short essay questions covering graphology, psychology, and ethics. The applicant is also required to submit a handwriting analysis that was professionally prepared for a client, along with graphological justifications.

An alternative for those who are not sure they are ready, or who do not yet qualify for certification, is the Proficiency examination, which is the graphology segment. Successful applicants will be awarded with a Certificate of Proficiency (*this is not certification*). If the applicant later applies for certification, the portion of the fee already paid for the Proficiency examination will be applied to the full Certification examination.

Note: applicants are neither required to be a member of the network nor a subscriber to the Vanguard newsletter to avail themselves of this opportunity. It is open to all.

## Entrance Requirements

**E**ntry is open to handwriting analysts of any school of study. No particular course or organization membership is required or excluded. The Proficiency examination is open to anyone who wishes to apply.

Applicants for the Certification examination must meet a minimum education requirement (see below for details). Evidence of completion of course work for your application may be obtained by certificate or letter of recommendation from the instructor or school. If the applicant has self-studied only, a reading list will be required. A Recommended Reading List of graphology and psychology texts is included with the Syllabus.

## Examination Procedure and Results

- ☆ Tests are graded blind. In order to maintain strict impartiality, identifying information is redacted by the administrator before tests are distributed to the panel of examiners, which ensures that they remain unaware of whose work they are grading.
- ☆ Test results will be returned to the applicant within eight weeks of receipt of materials.
- ☆ The successful Proficiency examination applicant will receive a Certificate of Proficiency.
- ☆ Applicants who successfully complete all three examinations will be awarded certification and the designation, “Board Certified Handwriting Professional” (BCHP).

## The Program

- ☆ Examinations are undertaken at home.
- ☆ All test materials are to be held confidential and not shared.
- ☆ Open book is permitted, but tests are to be completed without assistance from any other person.
- ☆ A signed affidavit of confidentiality is to be submitted with the application. Any breach will result in cancellation of the certification application with no refund of fees.
- ☆ In most cases applications and examinations are to be completed and submitted by email (U.S. mail in special cases only).
- ☆ Vanguard certification is valid for five years and may be renewed by submitting proof of continuing education and experience in the form of attendance at conferences and seminars, publications, etc.

## The Proficiency & Certification Examination Program

### I. Proficiency Examination - *Principles of Handwriting Analysis*

**T**he Proficiency Examination is open to handwriting analysts at all levels of expertise. The primary objective is to evaluate the candidate's knowledge of graphological principles and theory.

The Examination is sent to the applicant in a PDF form that may be completed online or printed out. It comprises the graphology segment only of the certification examination and consists of essay, forced choice, and true/false questions.

The completed examination is to be returned by email within 60 days unless otherwise arranged in advance (an extension may be granted at the discretion of the administrator).

Those who achieve a passing score will receive a Certificate of Proficiency, which counts toward certification requirements for those who desire to apply for certification at a later date.

The Proficiency Examination applicant is required to:

- *Complete the application and affidavit*
- *Submit a sample of their own handwriting*
- *Pay the appropriate fee*

## II. Board Certified Handwriting Professional (BCHP) *Advanced Examination of Graphological and Psychological Theory, Practice, and Ethics*

The purpose of the advanced Certification examination is to establish a standard of excellence for handwriting professionals currently in practice. The examinations are sent to the applicant in a PDF form that may be completed online or printed out, and is made up of three tests: graphology, psychology, and ethics. Only those with outstanding knowledge, experience, and skills should expect to attain the BCHP designation.

The successful candidate will have earned at least a baccalaureate degree and demonstrate an accurate understanding of personality based on knowledge of normal and abnormal psychology, and graphology. The Ethics examination is an important part of the process and must be passed with the highest marks.

The completed examination is to be returned by email within 180 days unless otherwise arranged in advance (an extension may be granted at the discretion of the administrator).

The Certification Examination applicant is required to:

- *Complete the application and affidavit*
- *Submit a sample of their own handwriting*
- *Submit a handwriting analysis report with graphological justifications, that was professionally prepared for a client*
- *Pay the appropriate fee*

## Steps To Qualifying for Certification:

- *Submit application by email. If experience and education meet qualifying standards:*
- *Submit a current analysis along with the handwriting sample. The analysis should be representative of a professionally prepared report, such as a compatibility analysis, a vocational analysis, an employment analysis, etc., and be an example of your best work.*
- *If the analysis meets the qualifying requirements, the applicant will receive by email (and on a CD) three tests. The questions comprise a blend of psychology, graphology, and ethics.*

An applicant who does not pass any part of the examination will have the opportunity to re-take the part in which s/he was unsuccessful within one year at no additional cost.

Should an applicant fail to meet the qualifications for certification, he or she will be offered the opportunity to take the Proficiency examination instead. If they decline, their fee will be refunded less \$75, which will be retained for the cost of processing the application.

Acceptable minimum education for the Certification Examination includes a sound foundation of knowledge in the following areas:

### A. Graphology

- *Movement*
- *Zones (expansion/contraction, size, connectedness/disconnectedness, trend)*
- *Pressure (normal, directional, displaced, variable, pastosity/sharpness)*
- *Speed*
- *Form*
- *Stroke — (types of strokes)*
- *Connective forms (garland, arcade, thread, minor types)*
- *Form (simplified/embellished, copybook, persona, printed)*
- *Capitals, PPI, signatures*

- *Space*
- *Margins*
- *Alignment (baseline, line direction, organization, regularity/irregularity)*
- *Form Level*
- *Gestalt*
- *Guiding Image*
- *Confirming/Conflicting Indicators*
- *Order of Dominance*
- *Extremes*

## B. Psychology

- *Introduction to psychology*
- *Developmental psychology*
- *Personality development*
- *Normal psychology*
- *Abnormal psychology*
- *Working knowledge of terminology and personality disorders*

## C. Ethics

- *Moral issues faced by the handwriting professional.*
- *Mentor Program - those who achieve the BCHP designation are requested to volunteer as mentors for up to one hour per month for one year. No more than one mentee will be assigned to a mentor during any calendar year. Mentors will be matched with mentees by the administrator.*

## Continuing Education

**B**CHP's are expected to submit documentation of continuing education credits for renewal of certification at five year intervals. Such credits may be earned by, but not limited to: reading and submitting publication summaries, mentorship, attending meetings and conferences, and research projects.

## Recommended Reading

### Psychology

American Psychiatric Association: *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, (current edition); Washington, D.C.

Ewen, Robert B.; *Introduction to Theories of Personality Fourth Edition*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates, Publishers, 1993

A current text dealing with Introductory Psychology

A current text dealing with Abnormal Psychology

A current text dealing with Developmental Psychology

Butcher, James N., Susan Minetka, Jill M. Hooley: *Abnormal Psychology, 14th Edition*; Allyn & Bacon, 2009

(Texts may be obtained from local university or library or Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, for example)

### Graphology

Amend, Karen & Mary Ruiz - *Handwriting Analysis, the Complete Basic Book*; Newcastle Publishing, N. Hollywood, CA; 1980

Bar-Av, Ze'ev, Ph.D. and Sheila Lowe - *Psychology & Handwriting*, a series of print lectures; 2010

- Dosch, Esther - *Graphology of the Stroke*; International Graphological Colloquium; 2004
- Farmer, Jeanette - *The Theory of Contraction and Release in Handwriting*; self-published monograph, Denver, CO; 1990
- Klein, Felix - *Gestalt Graphology*, iUniverse; Bloomington, IN; 2007
- Lowe, Sheila - *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Handwriting Analysis 2nd Edition.*; Alpha; Indianapolis, IN; 2004
- Lazewnik, Baruch - *Handwriting Analysis, a Guide to Understanding Personalities*; Whitford Press, W. Chester, PA; 1990
- Mendel, Alfred O. - *Personality in Handwriting*; Newcastle Books, Van Nuys, CA; 199?
- Nezos, Renna - *Graphology, the Interpretation of Handwriting*; Trafalgar Square/David & Charles, N. Pomfret, VT; 1986
- Olyanova, Nadya - *Handwriting Tells*; Bell Publishing Company, New York, NY;
- Pulver, Max - *Symbolism of Handwriting*; Scriptor Books, London, England; 1994
- Roman, Klara - *Handwriting, a Key to Personality*; Pantheon Books; New York, NY; 1975
- Seifer, Marc - *The Definitive Book of Handwriting Analysis*; Career Press; 2008
- Teillard, Ana - *The Soul in Handwriting*; Scriptor Books; London, England, 1995
- Victor, Frank - *Handwriting, a Personality Projection*; Fern Ridge Press, Eugene, OR; 1989
- Hartford, Huntington - *You Are What You Write*; Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, NY; 1973
- Sonnemann, Ulrich - *Handwriting Analysis*; Grune & Stratton, New York, NY; 1950

Most of these texts may be ordered from Mostly Books:  
[www.mostlybooksaz.com](http://www.mostlybooksaz.com) Phone: (520) 571-0110  
 Monographs by Ze'ev Bar-Av and Sheila Lowe: [www.sheilalowe.com](http://www.sheilalowe.com)

## Certification Program Fees

Proficiency Examination	\$200
Certification Examination	\$300

Reactivation fee: An applicant who voluntarily withdraws from the certification program will be assessed a \$50 fee to reopen his or her file.

Note: Fees are subject to change without notice.

## How to apply

An application is attached as part of this document and may be completed online and submitted by email. Appropriate fees may be paid through PayPal or credit card online at [www.sheilalowe.com/store](http://www.sheilalowe.com/store) or by check to the address below.

## Vanguard Proficiency & Certification Program

Address questions or comments to:

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