



BOARD OF GENETIC COUNSELING

Registration No. 231 of 2015, Govt of Telangana, India

Accreditation/Reaccreditation process for Board recognised Genetic counselling courses

First time (Initial validity) - 3 years

Extension - 5 years

Stage 1:

Application – To the Board -

Requesting Letter on the institution letter Head

Attached duly filled Application Form: **(to be prepared)**

Primary Draft below:

Format for the form:

Page 1:

Board Logo

Form no:---

Application Form for BGCI recognition of Genetic counselling course

Issue no and date

Amendment no and date

Footer (on all the pages of application form).

Page 2: Contents:

Instruction and Information for completing the application (provided by the board)

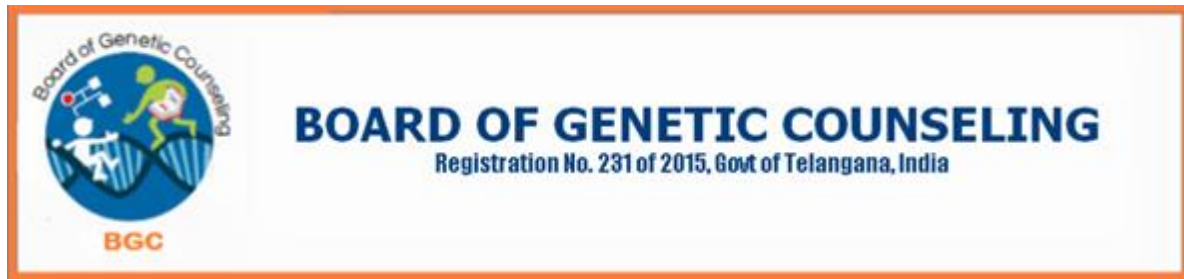
Page 3: Application Form

Information provided in application Form duly filled:

College/Institute details

Legal identity and Date of establishment

Address



Internal Audits and management review meeting

(Xerox copy of all the necessary documents to be attached as evidence and for records)

Course details - (Certificate/Diploma/Degree)

Syllabus - attached

No of students - (intake)

Course duration -

Full time/Part time

Teaching space and lay out

Details of teaching material

Library - available on site/MOU

Clinical Attachment - hospitals/institute/company/any other (Mandatory)

Organisation details (Organogram)

No of faculty : (Atleast one Grandfather or Level II certified counselor mandatory-Disclosure if the faculty is part of BGC-I EC). CV of atleast 3 faculty members with their role

Payment ***details (Rs 100,000 – Fees and Rs 2,00,000 for the site visit)***

Declaration by the Head of Institution:

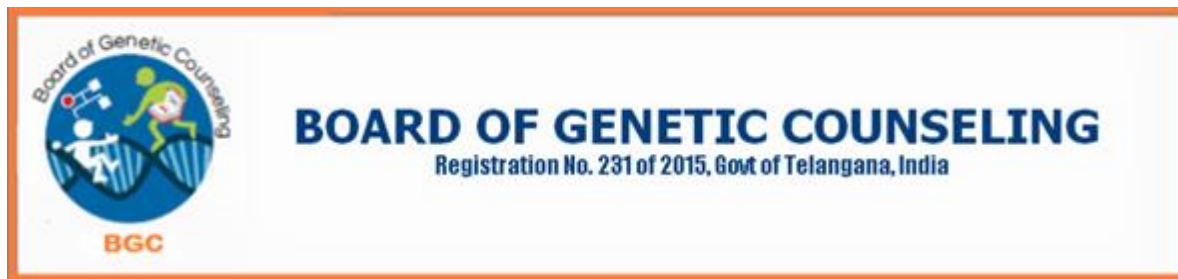
About the authenticity of the information provided and co-operation with the assessment team - signed with seal

Stage II

Application to be reviewed by two designated members ***of BGC-I and*** Communication regarding acceptance/revision of the application ***within 1 month of receiving application***

Fixing up a mutually convenient date for site-assessment within a month after final approval of application

Stage III



Site Assessment procedure - **2 or 3 assessors appointed by BGC I** will visit the site for the assessment and certify as per the checklist (checklist to be prepared)

Observations, inputs and assessment findings to be sent to the Board for review within two days of the site visit

Final decision to be taken by the Board based on the report of the assessment team

Communicate back to the hospital/college/Institute about the Board's decision within 1 month

Stage IV

Renewal of the course accreditation *every 3 years* (Same procedure as the accreditation one) but second renewal will be for 5 years (Renewal Fees - Rs 50,000/- Surveillance Site visit - Rs1,00,000/-)

Accreditation of Genetic Counselling teaching/training courses by BGC I

Overview:

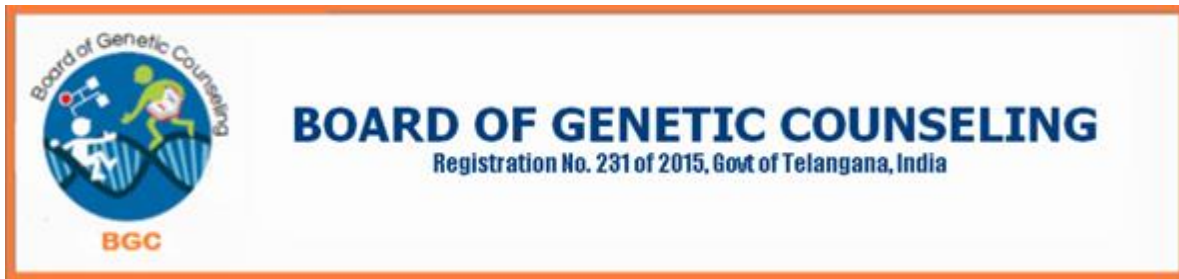
Accreditation is a voluntary peer-review process intended to assure quality and promote continual improvement in genetic counseling education and training.

BGC – I can critically evaluate Genetic Counselling teaching/training programs at regular intervals by engaging faculty, staff, students, graduates and employers in the accreditation process. Interaction among different stakeholders and BGC -I provides an opportunity to make changes that will improve the program and can stimulate discussion of how to innovate and improve programs by identifying unique strengths and assets. This, in turn will enhance the education and training for the profession.

Employers can expect that new graduates of BGC-I-accredited programs will have received academic and fieldwork preparation that qualifies them to be successful entry-level genetic counsellors

Prospective students can identify accredited programs that meet their chosen professional standards for academic education and clinical training. Obtaining certificate/diploma/degree from a program accredited by BGC -I will also be the eligibility criteria for taking the certification examination for genetic counseling conducted by BGC –I.

Institutes/colleges/universities can refer to published BGC -I standards for guidance in developing and maintaining a genetic counseling teaching/training program. Programs and their institutions both benefit from the evaluation and assessment during the accreditation process. The public and hiring organizations can be assured that accredited programs in genetic counseling are evaluated extensively



and meet high standards established by the profession both nationally and internationally. They can expect students of these programs to have received academic and fieldwork experiences that prepare them to meet the Practice Based Competencies.

Benefits of accreditation:

Accreditation assures students, employers, educational institutions, other professionals and the public that a program meets established standards that will enable it to produce professionals prepared to enter the genetic counseling workforce.

Mission of Accreditation Group for Genetic Counseling of BGC – I :

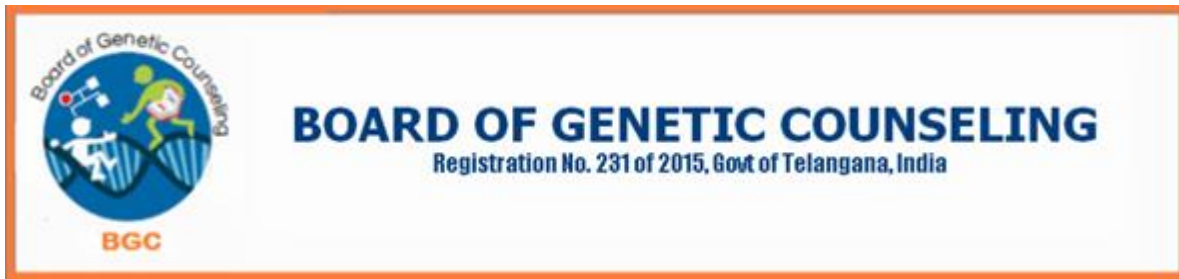
To promote and advance quality genetic counseling education by developing standards, assessing and evaluating teaching/training programs and accredit them.

Values of the Accreditation Group of BGC – I

- We value quality, honesty and integrity in all aspects of our work.
- We incorporate accreditation best practices within a dynamic environment with a consistent, equitable and objective accreditation decision making process
- We are committed to fairness, transparency and accountability:
- We take responsibility for our actions and the impact of our decisions
- We value interaction and collaboration with others committed to quality in genetic counseling education and training
- We are willing to provide clear, direct, accessible information about our mission, scope, standards, and policies.
- We are strategic in using our staff, volunteers, and financial resources to assure sustainability and to maximize value to accredited programs.

Composition and Details of accreditation group of BGC-I:

It will consist of BGC-I examination committee, grandfathers, associate members and senior counsellors attached to BGC-I. International Qualified experts will also be involved. The group will be constituted by the EC for a period of 3 years and will be extended for 2 years if the majority of EC



members approve. It will constitute of 5 members - two Senior members and two Junior members, along with an international representative.

Accreditation standards for Genetic Counselling programs:

In 2020-2021, the Board of Genetic Counseling - India (BGC-I) established the Standards for accreditation of genetic counseling programmes. These standards have been adapted and prepared using BGC-I, ABGC and HGSA standards as their base. These Standards will be reviewed every five years.

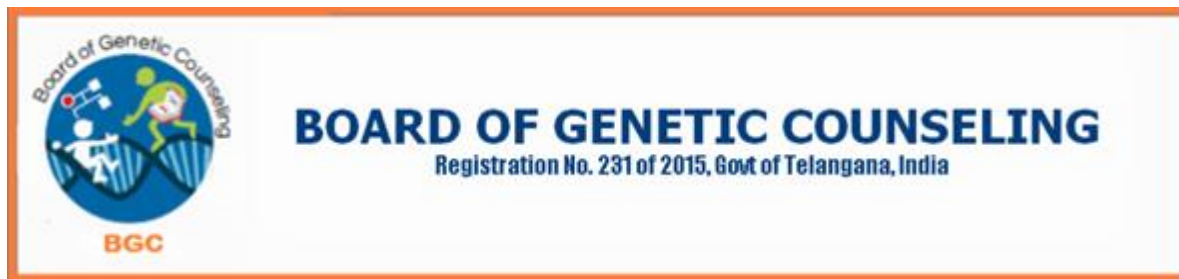
The Standards are used by BGC-I to evaluate and accredit certificate/diploma/degree-granting programs that prepare individuals to enter the genetic counselling profession at different levels (The details can be downloaded from the BGC-I website.) The extent to which a program complies with these Standards determines its accreditation status. The Standards are used for evaluation of existing programs in genetic counseling and also to provide guidance for the development of new programs. *Qualifying from a program accredited by BGC-I is a requirement for eligibility to appear for the certification examination conducted by BGC-I*

The Standards are the basis for accreditation decisions - Program coordinators must provide evidence to the BGC-I that the program is fully compliant with the Standards. The accreditation Group of BGC - I will assess that the Standards are sufficiently detailed to be capable of consistent application but not overly prescriptive. The Standards will be applied within the context of a program's expressed mission, student numbers, institutional policies and other characteristics that impact the program's leadership and administration.

BGC-I values the input of all stakeholders in the development of Standards and will be open to ideas suggested by both national and international experts in future revisions of accreditation standards.

BGC-I Standards outline the requirements for the sponsoring institution for the teaching/training program, financial budget and security, program leadership, other personnel, and facilities that will support program functioning. BGC-I strongly encourages the use of Affiliation Agreements or Memorandum of understanding in order to carry out programs.

Faculty and Instructional Staff - The institution has to nominate a coordinator of the program, who may be the Director of the organization or any other responsible person, along with an assistant Programme coordinator. Faculty responsible for teaching the Curriculum, carrying out Fieldwork and



supervising Research has to be indicated. In the event that a program leadership/faculty change occurs after completion of the accreditation process, this needs to be intimated to the BGC-I Executive Office within 30 days. Programs are responsible to submit BGC-I biosketch forms for primary instructional faculty/course directors at the time accreditation applications are submitted and to report new instructors if there is a change. Mission Statement and Objectives of Programs if changed also need to be intimated to BGC-I EC office within 30 days.

Curriculum and Instruction methods - Outline of curriculum and instructional requirements including curricular and fieldwork design, along with delivery method of didactic coursework, and/or off campus instructional sites should be clearly indicated. Basic Psychology and Communication skills - both oral and written have to be included in the program.

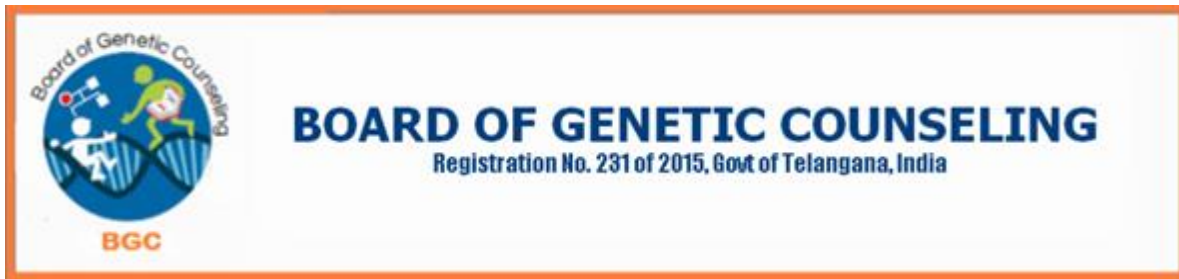
Fieldwork Training - General Description of Fieldwork Training from clinics, special schools, pediatric participatory Cases, prenatal, infertility + artificial reproductive technique, oncology, adult onset disorders, lifestyle, personalized medicine has to be provided. Although specific case numbers for the various counseling type need not be fixed but there should be overall diversity so that students experience different type of interaction and are prepared for independent practice. Thus the focus is to ensure that each student achieves the practice-based competencies through the variety of observatory and participatory cases. Pedigree analysis/Family tree drawing and analysis is one of the core skills of Genetic counsellors and this has to be an important part of each case type.

Lab Work - Although carrying out cytogenetic and Molecular lab based tests are not a required skill for a Genetic Counsellor, familiarity with all conventional and advanced genetic tests and their applications/ interpretations are mandatory, so that they are able to provide test based counselling. Lab or company rotations will help in this - MOU assuring exposure to this is required.

If students from an accredited program fail to perform well in the BGC-I Certification Exam over a three-year period, the program will be required to submit a remediation plan to the BGC and may lose their accreditation.

Accreditation process

Accreditation group of BGC-I will form a Program Review Committee (PRC), as well as a Site Visitor group, which will include certified genetic counselors and associate members. Assigned PRC members will review all documentation submitted by programs in their Accreditation Application as well as information learned as a part of site visits. The site visit provides an opportunity for the PRC and BGC-



I Board to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the program and to verify that the information submitted in the document is accurate, and to gather additional information about compliance concerns.

Site visitors will assess physical facilities; meet with faculty, clinical supervisors, and institutional and program administrators, students and alumni (for ongoing program).

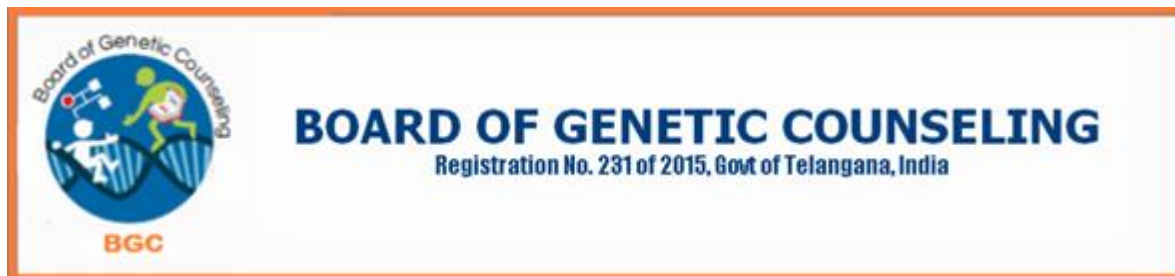
Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality: Accreditation Group of BGC-I and members of the PRC must give a self declaration regarding Conflict of Interest if any for the program being assessed.

BGC-I Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality policies - Conflict of Interest documentation is to be maintained by the Executive Office and updated every time a new EC takes over the BGC-I activity. The following relationships may create a conflict of interest and need to be declared : (i) An individual is currently an employee or consultant to a sponsoring institution, where the GC Program is to be carried out. (ii) An individual has one or more relatives who are appointees or employees of the sponsoring institution; or have served in one of these capacities during the current accreditation cycle. (iii) An individual is involved with, or has been significantly involved with, supervising clinical rotations or teaching students from the sponsoring institution during the current accreditation cycle (iv) An individual has a close personal or professional relationship with members of the program leadership or core faculty at the institution

Applying for Accreditation Status: BGC-I accredits certificate/diploma/degree level genetic counseling programs carried out within institutions physically located within India. The accreditation process is entirely dependent on the information submitted by the program leadership as a part of accreditation application. Completion of the application and additional material should regarding, faculty, administration, clinical supervisors, advisory board, and other stakeholders, information about current and former students is also required for ongoing programs.

The Accreditation application and additional information provided as a self study document provides an opportunity to critically review the program's mission, goals, and educational components, to examine its strengths and weaknesses, to consider the impact of changes affecting the profession and the institution, and to give the BGC-I Board and the Program Review Committee (PRC) a detailed description of the program and its compliance with the Standards. The application materials enable peer review by BGC-I to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the developing program's proposed structure and educational plan for evidence of adequacy in compliance with the Standards. New

Program Application Process:



Applications are submitted by the sponsoring institution of a proposed genetic counseling program in the prescribed form to the BGC - I for accreditation. The application process is outlined :

Request for Accreditation: Head of Sponsoring institution and/or the proposed Program Director must request recognition from the BGC-I Executive Office for their program along with the prescribed, non-refundable fee as an online transaction (Bank Details can be obtained from website).

Action Timeline for Initial Application scrutiny: BGC-I will respond to the submitted application for accreditation within 4 weeks from the date of receipt. The BGC-I response maybe: (i) That the program is eligible and institution should prepare for Site visit (ii) The program requires to provide additional information before decision of eligibility can be given. Response for this ***has to be given within 30 days along with additional material requested*** . The accreditation process will be discontinued if the timeline is not adhered to and the program will be required to submit a new Application to reinstate the process.

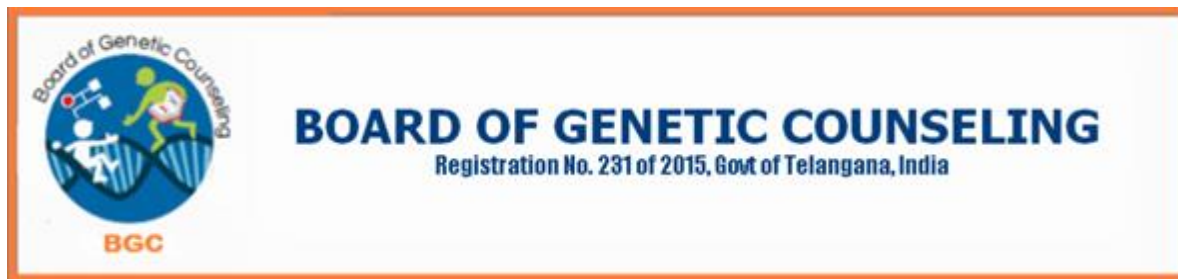
The Site Visit: The program director will be notified by the Executive Office with names of the proposed site visit team. A team leader will be identified. Programs will be given the opportunity to reject any member of the site team for reasons of conflict.

The Site visit team leader will contact the program director to indicate the duration of the visit (***1-3 days***) and ***number of site visitors (2-3)*** , as well as, what the team will need during the visit, including but not limited to:

- (i) Private room(s) for interviews,
- (ii) A list of individuals (faculty, program leadership, administrators) that the team wishes to interview
- (iii) Documentation that may be requested
- (iv) Develop an agenda for the visit
- (v) Confirm operational or logistical details (e.g. transportation, stay, etc.).

A typical visit will include tour of the facilities (classrooms, laboratories, library, computer resources, students' workspace, patient interaction areas), interviews with the program director, administrative officers, faculty, students (ongoing program) and program graduates (ongoing program).

Program coordinator will be asked to have **documents**, and/or access to electronic documents, ready for review by the team. These may include affiliation agreements or memos of understanding with



clinical sites involved in training, faculty and administrative documents, evidence of numbers and types of clinical cases available for evaluation and counseling as well as students' records and academic achievements (ongoing program)

The team leader will schedule an exit briefing with the program director. During this discussion, the team leader may share an initial summary of observations. The team leader will outline the next steps and timeline for the PRC and Board review of the team's findings.

Site visitors are not involved in and do not make the accreditation decision which is solely the responsibility of BGC-I Board.

Site visit Follow up Action Timeline: Within 2 days of the visit, the site team leader will forward the completed final Site Visit Report to the BGC-I Executive Director. The President then will send the report to the program accreditation director and the PRC chair, who will respond within two weeks after discussing with the site visit team (by conference call) a recommendation to the Board regarding accreditation.

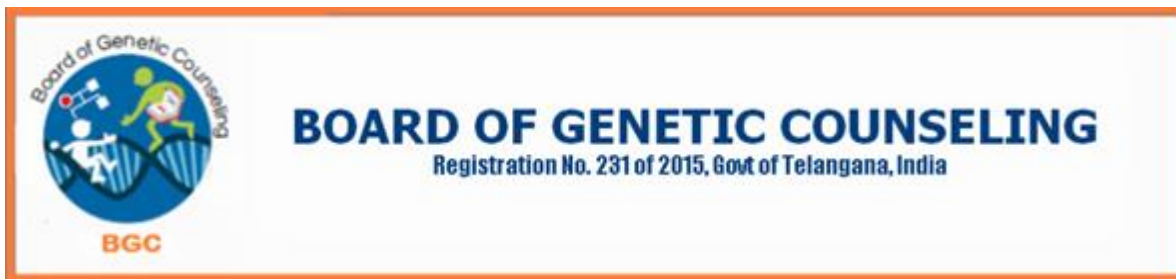
In the event that there are areas of non-compliance, the program director of the program will be notified by the Executive Office of the specific areas of concern. The notification will include a formal request for program response and/or a plan for remediation of the potential area of non-compliance with Standards. The Accreditation decision may be deferred until the program response is received and remediation has successfully been accomplished.

Accreditation Status and Decisions

A program achieving the status "**Accredited**" will remain so for 3 years (New program) and 5 years (Ongoing Program). Program, may admit students, who, upon successfully completing their degrees, will be deemed to have graduated from an BGC-I accredited program.

Maintaining Accreditation as a Program: An Accredited, Program is expected to maintain compliance with Accreditation Standards and report progress and changes if any annually as " Report of Current Status".

Application for Reaccreditation will be notified by the BGC-I Executive Office 3 months prior to the due date for submission of application along with a " Report of Current Status".



All decisions regarding accreditation are at the sole discretion of BGC-I, which reserves the right to interpret the Standards and to modify conditions and terms of a program's accreditation when warranted.

Accredited status of New Program is for 3 years at which time the program is reviewed for re accreditation which is granted for up to 5 years.

In cases where BGC-I defers an accreditation decision and requests additional information - during this period, the program will be notified and will maintain its existing status (e.g., "Accredited," "Accredited with Contingencies," or "Probationary Accreditation") until a decision on the accreditation status is made.

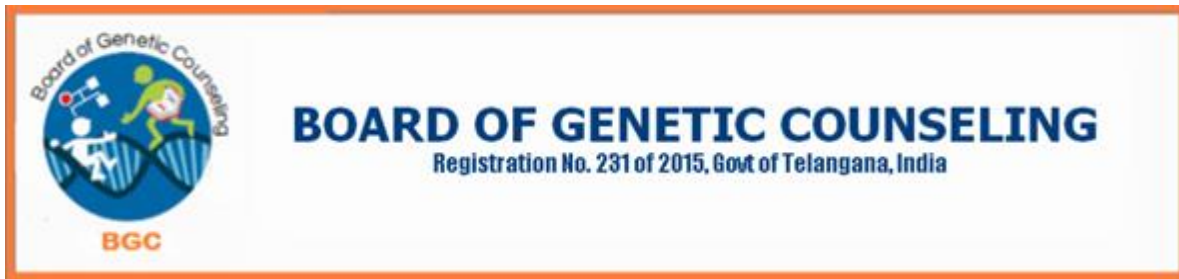
If the Board determines that a program is out of compliance with one or more of the Standards, the Board may issue a warning to the program. BGC-I President will provide a written warning to the program describing the specific areas of non-compliance, and specifying the length of time the program has to provide a response. By the end of the allotted time, the program must provide written evidence of satisfactory resolution of the area(s) of non-compliance. If the program does not respond to the warning satisfactorily by the deadline, BGC-I can decide (based on the number and type of non-compliance) to assign it "Accreditation with Contingencies" or "Probationary Accreditation" or revoke accreditation. BGC-I does not consider a warning to be public information and the program is not required to make it public.

Maintaining Accreditation:

"Report of Current Status is to be submitted" annually, during its period of accreditation, by the program director to the Executive Office. The report will show status of program, progress of program and changes if any. It is the responsibility of each accredited program to notify the Executive Office of substantive changes in a program to ensure maintenance of accreditation status and protection of students. Failure to report a substantive change might place the accreditation of a program in jeopardy. Program directors are encouraged to contact the Executive Office with any questions about whether a contemplated change would be considered substantive under BGC-I policies, give reason for the change and seek approval before implementing the change eg changes in curriculum or intake of students.

Complaints and Appeals :

Complaints: Any person (including a student, member of the general public, faculty, government agency, and any other organization) concerned about the quality of a Genetic Counseling Program



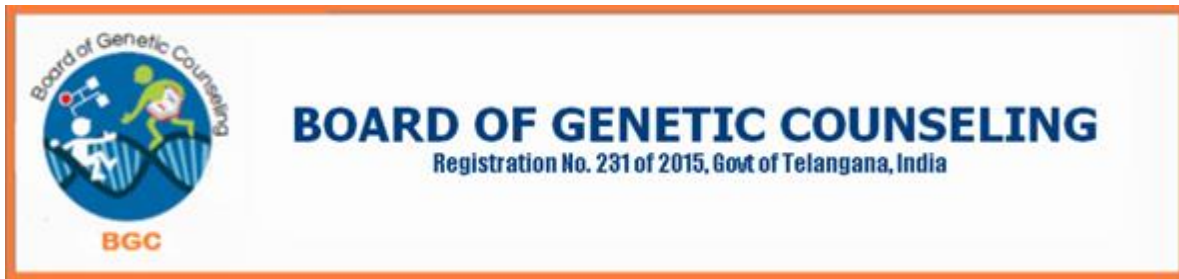
accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (BGC-I) may contact BGC-I Executive Office.

Jurisdiction: BGC-I will consider and investigate only those complaints containing allegations which, if substantiated, may indicate noncompliance with BGC-I Standards of Accreditation. BGC-I is not a mediator of disputes and, generally, will not interpose itself in a manner that limits the discretion of a program in the normal management and supervision of its academic policies and procedures or personnel, unless a violation of BGC-I Standards is specifically alleged. Such matters include: admission, appointment, promotion, or dismissal of faculty or students. BGC-I expects that a complainant shall attempt to resolve an issue with the program director before submitting a complaint to BGC-I. BGC-I will not seek any type of compensation, re-admission, or other redress on behalf of an individual. BGC-I will not respond to or take action upon any complaint that is defamatory, hostile, or profane. In addition, BGC-I will not involve itself in collective bargaining disputes. BGC-I will not intervene on behalf of individuals in cases where the situation giving rise to the complaint occurred so far in the past that ascertaining the facts might prove to be difficult or impossible. BGC-I typically will not take any action based on an anonymous complaint.

Filing a Complaint: The steps to follow in filing a complaint with BGC-I are as follows: BGC-I complaint must be made in writing and emailed or mailed to the BGC-I Executive Office. A complaint must set forth specific facts and circumstances that, if found to be true, would show that the program is not meeting one or more of BGC-I's Standards of Accreditation or other requirements. It is expected that the complaint will include the specific Standards enumerated in the complaint documentation.

Processing a Complaint: Within 10 days after receiving a complaint, BGC-I President will send a letter or email to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and start investigating. BGC-I may request that written corroboration be provided within 30 days from the date of the complaint. Such corroboration might include letters or other documentation not previously provided to BGC-I by the complainant. Although the complaint will be treated with discretion, BGC-I does not guarantee the confidentiality of the complainant.

The complainant and any corroborators will be required to sign an authorization to release the written complaint and corroborating materials to others including their legal representatives. BGC-I Executive Committee will determine whether a complaint raises issues relating to compliance with Accreditation Standards. If BGC-I Executive Committee determines that the complaint does not raise such issues, BGC-I President will notify the complainant, in a timely manner, that the complaint is outside the



jurisdiction of BGC-I and will close the matter. Otherwise, the President will notify the complainant that BGC-I has initiated an investigation.

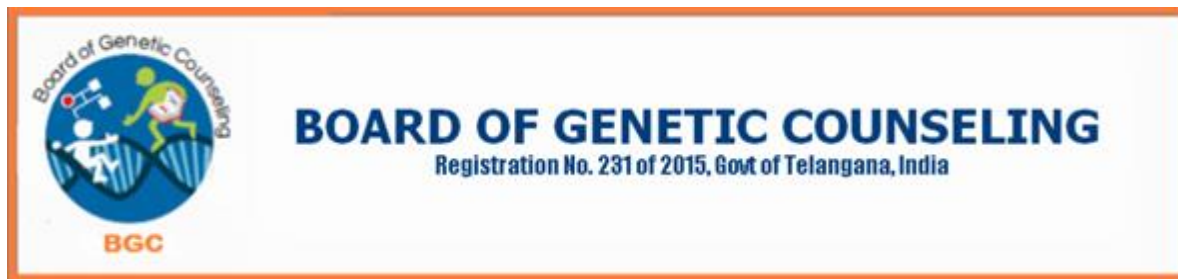
Investigating a Complaint: The President will notify the Program Official of the complaint in writing *within 30 days* and require a response to allegations which may include answers to specific questions, the submission of documentation, or materials. The President will set a deadline for response not to exceed 60 days. If after receiving the program's response, the Executive Committee determines that there is evidence that the program is not in compliance with Accreditation Standards, the complaint will be addressed. Otherwise, the President will close the complaint. In all instances, the complainant will receive notice of the status of the complaint.

Expenses: If the complaint is found to have merit, all expenses (i.e. site visit, interviews, etc.) incurred by BGC-I in investigating and resolving the complaint will be reimbursed by the institution carrying out the programme.

Decisions Subject to Reconsideration and Appeals: Denial of Accreditation and Revocation of Accreditation are adverse actions. Adverse actions are subject to reconsideration and are appealable. In the case of an appealable action, BGC-I notifies the Program Director stating specific reasons for the denial or revocation. Such actions are not made public for 30 days following notification to the program to allow for appeal or request for reconsideration. The decisions are not made public until appeal or reconsideration are completed and final. Decisions to assign Accreditation Warning, Accreditation with Contingencies, Probationary Accreditation, or to defer an accreditation decision are not deemed adverse actions and accordingly are not subject to reconsideration or appeal.

Request for Reconsideration: A program that has received notice of denial or revocation of accreditation from the BGC -I has the right to seek review of the decision by filing a written "Request for Reconsideration" to the Executive Office. A Request for Reconsideration must be received by the Executive Office no more than thirty (30) calendar days after the program director receives notice of the adverse decision. A Request for Reconsideration must contain a statement of why the program director believes that BGC-I's decision was improper and include any supporting documentation that the program wishes to have considered during the review. Information contained in the Request for Reconsideration may include evidence that the program has remedied the deficiencies that were the subject of the adverse accreditation decision.

A Request for Reconsideration must be accompanied with a non-refundable fee of Rs 5000/-



The President will forward the program's Request for Reconsideration to members of the EC and members of the Program Review Committee and Site visit committee upon which the Board had relied in making the accreditation decision. If after reviewing the Request for Reconsideration and the Review Record, the Board determines that there is no reason to alter the decision, it shall affirm its decision. If, on the other hand, the Board determines that the program submitted adequate evidence of remediation, or that the original decision was not supported by the evidence, or that BGC-I's policies and procedures were not followed, it shall modify or reverse its original decision. The president is responsible for providing a written summary of the Board's findings and a justification for its decision to the program director within 60 calendar days of receipt of request.

Decisions on reconsideration of accreditation are appealable

An Appeal Panel is appointed by the BGC and is composed of individuals who were not involved in the original decision or in the site visit and consists of :

- Public Member
- Academic member/educator
- Current Genetic Counseling Practitioner
- Current or recent site visitor who was not involved in the appellant program's review

The above will consider whether the decision of the Board was erroneous. The Appeal Panel will consider the entire record in the matter, including the program's appeal brief. No new evidence will be considered by the Appeal Panel. New evidence is information that was not formally before the Board on the record at the time the Board made its decision to deny or revoke accreditation.

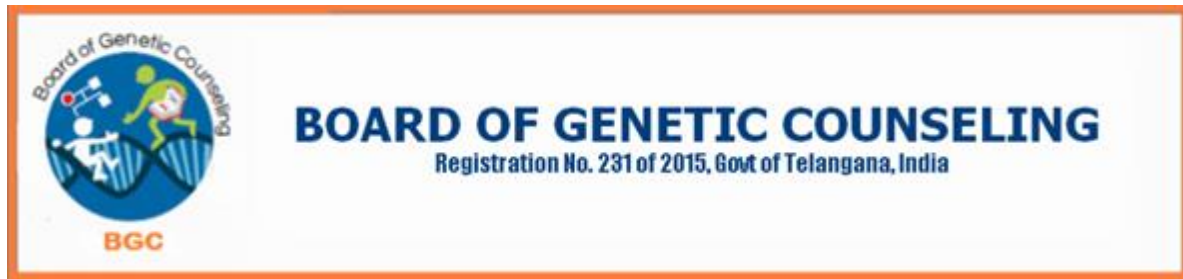
The Appeal Panel will determine by majority vote whether to affirm, reverse, remand or modify the appealed decision and report the decision and rationale to the Board within 15 days.

The Executive Office shall notify the program director of the Appeal Panel's decision and the reasons for the decision in writing within 30 days after receipt of the Appeal Panel's Report.

All expenses incurred in connection with the hearing shall be borne by the program and/or its sponsoring institution.

BGC-I will display on its website:

- A list of the programs currently accredited, with the state of their sponsoring institution and their accreditation status
- BGC-I's Vision and Mission
- The names of BGC-I's EC
- How to contact BGC-I
- Practice Based Competencies



- Certification Process
- Basic Curriculum
- Information on establishing a new program
- The Accreditation Manual with Standards For Accredited Genetic Counseling Programs
- Fees for certification and accreditation along with details of Bank account

BGC-I Strategic Plan 2021

- Communicate the value and role of accreditation in ensuring quality in genetic counseling education and training.
- Explore areas of challenge and opportunity for genetic counselors as identified by training programs and other key stakeholders, to improve standards, policies, and procedures.
- Explore the role of *Indian* accreditation standards, policies, and procedures within the international landscape of genetic counselor graduate education, certification/registration, and practice.
- Continue to develop operational policies and procedures that ensure long-term stability of the organization.