



General Guidelines

for the members of the Association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists.

For the sake of clarity we would like to stress that in the following text both male and female genders are intended when only the he or she pronoun is used.

In the following, claimed epoch refers to the approximate time period for which the professional genealogist offers his services; claimed area the approximate geographic region for which the professional genealogist offers his services; research realm the claimed epoch and the claimed area; professional genealogist refers to a member of the Association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists.

1. Personal prerequisites

1.1. Professional genealogists do not have to fulfil any personal prerequisites, not with respect to age, nationality or any other similar prerequisite.

2. Professional prerequisites

2.1. Education, experience and improvement shall grant the ability to professionally handle all cases in the research realm. The skills are to be developed systematically and kept up-to-date.

2.2. German language

Professional genealogists in the German-speaking region must be able to correspond in German and, at least basically, to converse in German. They must be able to understand the wording of the sources common in their research realm.

2.3. Foreign languages

2.3.1. If a professional genealogist publicly offers his services in an area with a language in which he cannot correspond, he has to mention the languages in which correspondence with him is possible. The term "publicly offer" does in this context not include making direct contact with a specific potential client.

2.3.2. The necessity of additional foreign languages depends on the languages used in the sources of the genealogist's research realm.

2.4. Knowledge of Latin

2.4.1. Knowledge of Latin is obligatory, depending on the professional genealogist's research realm and on the sources in this research realm. In the case of exclusively church-book research a rudimentary knowledge of Latin terms, genealogical terms and the legal terms of the church is sufficient. It is recommended to have knowledge at the level of the "Kleines Latinum" (approx. four school years).

2.5. Paleography

2.5.1. Skills in paleography must suffice to understand an average manuscript from the claimed epoch, and to reproduce it without making errors which are substantial or change the meaning.

2.5.2. It is obligatory to know the printed types of the claimed epoch, in particular the German Gothic script.

2.5.3. It is recommended to have the ability to transcribe the Greek and Hebraic alphabets and to be able to pronounce words phonetically. A knowledge and understanding of these languages is not to be expected.

2.5.4. It is obligatory to know the Roman and German numbering symbols.

2.5.5. Knowledge of abbreviations is preferred, however when transcribing reference works and handbooks may be used.

It is obligatory to know the most important reference works for abbreviations.

2.4.6. Professional genealogists may only use sources which they are able to understand. They may refer to manuals, reference books or handbooks, e.g. historical terms for illness, professions or legal terms.

2.6. Chronology

2.6.1. It is obligatory to know reference material for the calendar used in the claimed epoch, in particular the terms for: the movable days of the church calendar, days of the week, holy days and months; for the signs of the zodiac or for the change from one calendar to another.

2.7. Heraldry

Knowledge of heraldry is not necessary. The general meaning and origin of heraldic symbols as well as possible connections to genealogy should be known. Experts or specialist literature should be available if needed.

2.8. Sphragistics (study of seals)

Knowledge in Sphragistics is not necessary. The general meaning and origin of seals as well as possible connections to genealogy should be known. Experts or specialist literature should be available if needed.

2.9. Study of names

2.9.1. It is obligatory to have knowledge about the basics of laws and customs in naming persons, and about geographical specialties in the claimed geographical area, like the question under which family name (surname) a married couple appears after the marriage.

2.9.2 Knowledge of the meaning and etymology of family names and given names is not necessary. Changes in family names over time, in particular when the family crossed linguistic borders, should be recognised.

2.10. Diplomatics

Knowledge in diplomatics is obligatory, as far as needed for the claimed epoch.

2.11. Jurisprudence

2.11.1. Legal knowledge is obligatory, as far as is necessary for genealogy; e.g., grades of kinship in civil and ecclesiastical law, legitimations, dispensations for marriage.

2.11.2. The historical institutions and laws, as far as relevant for the claimed region and epoch, should be known in their basics (e.g. fief, Mannrecht, Reichskammergericht, proclamation).

2.11.3. The professional genealogist must be able to use handbooks to determine the meaning of a juridical term unknown to him.

2.12. Genealogy

2.12.1. Knowledge of the genealogic terminology and of genealogic signs is obligatory. This also includes the knowledge of the two basic research directions (ascendancy and descendancy).

2.12.2. If the professional genealogist corresponds in a foreign language, he should know the basic genealogic terminology and abbreviations in this language.

2.12.3. The professional genealogist must be able to handle the basic problems of genealogic research. This includes the problems of filiation, of identity or mixing up persons; this also includes biological basics like the length of a pregnancy or the fertile life of a woman.

2.12.4. The professional genealogist must be able to grasp a genealogical problem, to name possible ways and sources to solve this problem, and to evaluate them critically. If more than one solution may be possible, he must be able to explain these possibilities.

2.13. Geography

2.13.1 Good geographical knowledge of the claimed region is obligatory as well as a general knowledge of the neighbouring areas. With the help of handbooks, the professional genealogist must be able to identify place names within this area, even if they are slightly misspelled or given in other languages.

2.13.2. Furthermore, with the help of handbooks, he must be able to determine to which administrative, juridical and ecclesiastical units this place belonged. To do so, he must be familiar with the structure and terminology of the administrative, juridical and ecclesiastical units in this area.

2.13.3. The professional genealogist must know the basics of territorial history in the claimed area, and have access to reference works for solving specific problems.

2.14. History

The professional genealogist must know the basics of historical development in his research realm, as well as handbooks for solving specific problems.

2.15 Knowledge of sources

2.15.1. Genealogical sources include anything that might contain information about kinship between individuals. The most important sources are the records of persons, i.e. church records, civil records and family registers or when applicable their regional or historical equivalent.

2.15.2. Biographical information is necessary to connect individuals. For this reason, genealogical research also means the analysis of biographical sources. Depending on the specific project, genealogical research also includes biographical information about the individuals (see 4.2.1).

2.15.3. The professional genealogist must be familiar with the basic sources for his research realm.

2.15.4. Most especially, he must know when civil registration was established, as well as the approximate time span covered by the church records.

2.15.5. He must know about the genealogical relevance and the extent of information given in the entries in these registers, depending on the time period in question.

2.15.6. The professional genealogist must, if necessary with the help of handbooks, be able to determine the institution holding the sources named in 2.12.1, as far as this is possible.

2.15.7. The professional genealogist must have basic knowledge of further sources, of their character and usability, most especially when vital records are missing, incomplete or uninformative. Here, too, he must have basic knowledge where these records are stored.

2.15.8. The professional genealogist must know source editions and historical publications, as long as they are standard research texts for his research realm.

2.16. Computers

Knowledge in the realm of computers is necessary only insofar as the professional genealogist uses computers as an auxiliary means.

2.17. Specialties

If the professional genealogist offers research on special topics (migration research, nobility, religious minorities), he must have special knowledge of these topics.

3. Professional practice prerequisites

3.1. The appearance in public, most especially the professional genealogist's advertising, may not be misleading, incorrect or exaggerated.

3.2.1. The brand or name, under which the professional genealogist appears in public, may not be misleading or exaggerated.

3.2.2. The professional genealogist may not state, in written or oral form, anything that is known to be incorrect or improvable.

3.2.3. The professional genealogist may offer his services publicly only for those research realms, for which he fulfils the prerequisites according to no. 2 of these general guidelines.

3.2. The professional genealogist must maintain his office in a regular manner. He is not obliged to have a specific commercial or business education.

3.2.1. It is recommended that the professional genealogist opens a business bank account.

3.2.2. An individual record of incomings and outgoings should be kept separately for every client, unless a "package price" has been agreed upon.

3.2.3. If the client insists, the professional genealogist may use an advance deposit for private or commercial purposes only if the pertaining work already has been done or is in the process of being fulfilled.

3.2.4. If any personal or financial interests affect the genealogist's impartiality to a client, the client has to be informed about this.

3.3. Professional genealogists are not obliged to provide rooms in order for clients to visit their office.

3.4. The professional genealogist should have his own collection (library) of the standard works of genealogy.

3.4.1. This is particularly true of the books of the historical auxiliary sciences, reference works for chronology and place-names.

3.4.2. In addition the most important source-indexes or the standard works for the research realm offered by the professional genealogist, e.g. church book indexes, should, as far as this is possible, be part of his library.

3.4.3. If the professional genealogist does not own the most basic genealogical publications in his own library, he may not charge the client with the time and costs necessary for consulting these publications elsewhere, but only the time for the consultation itself.

3.5. The professional genealogist keeps the copyright for his research reports.

3.5.1. The professional genealogist may use research results, for which he has been paid by a client, for himself or for third parties only as far as this use is covered by the agreement with the original client.

3.5.2. If no agreement has been made, the professional genealogist may in any case use these results for further research or for building up his own files.

3.5.3. The same rule applies to the publication of research results by the professional genealogist.

3.5.4. After a client's death, the professional genealogist may use the research results freely and without limits, unless otherwise arranged with the client.

4. Research methods

4.1. The professional genealogist chooses his research methods and the sources, according to his education and experience and to the best of his knowledge. Given this he must also achieve his aim as exactly and as quickly as possible.

4.2. The goal or aim of the research should be defined in the order.

4.2.1. If the order is for general research for ancestors or descendants of a person, without specifying the research aims, the professional genealogist must first of all try to determine the persons' vital dates (birth/christening, marriage[s], death/burial), as far as this is possible.

4.2.1.1. It is irresponsible to limit research to one or the other of these categories. Quality is more important than quantity.

4.2.1.2. Although research for further details of the persons' biographies is also important, the professional genealogist should first of all concentrate on the basic vital dates.

4.3. In the case of unusual findings (e.g. an unusually old age at the time of a first marriage, or a large difference in ages between spouses) it is recommended to make use of more than one source.

4.4. In the case of unusual findings, discrepancies between different sources or in the case of hypotheses, the professional genealogist has to analyse the sources according to the methods developed by historians, to determine the credibility of the various statements and of the sources upon which the statements are based.

4.4.1 As a general rule of research (exceptions are possible), the source should be regarded as more reliable which:

- is closer in time to the incident
- is geographically closer to the incident
- originates from someone who was in a greater degree involved in the incident
- originates from someone who has less personal interest in a particular version of the events.

4.4.1.1 Data in secondary sources should be checked in a random pattern with data in primary sources, unless the reliability of the secondary source is known in specialist circles.

4.4.1.2. The individual entries in contemporary family summaries (e.g. family registers) should also be checked. This is particularly important if the summary has been made long after the events.

4.4.1.3. Archival resources (e.g. catalogues) are seen as secondary sources.

4.4.2. If an entry is not found in the source where the professional genealogist assumed it, then as well as possible gaps (cf. point 5.9.) the following possibilities must be taken into account:

4.4.2.1. The event did not happen in the place in question.

4.4.2.2. The event was registered in another parish of the same place.

4.4.2.3. The event was registered under a date or on a page that is different to that one would have expected from the internal organisation of the source. (In particular this is important with later entries or comments or answers from foreign authorities to the place of domicile or place of citizenship.)

4.4.2.4. The event was registered under another name (important in cases of legitimisation through the later marriage of the parents).

4.4.2.5. The event was entered into a special register or in a special section of the same register (e.g. special register for illegitimate births, special register for the natives of another parish or for distinct registers for all villages belonging to one parish).

4.4.3 Errors in the sources

If in doubt as to the information in sources the following possibilities are to be accounted for:

4.4.3.1 A slip of the pen or clerical error on the part of the writer.

4.4.3.2. An error on the part of the writer with regard to the contents.

4.4.3.3. A misunderstanding on the part of the writer if he wrote the record on the basis of oral information, in particular with place names and family names, or if the written contents are beyond his horizons or if he makes reference to other records that he didn't write himself.

4.4.3.5. How interested the writer was in the accuracy of the record. Various factors play a role here: the age of the writer, personal interest in what was written, a feeling of identification with what was written, overwork, education and professional suitability.

4.4.3.6. Deliberate forgery or the concealment of facts.

4.4.4 Misinterpretation

As well as errors in the sources it must be considered that the professional genealogist has misread or misunderstood individual words or entries in the sources (mistaken interpretation).

4.4.4.1. Particular care must be taken to avoid misreading terms of kinship, e.g. "Vater" (father) instead of "Vetter" (male cousin), or misunderstanding them (e.g. "Vetter" which is now a male cousin but formerly meant kinship in general terms).

4.4.4.2. If reproductions of sources are indecipherable then if possible the originals must be referred to.

4.4.4.3. If the reading is uncertain then the questionable point should not be used as a starting point for further research.

4.4.5 False conclusions

It is also possible that the professional genealogist reaches the wrong conclusion even when he has correctly understood the contents of the source. Logical deductions should always be double-checked. The professional genealogist should always be aware of his/her limitations.

4.5. The relationship between a child and its parents (filiation) is the basic element of genealogy. Errors in biographical information, including vital dates, are less serious than errors regarding this relationship, because any and all further research will be erroneous if this crucial connection is false. For this reason, the professional genealogist has to pay special attention to this relationship.

4.5.1. One should keep in mind that sometimes even records of persons (like church records) may contain errors in the identification of individuals, e.g. in the case of siblings with the same name.

4.5.2. If a given name or surname occurs frequently at a particular place, special care must be taken to check and prove filiation.

4.5.3. If more than one person has to be considered for identification, e.g. if only the names of bride and groom are given in a marriage record and no further information, all options have to be examined with due diligence.

4.5.3.1. Every single alternative should be checked and ruled out, preferably through a process of elimination using records of death or marriage.

4.5.3.2. In the case of biological data (e.g. marriageable age, fertile age) allowances must be made in both directions.

4.5.3.3. To aid identification one can consider participants such as godparents and witnesses at a marriage. However this is very dependant on era and region whether such participants were related. Without knowledge of the local customs at the time one should avoid drawing a conclusion.

4.5.3.4. Simply choosing an option is not professional. In case of doubt the question must remain unanswered. This is also true for the client, i.e. a professional genealogist may not accept the clients choice of an identified person as such.

4.5.4. For purposes of identification age references alone are unsuitable, due to the possibilities of inexactitude. Age references are always questionable and only to be used as points of reference, especially when the age reference seemingly refers to only one specific person but there are other candidates as well. Age references on their own can only be used for identification purposes if the accuracy of the source is known or can be tested through random checks. If other sources or inferences are available for purposes of identification then the age reference may vary by several years.

4.6. The professional genealogist is obliged to handle the sources carefully in regards to their material and condition.

4.6.1. He observes the rules of conduct of the archives and libraries in question. If such rules do not exist, the following principles are to be observed:

4.6.2. He may not steal, damage, manipulate the sources or use them as desk pads.

4.6.3. He may not take them away temporarily to use them.

4.6.4. He may add handwritten notes only with pencil and only with the explicit agreement of the owner or the archive.

4.6.5. He may only make photocopies of the sources if no damage to the documents is likely to result.

4.7. The professional genealogist's consideration, as to which source he decides to consult, depends upon:

- availability
- the expected contents
- the amount of time necessary for consultation.

Possibly, this may mean that a particular order of consultation of different sources will be necessary in order to save time, e.g. to limit the time period to be checked in a particular time-consuming source.

4.8. Collaborative work with other genealogists, who are able to evaluate certain sources more quickly or with more specialist knowledge should be considered.

4.9. Regarding enquiries to parish offices or archives it must be taken into account that the employees at these institutions do not always have sufficient expert knowledge to reliably answer the enquiry.

5. Research report

5.1. Unless agreed otherwise the research report should be delivered in typewritten or computer printout form.

5.1.1. Die Ablieferung eines handgeschriebenen Forschungsberichts ist möglich, wenn der Empfänger zustimmt.

5.1.2. The client may not insist upon the compilation of the report by electronic means.

5.1.3. The report language depends on the language of correspondence agreed upon (cf. point 7.). Terms that can be translated easily should be translated. As far as terms are concerned that are difficult to translate or which are special terms of legal history or of local history, they should, when appearing the first time in the report, be sufficiently explained or paraphrased. Subsequently, either the German term or a foreign-language equivalent may be used.

5.1.4. The client may not insist upon a specific form for the research report, unless this has been agreed upon. The genealogist should, however, keep the client's wishes in mind. Among others there are the following possibilities:

5.1.4.1. An ancestor list, ordered according to generations or by ancestor number using the Kékulé system.

5.1.4.2. An ancestor table, possibly several pages long with a cross reference.

5.1.4.3. A lineage.

5.1.4.4. A table of lineage, possibly several pages long with a cross reference.

5.1.4.5. A family tree of ancestor table in picture form.

5.1.4.6. An electronic database, either as an ASCII file or as part of a genealogical software program (which may or may not be included in the delivery).

5.1.4.7. A report on the consulted sources and the resulting deductions (for specifically delimited questions).

5.1.4.8. A family history.

All forms may or may not be accompanied by documentary support.

5.2. The professional genealogist may only describe things as factual if this is supported by documents.

5.2.1. The professional genealogist may not knowingly cite sources incorrectly, or characterize questionable sources as reliable ones.

5.2.2. The professional genealogist may not characterize research done by third parties as his own, or implicitly cause this impression. Exceptions are given at no. 5.5.5 and 5.5.6.

5.3. The research report should reproduce those results which are basic for the research objective (see no. 4).

5.3.1. The research report should reproduce the essential contents of the various sources.

5.3.2. What is essential depends on the client's previous knowledge and on whether the topic is important for further research or if it is needed to argue or prove a specific point.

5.3.3. When describing an event, place and date are essential pieces of information.

5.4. The professional genealogist is only obliged to provide documentation in the form of photocopies, photos or document transcripts if this has been agreed upon and as far as this is permissible.

5.5. Sources must be cited.

5.5.1. The sources shall be cited in a way that any skilled genealogist can find them.

5.5.1.1. The citation must give not only the archive as such, but also the archive storing it, as far as these are not identical. This is particularly important when the entire archive has been stored (as a deposit) in another archive, which is a frequent occurrence in the case of parish records.

5.5.1.2. With commonly used archives the abbreviations commonly used by specialists may be used. These should, however, be explained at some point within the report.

5.5.1.3. If the archive is not commonly known the address must be supplied.

5.5.1.4. The citation must also include the call number and page or folio number of a source, as far as extant. The page or folio number may be left out if the structure of the source makes it evident where to find the entry (chronological or alphabetical order).

5.5.1.5. It is recommended that the contents and duration of the source are given.

5.5.1.6. Printed sources are to be cited according to international bibliographical standard; this includes at least the author's given name and surname, title, place and year of publication, and if necessary volume number, pages, or if relevant, the key-word in the case of a handbook.

5.5.2. Depending on the client's order and his previous knowledge, an overview should be given in which all available sources are listed and an explanation of how suitable each source was in answering the research questions.

5.5.3. If a source was examined partly, but not completely, it is to be mentioned to which extent it was examined.

5.5.4. The source citation may be summarised if the other items under no. 5.5 are observed.

5.5.4.1. For church records, it is usually sufficient to mention the denomination, place and, if there is more than one in a place, the parish, as long as the entry can be found without undue effort. If the entry was found outside the usual order of entries or at an unexpected place, this must be mentioned separately.

5.5.4.2. In addition to the prerequisites given in no. 5.5.3.1. entries for birth/christening, marriage and/or death/burial may only then be cited without complete source citation, if the professional genealogist himself took the excerpt from the respective church book.

5.5.5. If the professional genealogist, partly or completely, lets a third party do the research (e.g. sub-contract, correspondence), the report should mention the sources used by the third party as well as the third party's name. In this case separate reference to sources used is not necessary if the research report from the third party or the written answer provided by the third party is a part of or an enclosure to the research report.

5.5.6. If the research is done by an office with several partners or employees, the persons involved need not be mentioned.

5.6. The citation of place, date and sources must be so extensive that it can be verified or disproved by a skilled genealogist.

5.6.1. In the case of place names, special attention has to be paid if there is more than one place with that name.

5.6.2. A research report must have a form that enables a skilled genealogist to continue the research without repeating work that already has been done.

5.7. Abbreviations are permissible, but should be explained, if they are not common in the report language.

5.8. If the research leads to questions or different possibilities, the report has to contain the reasoning with all elements of argumentation why just this answer to the question or this option was chosen. The argumentation must contain all clues, arguments and conclusions for as well as against a certain option. A skilled genealogist must be able to follow the argumentation.

5.9. If dates or documents are missing, the report has to mention the possible or probable reasons for their lack. The possibilities are:

5.9.1. The source is completely missing.

5.9.2. The source is chronologically incomplete (gaps in the register).

5.9.3. The register is complete but the specific entry searched for is missing. In such cases it should be mentioned where the entry might be found elsewhere.

5.9.4. The source is factually incomplete (e.g. a military church book usually only contains entries for military dependants).

5.10. If an entry is indecipherable the reason for the indecipherability should be given. Possible reasons include:

5.10.1. The handwriting itself is indecipherable.

5.10.2. A part of the text is missing (part of the page has been torn or cut off, destroyed by parasites, or a page has been torn out of the book).

5.10.3. The ink has faded to the point of indecipherability.

5.10.4. The section or entry is unreadable in a reproduction (e.g. microfilm), it may be decipherable in the original.

5.10.5. It should also be mentioned if the text appears to be completely unreadable or whether someone else may be able to decipher it.

5.11. In the case of later additions to a document the fact of the entry having been made later should be mentioned.

5.12. In any case, the research report should make clear in which way dates were obtained.

5.12.1. It should be clearly stated whether dates were obtained in the sources, calculated or estimated.

5.12.1.1. If a date was directly obtained from a source it may be recorded without needing the information that it was directly obtained from a source.

5.12.1.2. With calculated day dates it is imperative that it is stated that the date has been calculated.

5.12.2. When a gap in a record is filled in or an indecipherable text is interpreted it should be stated whether the completion is based on the comparison of handwriting elsewhere in the text, on assumption or a contextual deduction. This is particularly important if the information is needed for the basis of identification of a person or filiation.

5.12.3. Certain normally used short forms of expression (e.g. question marks, ..., or parentheses) may be used although they must be unambiguous. Particularly when using question marks it must be explained from the beginning if they are meant to represent an indecipherable entry, a calculated date or anything else.

5.12.4. The statement of dates on the basis of an average (e.g. average age of marriage, average age of death) is unprofessional as such conclusions can be drawn by anyone, if they so wish, but offer no possible gain in information or knowledge.

5.13. The research report should suggest further possibilities for research depending upon the order and its scope.

5.13.1. If a question is not answered or if contradictions are not resolved it should be mentioned which existing sources are available which might help solve the problem.

5.13.2. If all questions within the scope of the research have been answered but the available sources or type of source have not been thoroughly exhausted, then this should be mentioned and it should be stated for which time period or in which way these sources could still prove of value.

5.13.3. If a certain source or type of source has been exhausted then it can be stated which other sources would come into question for further research and in what way they could be used.

5.13.4. If further research leads to another research realm then a specialist for this realm may be referred to.

5.14. The research report may be kept in short or summary form, depending on the client's previous knowledge, or it may refer to earlier reports.

6. Conduct with regard to colleagues

6.1. The professional genealogists keep on good terms with their colleagues.

6.1.1. The professional genealogists maintain professional privacy.

6.1.2. The professional genealogist commits himself not to gain advantage from illegal behaviour or monopolization of basically public sources.

6.2. The professional genealogist fulfils his obligations to his colleagues.

6.2.1. Here the guidelines apply as they do for conduct with regard to clients (c.f. point 7.) especially if a professional genealogist engages the services of another professional genealogist.

6.3. The client has completely free choice to engage the services of any professional genealogist.

6.3.1. A professional genealogist may not attempt to actively attract the clients of a colleague. Comments, which could be seen as detrimental to the credit or reputation of a colleague, are to

be avoided unless they are based on concrete evidence that the maker of the comments must be able to supply.

Furthermore the work of a colleague may only be criticised in the framework of a professional publication or as part of a scientific debate or if it has become part of the research report, which a professional genealogist is working on. Within this framework the professional genealogist is allowed free reign to evaluate the working methods, education, experience and actual produced work of a colleague, in particular if this evaluation leads the professional genealogist to a different result to that which has been proposed by the colleague in question.

6.3.2. If the client chooses to change from one professional genealogist to another the professional genealogist who was initially engaged may not hinder his successor.

6.3.2.1. If the successor to a project has any questions these must be answered by the predecessor.

6.4. In case of recognisable errors in the work of a colleague, he is to be given the opportunity to explain, correct or defend his work before any further action or evaluation takes place.

6.5. The case of a difference of opinion between professional genealogists, as far as they are members of the Association, is always in the first instance to be decided by the arbitration board made up by members of the Association. This includes cases in which the problem lies in the principal/agent relationship.

7. Conduct with regard to clients

7.1. The client's privacy is to be respected. Information which becomes known to the professional genealogist in the course of his research, is to be treated confidentially if it concerns persons living or dead for less than ten years.

7.2. Experience, knowledge and integrity are always to be used to the advantage of the client.

7.3. The professional genealogist is obliged to correspond with the client in the clients mother tongue, unless otherwise agreed upon. If approached by a prospective client whose mother tongue is not known to him then the professional genealogist can suggest a common international language such as English.

7.4. Letters and enquiries from clients or the curious are always to be answered as long as they: include a stamped addressed envelope, have a pertinence to the profession of genealogist, are serious, understandable and fairly specific in their enquiry.

7.4.1. The first reaction to an enquiry should take place within three months after receipt, not including holiday periods.

7.4.2. The answer to an enquiry should at least include: availability for specific work, style and form of the research report, a time span for the research and the expected fee for services.

7.4.3. A fee is not to be charged for the answer to an enquiry as described in 7.4.2. If the time required for looking through the materials provided by the interested party is significantly more than usual the professional genealogist can inform the interested party that looking through the materials will only follow if he can charge a fee.

7.5. If a commission is accepted it must be completed in so far as this is realistically and legally possible.

7.5.1. Unless otherwise arranged the client cannot insist that the work is personally carried out by the agent. The agent can choose employees or commission a third party to work on the order.

7.5.2. In the case of 7.5.1. the legality and the content of the order remain the responsibility of the professional genealogist commissioned by the client.

7.6. If the start of or carrying out of the research is delayed, the client must be informed by way of a progress report - at least once a year.

7.7. There is no upper limit to the fee a professional genealogist can charge for his/her work.

7.7.1. The professional genealogist is not restricted to a standard fee for all clients.

7.7.2. The fee agreed between client and professional genealogist is valid up to the point when a new fee is agreed upon.

7.7.2.1. A newly agreed fee is seen as valid and accepted if the professional genealogist informs the client of the change with reference to future work and receives no argument within a set deadline.

7.7.3.2. An invoice with a higher than agreed upon fee is not valid if the client has not previously been informed of the change.

7.7.4. The professional genealogist may not charge higher fees than previously agreed upon.

7.7.4.1. If a client's order is based on a quotation then a variation of up to 15% more is acceptable.

7.7.4.2. The offer of the professional genealogist has to precisely define whether it concerns a one-off package price or whether it concerns a quotation, in which the end price could vary.

7.8. The professional genealogist can calculate his fees on the basis of time (hourly, daily or weekly rate) or on the basis of result (fee for each person or each piece of data found), or in the case of a specific goal the price can be calculated as a "package".

7.8.1. Once a mode of calculation has been agreed upon it cannot be changed only on the side of the professional genealogist.

7.8.2. When calculating the price on the basis of time the professional genealogist is not guaranteeing success. The contract is based on services rendered, not on a definite result.

7.8.3. In cases of doubt the contract is based on the German definition of a "Dienstvertrag" (payment for services rendered), not a "Werkvertrag" (payment for a specific result or production of a finished object).

7.8.4. If the professional genealogist calculates his price on the basis of time he may only charge for time truly spent on the project.

7.8.5. Time-based calculations can have different rates for time spent on research, office and administration, writing the research report or travel, but this is not compulsory.

7.9. The client may only be charged for work which concerns the research and which is relevant and fitting to helping the project proceed.

7.9.1. In regards to the question what is to be researched, the client's wishes as expressed in the order are predominant.

7.9.1.1. Here the literal meaning of the words is not critical, but rather what the client according to common sense probably intended.

7.9.1.2. If there any doubts or queries about the content of the order they must be cleared up. Time spent on a research project at random, based merely on the hope that the client will accept the result, cannot be charged to the client.

7.9.2. The professional genealogist can charge for office administration time as well as research time. The administration can cover all areas linked to the research project, such as making the offer, the invoicing and correspondence with the client and the time taken to study the specific case.

7.9.3. The professional genealogist may conduct research within the framework of scientific procedure or if it suggests itself within the specific case, even if it is questionable whether this will lead to specific results for the project. However, when questioned he must be able to give sound reasons as to why the research was carried out. Such research should restrict itself to a framework in relation to the order/project as a whole. This is not the case if the overall order is a risk-based project.

7.9.4. In the case of research which is to be carried out again or additionally, because the former research contained errors, a difference is seen between the following cases:

7.9.4.1. If the error has been made by the client or if the error has been made by, indeed, the professional genealogist but is based on incomplete, delayed or false information or documents provided by the client, then the professional genealogist can charge the client for the extra work necessary to correct the error.

7.9.4.2. If the error has been made through gross negligence on the part of the professional genealogist, the client cannot be charged for repeated or new research above and beyond the point where the error was made. Gross negligence is here also meant to include incompetent knowledge of sources.

7.9.4.3. If the error is on the part of the professional genealogist after he/she has thoroughly checked the relevant sources and has proceeded on established scientific research principles, if the error, in fact, could also have been made by another specialist, then charging the client for additional or re-research is permitted. The professional genealogist should however offer a price reduction of his/her own choosing, depending upon how grave the error was. It is particularly recommended that the client and professional genealogist reach an agreement. The client is in a better position to accept the further charges when the professional genealogist can offer a detailed and valid explanation of how the error was made.

7.9.4.4. If the error is based on a false identification or other false conclusion then the same applies as stated in 7.9.4.3., i.e. if the false identification or false conclusion occurs within a

scientifically correct methodology and the professional genealogist can offer a valid explanation why in this instance he/she made this conclusion and not another. This explanation must fall within the standards of correct methodological practice.

7.9.4.5. If an error can only be corrected on the base of consulting additional, newly discovered sources that were not consulted earlier and these sources were truly previously unknown to the experts, then the professional genealogist can charge the client for his/her efforts in researching the newly discovered sources.

7.9.4.6. If the professional genealogist can prove that the work was indeed carried out then the onus is on the client to prove an error has been made if the client does not wish to pay for the part of the work that he/she believes contains an error. There are no strict rules as to how the carrying out of research is to be proved as in general research is not meant to leave a trail. It is sufficient to appear in visitor lists, in so far as the archives involved have such lists, to keep order forms for archives and to keep an accurate record of the dates research was done and the sources used.

7.10. The client can insist on a detailed invoice (time, itemised costs) from the professional genealogist. The professional genealogist is however not obliged to deliver an itemised invoice if it is not insisted upon, but may as well deliver an invoice stating the final sum.

7.11. The professional genealogist is not obliged to receive the client personally (c.f. point 3.3. above).

7.12. Disagreements

7.12.1. In the case of a disagreement between the client and the professional genealogist, the professional genealogist should get in touch with the arbitration board in the first instance.

7.12.2. The Association recommends that their members always refer to the internal arbitration board in the first instance for matters of disagreement between client and professional genealogist. In so far as this is done the arbitration board is always the court of first instance.

7.12.3. The professional genealogist is obliged in cases of disagreement to disclose all relevant information to the arbitration board. When it is requested he/she should also allow access to all records.

8. Area of validity

8.1. Unlike the "Binding Professional Rules of Conduct" these general guidelines are not obligatory, they provide rather a guide for professional activities and for the training and further qualification of professional genealogists.

8.2. The Association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists recommends that its members use the "Binding Professional Rules of Conduct" as an element of their contractual arrangements with clients, as long as the "Binding Professional Rules of Conduct" do not exclusively refer to matters of conduct between members.

8.3. These professional rules of conduct are valid until the Association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists determines new ones.

These guidelines were adopted by the Association of German-Speaking Professional Genealogists on the occasion of the general meeting on 18 September 1993.