



# Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board Standards

## 1. Scope

1.1 *Statement of purpose* - The Standards of the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB Standards) are intended for the evaluation of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) seeking FSAB accreditation. The FSAB exists to accredit and oversee CABs offering certification to individuals who practice a forensic specialty. The FSAB Standards, with which FSAB-accredited CABs shall comply, are designed to include all the procedural requirements of the ISO/IEC Standard 17024, thereby permitting FSAB-accredited CABs to accurately claim ISO 17024 compliance.

## 2. References

The following documents were referenced in preparing this Standard. The latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

2.1 ISO/IEC 17024 (second edition, July 1, 2012), Conformity assessment - General requirements for bodies operating certification of individuals

2.2 ISO/IEC 17011 (first edition, September 1, 2004), Conformity assessment - General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

## 3. Terms and definitions

In this FSAB Standard, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or capability

The following definitions are specific to this document and appear alphabetically:

### 3.1 *accreditation*

the procedure by which the FSAB gives formal recognition that a CAB is certifying forensic practitioners in accordance with FSAB standards

### 3.2 *appeal*

a request by an individual in the certification process (applicant, candidate, or certificant) for reconsideration of a decision made by the CAB regarding his or her certification status

### 3.3 *applicant*

an individual who has submitted an application to a CAB with the objective to become certified

*3.4 assessment*

process that evaluates an individual's fulfillment of the requirements of the certification program

*3.5 audit*

an assessment undertaken by the CAB to determine compliance with CAB standards

*3.6 CAB (conformity assessment body)*

body that performs conformity assessment services of forensic specialty practitioners and can be the object of FSAB accreditation

*3.7 candidate*

an applicant whose application has been reviewed and who is eligible to take an examination

*3.8 certificant*

individual who holds a current and valid certificate of competence

*3.9 certificate*

document issued by a CAB under the provisions of this FSAB Standard, once the named individual has fulfilled the certification requirements

*3.10 certification process*

activities by which a CAB determines that an individual fulfills certification requirements, including application, assessment, decisions on certification and recertification, and use of certificates and logos/marks

*3.11 certification program*

competence and other requirements related to specific occupational or skilled categories of individuals

*3.12 certification requirements*

a set of specified mandatory elements for establishing and/or maintaining certificant status

*3.13 competence*

the ability of an individual to perform effectively in a given area

*3.14 complaint*

an expression of dissatisfaction, other than an appeal, by any individual or organization to a CAB about its activities or those of an individual certified by it, where a response is expected

*3.15 credentialing*

the process by which an individual's education, training and work experience are reviewed against CAB standards

3.16 *documents*

Policies, manuals, instructions, forms, and templates, related to a management system. Documents are indexed, inventoried, and uniquely identified.

3.17 *examination*

mechanism that measures a candidate's competence by means such as written, oral, practical and observational

3.18 *examiner*

an individual competent to conduct and score an examination (3.17), where the examination requires professional judgement

3.19 *fairness*

equal opportunity for success provided to each candidate in the certification process

3.20 *forensic specialty*

an area of expertise in which the practitioner (1) applies scientific or technical practices to the recognition, collection, analysis, or interpretation of evidence for criminal and civil law or regulatory issues, and (2) issues test results, provides reports, or provides interpretations, conclusions, or opinions through testimony with respect to such evidence.

3.21 *grandfathering*

granting certification to an individual who has not been tested for knowledge and/or competence in the field as approved by the body awarding certification

3.22 *impartiality*

the presence of objectivity, fairness, independence, freedom from bias

NOTE 1: Objectivity means that conflicts of interest do not exist, or are resolved, so as not to adversely influence subsequent activities of the CAB.

3.23 *independent*

having no vested interest in the outcome of the certification/accreditation activity

3.24 *interested party*

individual, group or organization affected by the performance of a certified person or the certification body

Examples: Certified person; user of the services of the certified person; employer of the certified person; consumer; governmental authority

3.25 *management system*

the organizational structure, responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources for implementing quality management. Top management is the person or group of people who directs and controls an organization at the highest level.

### 3.26 *personnel*

individuals carrying out activities for the CAB

### 3.27 *primary training*

training required to establish initial competency in a forensic speciality

### 3.28 *proctor*

individual who monitors the written examination or practical component of a certification system, but does not evaluate the competence of the candidate

### 3.29 *psychometrics*

a measurement of reliability and validity of examinations

### 3.30 *qualification*

demonstrated education, training and work experience, where applicable

### 3.31 *recertification*

the process (however named) whereby an individual previously certified in a forensic specialty, renews that certification after a defined period of time, and after satisfying published criteria

### 3.32 *records*

Data and objective evidence that the management documents are followed, such as records of the current status of a certified individual, recertification, suspension or loss of certification, examination development, credentialing, certificates, and other written proof (audit reports, meeting minutes etc.), of the observance of applicable policies and procedures. Records state results achieved or provide evidence of activities performed.

### 3.33 *related bodies*

a body linked to the CAB by common ownership, in whole or part, and has common members of the board of directors, contractual arrangements, common names, common staff, informal understanding or other means, such that the related body has a vested interest in any certification decision or has a potential ability to influence the process

### 3.34 *reliability (examinations)*

degree to which an examination provides a consistent measure of competency through offerings at different times and locations

### 3.35 *study guide*

Materials prepared by a CAB to acquaint applicants with test content and scope. Study Guides should include, at a minimum, any book chapters or other published material from which test questions are taken; the test format, education, training and/or experience requirements and pass/fail criteria. Guides may include sample questions, scenarios or practice materials. Guides should contain a reasonable amount of relevant material

### 3.36 *surveillance*

periodic monitoring, during the periods of certification, of a certified individual's performance to ensure continued compliance with the certification program

### 3.37 *validity (examinations)*

degree to which an examination measures competencies it is designed to assess

## 4. CAB (Conformity Assessment Body)

### 4.1 General Provisions

4.1.1 *Mechanisms* - All mechanisms used by the CAB to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the applicants shall possess the attributes of reliability, validity, and non-discrimination.

4.1.2 *Memberships not required* - Certification bodies shall not require membership in any other professional organization for certification; nor shall they impose undue financial requirements for certification. The CAB shall not use procedures to impede or inhibit access to the certification process by the applicants, except as provided in this Standard.

4.1.3 *Approved training courses shall not compromise impartiality* - Successful completion of an approved training course may be a requirement of a certification program but recognition/approval of training courses by the CAB shall not compromise impartiality, or reduce the demands of the evaluation and certification requirements.

4.1.3.1 *Information re: training* - The CAB shall provide information regarding education and training if they are used as pre-requisites for being eligible for certification. However, the CAB shall not state or imply that certification would be simpler, easier or less expensive if any specified education/training services are used.

4.1.3.2 *Threats to impartiality* - The CAB shall document any threats to impartiality related to training provided by the CAB, and shall have in place procedures and policies to eliminate or minimize those threats.

4.1.3.3 *Non-participation of trainers* - The CAB shall ensure that any individual involved in the training of a candidate not participate as an examiner of that candidate for at least two years after the conclusion of the candidate's training.

4.1.4 *Criteria used* - The criteria used to evaluate candidates for certification shall be only those published by the CAB. The criteria shall be periodically updated consistent with changes in the discipline.

4.1.5 *Knowledgeable personnel* - The personnel who make certification decisions shall have sufficient knowledge of and experience with the certification process to determine if the certification requirements have been met.

4.1.6 *Notice of changes* - The CAB shall give reasonable notice to all certificants (and as practical, other interested parties) of any changes to its certification requirements, the exact nature of the changes, and their effective date.

## 4.2 Management System

4.2.1 *Legal entity* - The CAB shall be a legally identifiable entity or part of such an entity.

4.2.1.1 *Line of authority* - When the certification body is a defined part of a legal entity, documentation of the organizational structure shall include the line of authority and the relationship to other parts within the same legal entity.

4.2.2 *Independent and impartial* - The CAB shall be independent and impartial in all matters of certification. All decisions relating to certification shall be the responsibility of the CAB's governing board and not be subject to undue influence or approval by another body.

4.2.3 *Structured for Confidence* - The CAB shall be structured as to give confidence to interested parties in its competence, impartiality and integrity. The CAB shall make available a publicly accessible statement affirming its understanding of the importance of impartiality in its certification activities.

4.2.4 *Identify threats* - The certifying body shall proactively identify either internal or external threats to its impartiality, which may arise from its activities, or from its relationships.

4.2.5 *Plan of action against threats* - The certifying body shall document and carry out a plan of action to minimize or eliminate all identified threats.

4.2.6 *Formal nominating procedures* - The CAB shall use formal procedures for nominating members to its board. The current board members shall not nominate a majority of their successors.

4.2.7 *Documentation of committees* - The CAB shall have documentation outlining the committees and individuals responsible for each component of each certification program offered. Documentation shall be reviewed annually or more frequently if necessary.

4.2.7.1 *Up-to-date records* - The CAB shall maintain up-to-date personnel records, including relevant information, e.g. qualifications, training, experience, professional affiliations, professional status, competence and conflicts of interest.

4.2.7.2 *Personnel sign agreements* - The CAB shall require its personnel to sign a document in which they agree to comply with the rules defined by the CAB, including those relating to confidentiality, impartiality and conflict of interests.

4.2.7.3 *Impartiality of employees* - When a CAB certifies an individual it employs, the CAB shall adopt procedures to maintain impartiality.

4.2.7.4 *Enforceable arrangements* - The CAB shall have enforceable arrangements to require that the certified individual informs the CAB, without delay, of matters that can affect the capability of the certified individual to continue to fulfill the certification requirements.

4.2.8 *Sufficient resources* - The CAB shall have sufficient financial, human and logistical resources to fulfill its mission.

4.2.9 *Confidentiality and objectivity of program* - The CAB shall ensure that any training or related activities conducted do not compromise the confidentiality, objectivity or impartiality of its certification program, or reduce the assessment and certification requirements.

4.2.10 *Documents and records* - The CAB shall maintain documents and records in a secure manner. These records will include the current status of a certified individual and documentation supporting granting of certification, recertifying and any suspension or loss of certification.

4.2.10.1 *Policies and procedures* - Top management ensures that the policies and procedures of the management system are understood at all levels of the organization.

4.2.10.2 *Quality management* - Top management shall appoint a member of management charged with the responsibility of ensuring the implementation and maintenance of the management system. The individual reports to top management about the performance of the management system including any improvements needed.

4.2.10.3 *Document control* - Procedures shall define and ensure:

- the updating and re-approval process for documents
- the identification of changes before re-approval of updated documents
- the identification of current document versions
- the availability of applicable documents as needed for users
- the distribution of documents
- the control of external documents

4.2.10.4 *Records control* - Procedures shall define the controls for identification, storage, protection, retrieval, retention time, and disposition of the records.

4.2.11 *Appeals against decisions on certification* - The CAB shall have policies and procedures for the resolution of appeals and include at least the following elements:

4.2.11.1 *Description available* - A description of the appeals process shall be accessible without request. The procedures shall treat all parties fairly and equitably.

4.2.11.2 *Decisions by committee* - All decisions in the appeals process shall be made by a committee of at least three individuals.

4.2.11.3 *Process for appeals* - The process for receiving, validating and investigating the appeal, and for deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it, taking into account the results of previous similar appeals.

4.2.11.4 *Tracking appeals* - Tracking and recording appeals, including actions undertaken to resolve them.

4.2.11.5 *Corrective actions* - Ensuring that, if applicable, appropriate corrections and corrective actions are taken.

4.2.11.6 *Impartiality and timeliness* - The policies and procedures shall ensure that all appeals are dealt with in a constructive, impartial and timely manner.

4.2.11.7 *No discrimination* - Submission, investigation and decision on appeals or complaints shall not result in any discriminatory actions against the appellant or complainant.

4.2.11.8 *Acknowledgement of receipt and notification of outcome* - The CAB shall acknowledge receipt of the appeal and provide the appellant with progress reports and formal notification of the outcome at the end of the appeals or complaint process.

4.2.12 *Complaints Process* - The CAB shall have a documented process to receive, evaluate, investigate and make decisions on complaints and include at least the following elements:

4.2.12.1 *Description available* - A description of the complaints-handling process shall be accessible without request. The procedures shall treat all parties fairly and equitably.

4.2.12.2 *Decisions by committee* - All decisions in the complaints process shall be made by a committee of at least three individuals. The decision to be communicated to the complainant shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, personnel not previously involved in the subject of the complaint.

4.2.12.3 *Complaints policies and procedures* - The policies and procedures shall ensure that all complaints are handled and processed in a constructive, impartial and timely manner.

4.2.12.4 *Process for complaints* - An outline of the process for receiving, validating, investigating the complaint and deciding what actions are to be taken in response to it.

4.2.12.5 *Documenting complaints* - Tracking and recording complaints, including actions undertaken in response to them.

4.2.12.6 *Corrective actions* - Ensuring that, if applicable, appropriate corrections and corrective actions are taken.

4.2.12.7 *Initial evaluation of complaint* - Upon receipt of a complaint, the CAB shall confirm whether the complaint relates to certification activities for which it is responsible and, if so, shall respond accordingly.

4.2.12.8 *Acknowledgement of receipt and notification of outcome* - Whenever possible, the CAB shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide the complainant with progress reports and the outcome.

4.2.12.9 *Responsibility of CAB* - The CAB receiving a complaint shall be held responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to validate or dismiss the complaint.

4.2.12.10 *Referral to certified individual* - Any substantiated complaint about a certified individual shall also be referred by the CAB to the certified individual in question at an appropriate time.

4.2.12.11 *Confidentiality* - The complaints-handling process shall be subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint.

4.2.13 *Other activities* - The CAB shall have policies and procedures that distinguish between the certification of individuals and any other activities.

### **4.3 Subcontracting**

4.3.1 *No vested interest* - If a subcontractor is used for any purpose, the subcontractor shall have no vested interest or other conflict with the task being performed.

4.3.2 *Documentation* - If a subcontractor is used, a properly documented agreement covering the arrangement, including confidentiality and prevention of a conflict of interest, shall be drawn up.

4.3.2.1 *List of outsourced organizations* - The CAB shall maintain a list of the bodies conducting the outsourced work.

4.3.2.2 *Certification decision not outsourced* - The decision on certification shall not be outsourced.

4.3.3 *Responsibility for oversight* - If a subcontractor is used, the certifying body is responsible for ensuring that the subcontractor performs the work in a manner consistent with these Standards.

#### **4.4 Policies and Procedures**

4.4.1 *P&P Manual* - The CAB shall establish a Policies and Procedures Manual for the administration of its program.

4.4.2 *Nondiscriminatory* - The policies and procedures shall be fair, objective and nondiscriminatory, and shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws.

4.4.3 *Define evaluation mechanisms* - The CAB shall define and implement the methods and mechanisms to be used to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of candidates.

4.4.4 *Address status inquiries* - The Policies and Procedures Manual shall address internal and external inquiries regarding the certification status of an individual.

#### **4.5 Management System and Review**

4.5.1 *P&P Manual* - The nature and extent of the management system shall be outlined in a Policies and Procedures Manual. This Manual shall include procedures that address the following:

4.5.1.1 *Management of documents* - Approval of documents for adequacy prior to issue, review and approval of updates, posting of applicable documents, removal of obsolete documents, and archiving of documents.

4.5.1.2 *Policy statement* - A policy statement describing establishment and implementation of a management system of the certification. Documentation shall demonstrate support from top management and be distributed to all relevant personnel.

4.5.1.3 *Describe organizational structure* - A description of the organizational structure of the CAB, including all positions and committees; and a brief description of the function and responsibilities of each position and committee. A designated manager shall be responsible for establishment of the processes and procedures needed for the management system and reporting to top management on the effectiveness of the system.

4.5.1.4 *Policies to issue/revoke certificates* - The policies and procedures for the issuance and revocation of certificates or related documents.

4.5.1.5 *Policies for examinations and certification* - The policies and procedures for examining and certifying applicants.

4.5.1.6 *Policies for Appeals, Complaints* - The policies and procedures for processing appeals, complaints, inquiries, disputes, or information alleging adverse behavior or activities.

4.5.2 *Management review* - The CAB shall designate an individual to conduct a documented, review or audit of its management system and records annually to ensure that they are complete and up to date.

4.5.2.1 *Review input* - The input to the management review shall include information related to the following:

4.5.2.1.1 *Other audit results* - Results of internal and external audits (e.g. accreditation body assessment);

4.5.2.1.2 *Feedback* - Feedback from applicants, candidates, certified individuals and interested parties related to the fulfillment of this Standard

4.5.2.1.3 *Impartiality* - Safeguarding impartiality;

4.5.2.1.4 *Preventive/Corrective Actions* - The status of preventive and corrective actions;

4.5.2.1.5 *Previous Reviews* - Follow-up actions from previous management reviews;

4.5.2.1.6 *Objectives* - Fulfillment of objectives; appeals and complaints.

4.5.2.1.7 *Changes* - Changes that could affect the management system;

4.5.2.1.8 *Appeals and complaints* - Appeals and complaints received by the certification board.

4.5.2.2 *Review output* - The output from the management review shall include as a minimum decisions and actions related to the following:

4.5.2.2.1 *Improve effectiveness* - Improvement of the effectiveness of the management system and its processes;

4.5.2.2.2 *Improve program* - Improvement of the certification services related to the fulfillment of this Standard;

4.5.2.2.3 *Improve resources* - Resource needs.

#### 4.5.3 *Internal Audits*

4.5.3.1 *Audits* - The CAB shall establish policies and procedures for conducting periodic internal audits of the certification program, taking into account the importance of the areas to be audited.

4.5.3.2 *Audit frequency* - Internal audits shall be conducted annually. The frequency of internal audits may be reduced if the CAB demonstrates that its management system continues to be effectively implemented in accordance with this Standard and has proven stability.

4.5.3.3 *Audit requirements* - The internal audits ensure that:

4.5.3.3.1 *Designated individual* - The internal audit shall be the responsibility of a designated individual, knowledgeable in the certification process and requirements of this standard, who reports to the highest level of management of the CAB;

4.5.3.3.2 *No self-auditing* - Auditors do not audit their own work;

4.5.3.3.3 *Personnel informed of outcome* - Personnel responsible for the area audited will be informed of the outcome of the audit;

4.5.3.3.4 *Resulting actions* - Any actions taken resulting from the audit will be timely and appropriate;

4.5.3.3.5 *Improvement* - Any opportunities for improvement be identified as a result of the auditing process.

4.5.4 *Preventive and Corrective Actions* - The CAB shall establish procedures for identification and management of nonconformities and take preventive and corrective action when necessary to eliminate causes and prevent recurrence. Preventive and corrective actions shall be appropriate to the impact of the problems. The procedures shall define requirements for the following:

4.5.4.1 *Identifying nonconformities* - Identifying nonconformities;

4.5.4.2 *Causes* - Determining causes of nonconformity;

4.5.4.3 *Correcting* - Correcting nonconformity;

4.5.4.4 *Need for actions* - Evaluating the need for actions to insure that nonconformities do not recur;

4.5.4.5 *Implementing actions* - Determining and implementing the actions needed in a timely manner;

4.5.4.6 *Documenting* - Recording the results of actions taken;

4.5.4.7 *Effectiveness* - Reviewing the effectiveness of preventive and/or corrective actions.

**4.6 Certification Program Development** - The CAB shall have documents to demonstrate that, in the development and review of the certification program, the following were included:

4.6.1 *Involve experts* - The involvement of appropriate experts;

4.6.2 *Appropriate structure* - The use of an appropriate structure that fairly represents the interests of all parties significantly concerned, without any interest predominating;

4.6.3 *Prerequisites* - The identification and alignment of prerequisites, if applicable, with the competence requirements;

4.6.4 *Assessment mechanisms* - The identification and alignment of the assessment mechanisms with the competence requirements;

4.6.5 *Job analysis* - A job or practice analysis that is conducted and updated to:

4.6.5.1 *Identify tasks* - Identify the tasks for successful performance of the job;

4.6.5.2 *Identify competence* - Identify the required competence (ability) to perform each task;

4.6.5.3 *Identify prerequisites* - Identify prerequisites (if applicable) for the job;

4.6.5.4 *Confirm* - Confirm the assessment mechanisms and examination content;

4.6.5.5 *Recertification* - Identify the recertification requirements and interval.

4.6.6 *Bibliography* - A collection of published peer-reviewed articles addressing the specialties practiced by the CAB's certificants.

Note: CABs may have to do some of these activities “retroactively” to achieve ISO 17024 compliance. It is acceptable that they be done prior to reaccreditation if not done previously, but they are required according to ISO 17024.

## 4.7 Scope of Program and Available Documentation

4.7.1 *Website information required* - The certifying body shall have the scope of each certification program clearly defined and available to the public through a website. The site shall include the following information:

4.7.1.1 *Organizational structure* - A description of the organizational structure and legal status of the organization;

4.7.1.2 *Program purpose* - Purpose of the certification program;

4.7.1.3 *Study guide* - A study guide, to include an outline of the scope of the program to include the areas covered by the certification and the required knowledge, skills, and abilities of applicants;

Note 1 - Abilities can include physical capabilities such as vision, hearing and mobility.

Note 2 - Study guide shall be sufficiently specific as to be useful to the applicant.

4.7.1.4 *Minimums* - The minimum education, training and experience required of applicants;

4.7.1.5 *Test procedures* - A description of the procedures used to test or evaluate the knowledge skills and abilities of the applicant;

4.7.1.6 *Certification standards* - The standards and rules for granting, maintaining, suspending and withdrawing of certificates;

Note: The description shall be sufficiently detailed that a third party can readily determine how certificants were assessed and the minimum qualifications and experience they were required to have prior to certification being granted. If the standards have undergone substantive changes, a description of the changes shall be listed as well as the date they became effective. For program changes that occurred several years ago for which detailed records may not be available, it is acceptable to list a chronology of changes with approximate dates.

4.7.1.7 *Training program evaluation criteria* - Criteria used for the evaluation of any required training program(s) /course(s) and/or trainer(s);

4.7.1.8 *Application form* - The application form and an outline of the application process;

- 4.7.1.9 *Exceptions disclosure* - A disclosure of any exceptions that may be made to the standards usually applied to certification of an individual and the rationale for that (e.g. waiver of a degree requirement)
- 4.7.1.10 *Use of marks/logos* - A description of restrictions or limitations on the use of the CAB's marks, and on ways of referring to the certificates granted;
- 4.7.1.11 *Directory* - A directory of certified individuals;
- 4.7.1.12 *Code of ethics* - A copy of the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct of the CAB;
- 4.7.1.13 *Outline of changes* - An outline of all substantive changes to the standards used to credential (evaluate), test and certify applicants;
- 4.7.1.14 *Appeals and complaints* - Descriptions of the appeals and complaints handling processes;
- 4.7.1.15 *Recertification* - The full description of the recertification procedure for certificants, including the minimum standards required and any alternate pathways for recertification (e.g. examination in lieu of sufficient continuing education requirements);
- 4.7.1.16 *Accurate information* - Information provided by the CAB, including advertising, shall be accurate and not misleading.
- 4.7.2 *Archiving* - All policies and procedures and all program documents describing the certification Standards of the CAB from its accreditation date forward for at least one accreditation cycle.
- 4.7.3 *Control dates* - The archiving of these documents shall include the date each became effective and date each was superseded or dropped.

## **4.8 Examination and Other Records**

- 4.8.1 *Maintain a records system* - The CAB shall maintain a record system appropriate to its particular circumstances and to comply with regulations. The records shall demonstrate that the certification requirements have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, evaluation reports and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, renewing, suspending and withdrawing certification or any other changes to the scope of certification of an individual.
- 4.8.2 *Confidentiality and retention procedures* - The CAB shall establish procedures to require that records be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information. The records shall be

kept for an appropriate period of time to demonstrate continued confidence for at least one full certification cycle, or as required by recognition arrangements, contractual, legal or other obligations.

4.8.3 *Examination records* - The CAB shall maintain the following records: dates of examinations, the target forensic specialty, and examination outcome.

4.8.4 *Archiving publications in support of validity/reliability* - The CAB shall archive relevant peer reviewed publications demonstrating validity and reliability of the specialty and its methods/applications.

## **4.9 Confidentiality**

4.9.1 *Policies and personnel* - The CAB shall establish documented policies and procedures for maintenance and release of information, and to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its activities, consistent with applicable laws. All personnel involved in the certification program shall agree in writing to maintain confidentiality and to disclose any potential conflict of interest.

4.9.2 *Disclosure and the law* - Except as described in these Standards, information about a particular individual shall not be disclosed to a third party without the written consent of that individual. Where the law requires disclosure, the individual shall be notified of the information provided.

4.9.3 *Related bodies* - The CAB shall ensure that the activities of related bodies do not compromise confidentiality.

## **4.10 Security**

4.10.1 *Security P&P* - The CAB shall develop and document policies and procedures necessary to ensure physical and digital security throughout the entire certification process and have measures in place to take corrective actions when security breaches occur. Examples would be firewalls, antivirus software, password protections, physical locks in security areas, proper security in proctoring centers, chain of custody of documents, confidentiality agreements.

## **4.11 Application Process**

4.11.1 *Response to inquiry for application* - Upon inquiry for application, the CAB shall provide an overview of the certification process in response to the query. As a minimum, the overview shall include the requirements for certification and its scope, a description of the assessment process, the applicant's rights, the duties of a certified individual and the fees.

4.11.2 *Application form requirements* - The CAB shall require the completion of an application, signed by the applicant seeking certification, which includes as a minimum the following:

4.11.2.1 *Identifying information* - Information required to identify the applicant, such as name, address and other information required by the certification program;

4.11.2.2 *Scope of interest* - The scope of the desired certification;

4.11.2.3 *Statement of compliance* - A statement that the applicant agrees to comply with the certification requirements and to supply any information needed for the assessment;

4.11.2.4 *Supporting information* - Any supporting information to demonstrate objectively compliance with the program prerequisites;

4.11.2.5 *Opportunity to request accommodations for special needs* - Notice to the applicant of his/her opportunity to declare, within reason, a request for accommodation of special needs in accordance with the Americans for Disabilities ACT;

4.11.2.6 *Electronic signature* - Where permitted by law, other methods, including electronic signature, are acceptable.

4.11.3 *Application review* - The CAB shall review the application to confirm that the applicant complies with the application requirements of the certification program.

**4.12 Site Visits** - In accordance with ISO/IEC 17011, the FSAB shall conduct on-site evaluations during accreditation and reaccreditation as a component of its accreditation responsibilities. To facilitate this process, the CAB shall:

4.12.1 *Select location* - Select the location(s) for the visit(s) to take place;

4.12.2 *Prepare documents* - Prepare all documents listed in the Site Visit Protocol (See Appendix A);

4.12.3 *Identify CAB representatives* - Identify in advance the CAB representatives who will participate in the site visit(s);

4.12.4 *Cooperate with assessors* - Cooperate with the FSAB assessors who conduct the site visit(s);

4.12.5 *Cover site visit expenses* - Be responsible for the expenses of the two FSAB assessors who conduct the site visit(s).

## 5. Certification Standards

### 5.1 General Provisions

5.1.1 *Meet or exceed criteria* - Certificates shall be awarded only to applicants who meet or exceed the criteria set by the CAB. These criteria shall be applied uniformly to all applicants and candidates.

5.1.2 *Minimum criteria* - These criteria shall include at minimum appropriate credentials, successful examination completion, and agreement to abide by defined ethical and professional standards.

5.1.3 *Recertification required* - The CAB shall require periodic recertification.

5.1.4 *No grandfathering* - Grandfathering is not an acceptable method of certification.

5.1.4.1 *50% rule re: grandfathering* - Certification bodies that used grandfathering and which were established prior to February 17, 2001, may apply for accreditation if not more than 50% of its certificants were grandfathered.

Note: An individual is considered “grandfathered” if the individual was issued a certificate without having taken and attained a satisfactory score in an examination designed to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities in the stated field of certification.

5.1.4.1.1 *Examination requirement* - Any grandfathered certificants shall be subjected to the same examination and competency assessment as new applicants (as defined in 5.3 of these Standards) no later than the regularly scheduled recertification for that individual, not to exceed a period of five years.

5.1.4.2 *CABs established after 2/17/01* - No CAB established after Feb 17, 2001, may apply for accreditation until all its certificates have been issued according to the Standards as defined section 5.1.4 of these Standards.

### 5.2 Credentialing

5.2.1 *Assessment and verification* - Credentialing of applicants shall include an assessment and verification of:

5.2.1.1 *Education/training* - Academic education and/or equivalent training, including specific subject requirements;

5.2.1.2 *Experience* - Relevant professional experience or employment;

5.2.1.3 *Training* - Sufficient relevant training to reach the competencies required for the specific field;

5.2.1.4 *Licensing* - Relevant professional licensure, certification, or registration.

### **5.3 General Requirements for Initial Professional Development or Training in a Forensic Specialty Area**

5.3.1 *Documentation of training* - To the extent practical, training shall be documented, to include a description of the nature and extent of training undertaken, any assessment of the trainee and outcome.

5.3.2 *Academic foundation* - For forensic specialties that have a strong academic foundation as a basis on which training and experience is based, the required knowledge and competency may be gained through a combination of mechanisms to include course work, workshops, and training courses.

5.3.3 *Experience-based foundation* - For certification bodies in the forensic specialties in which the required knowledge and competency is predominantly experience-based, the certificant applicant's education shall have included a formal training program requiring extensive peer-based review.

Note: A formal training program is one that has a pre-defined list of training topics and is conducted by one or more individuals with expertise in those areas. The nature of the training program, dates training occurred and the name of the trainer should be available. For training that occurred many years ago for which such records are not available, there should be a list of the training that did occur and which is considered equivalent, even if it did not occur over a contiguous time period. The training should be verifiable. Correspondence and conference attendance are not recognized as primary training in the forensic specialties. For skill-based training, the identity and qualifications of the trainer should be documented.

5.3.3.1 *Formal training program required* - Such a CAB previously accredited by the FSAB prior to 21 February 2010 will not be eligible for reaccreditation unless its requirements for those applying for certification mandate the formal training program described in 5.3.3.

5.3.3.2 *50% rule re: formal training* - Such a CAB applying for initial accreditation or reaccreditation shall be able to affirm that more than 50% of its certificants have gone through the formal training program described in 5.3.3.

5.3.3.3 *Nationally recognized training standards* - Where nationally recognized professional training standards exist for a particular forensic specialty, these should be followed.

## **5.4 Competency and Examination**

5.4.1 *Reliable examinations* - If competency is assessed, at least in part, by examination of relevant knowledge, skills and abilities, the CAB shall ensure that this examination provides a reliable assessment of the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities.

5.4.2. *Practical application of facts* - The examination, at least in part, shall require the candidate to apply forensic expertise of the discipline to a set of facts set out by the creators of the examination.

5.4.3 *Written component* - The examination shall include a written component.

## **5.5 Ethical and Professional Standards**

5.5.1 *Inquiry into standards* - The certification application process shall include inquiry into the applicant's adherence to ethical and professional standards.

5.5.2a *Written agreement* - The certification process shall require that the candidate agree in writing to abide by the ethical and professional standards identified by the CAB.

5.5.2b *P&P re: disciplinary actions* -The CAB shall have policies and procedures providing for disciplinary actions in an instance of breach of ethics or professional standards by a certificant.

## **6. Recertification**

### **6.1 General Program Requirements**

6.1.1 *Eligibility* - Only individuals who are currently certified are eligible for recertification.

6.1.2 *Program Requirements* - Recertification shall require successful demonstration of continuing professional development, competence, and work experience as well as reaffirmation of ethical and professional standards.

6.1.3 *Basis for Recertification Period* - The recertification period shall be based upon the

program requirements. The rationale for the recertification period shall take into account, where relevant, the following:

- 6.1.3.1 regulatory requirements;
- 6.1.3.2 changes to normative documents;
- 6.1.3.3 changes in the relevant program requirements;
- 6.1.3.4 the nature and maturity of the industry or field in which the certified individual is working;
- 6.1.3.5 the risks resulting from an incompetent individual;
- 6.1.3.6 ongoing changes in technology, and requirements for certificants;
- 6.1.3.7 requirements of interested parties;
- 6.1.3.8 the frequency and content of surveillance activities, if required by the program.

## **6.2 Continuing Professional Development**

6.2.1 *Professional development* - Continuing professional development includes, but is not limited to, ongoing learning, growth and professional development within the certificant's field of expertise.

6.2.2 *Professional development activities* - Measurement of continuing professional development may include, but is not be limited to, attending training courses or workshops, conferences, writing and/or review of, relevant publications, and conducting training (paid or unpaid).

6.2.3 *Documentation required* - Recertification shall require documentation of continuing professional development, the requirements for which shall be defined by the CAB.

6.2.4 *40 hours in 5 years* - The requirement for continuing professional development shall include at least 40 hours or point equivalents over 5 years.

6.2.5 *Multiple types* - The program shall allow credits for completing multiple types of activities.

6.2.6 *Examination* - Where an examination is used in lieu of sufficient professional development, the same general principles that apply to section 8 in these Standards apply.

Note: FSAB Standards do not require a certificant to take an examination in order to be re-certified. However, some certification boards may choose to administer an examination as a component of recertification. It is recognized that for some forensic specialties periodic demonstration of competency may be required by means of proficiency testing, case audits and audit of court testimony.

### **6.3 Work Experience**

6.3.1 *Work experience* - Recertification shall require documentation of continued relevant work experience, the requirements for which being defined by the CAB.

### **6.4 Ethical and Professional Standards**

6.4.1 *Ethical requirements* - Prior to recertification, certificants shall be provided with current versions of ethical and professional standards identified by the CAB.

Note: "Ethics and professional standards" may be contained in one single or two separate documents.

6.4.2 *Affirmation in writing* - Recertification shall require certificants to reaffirm in writing that they will continue to adhere to the ethical and professional standards identified by the CAB.

## **7. Competency Evaluation Personnel**

### **7.1 Training and Instruction**

7.1.1 *Examiner competency* - Examiners shall be responsible individuals who have received training or instruction appropriate for the tasks they perform.

### **7.2 Conflicts of Interest**

7.2.1 *Objectivity of examiners* - Proctors, examiners and appraisers shall avoid situations that affect or appear to affect their objectivity, in performing the tasks they are assigned.

## **8. Examination for Initial Certification**

**8.1 Valid and reliable** - Examinations shall be designed to evaluate a candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities in a valid and reliable fashion.

**8.2 Periodic review** - The CAB shall define an interval and periodically review the validity, reliability, fairness and performance characteristics of the examinations given to candidates. All deficiencies found shall be remedied.

Note: An example of performance characteristics would be the correct/incorrect rate for the answer for each question.

**8.3 Currency** - Examinations shall be revised periodically to maintain their currency.

**8.4 Preparation of examinations** - Examinations shall be prepared by individuals who have sufficient knowledge, skills, abilities and experience in the target forensic specialty.

**8.5 Content of examinations** - Examinations shall encompass the knowledge, skills and abilities required for competent practice within the target forensic specialty.

**8.6 Scoring of examinations** - The methods used for scoring and grading examinations shall be methodologically sound.

**8.7 Accommodating disabilities** - Reasonable accommodation shall be made for candidates with an identified disability according to the ADA.

**8.8 Administration of examinations** - Examinations shall be administered consistently in a manner that provides the environmental and physical conditions and security generally accepted as necessary for an examination (e.g. proctoring).

**8.9 Technical equipment** - When technical equipment is used in the examination process, the equipment shall be verified or calibrated where appropriate.

**8.10 Security of examinations** - Security policies and procedures shall include provisions to ensure the security of examination materials, taking into account the following:

8.10.1 *Storage and transport of examinations* - The locations of the materials (e.g. transportation, electronic delivery, disposal, storage, examination centre);

8.10.2 *Materials* - The nature of the materials (e.g. electronic, paper, test equipment);

8.10.3 *Process* - The steps in the examination process (e.g. development, administration, results reporting);

8.10.4 *Repeated use* - The threats arising from repeated use of examination materials.

**8.11 Fraud prevention** - Certification bodies shall prevent fraudulent examination practices by:

8.11.1 *Confidentiality* - Requiring candidates to sign a non-disclosure agreement or other agreement indicating their commitment not to release confidential examination materials or participate in fraudulent test-taking practices;

8.11.2 *Proctoring* - Requiring a proctor to be present;

8.11.3 *Confirming identity* - Confirming the identity of the candidate;

8.11.4 *Unauthorized aids* - Implementing procedures to prevent any unauthorized aids from being brought into the examination area;

8.11.5 *Unauthorized aids* - Preventing candidates from gaining access to unauthorized aids during the examination;

8.11.6 *Cheating* - Monitoring examination results for indications of cheating.

**8.12 Alternate examination** - If it becomes apparent that integrity of the examination has been compromised, a different comparable examination shall be offered.

**8.13 Re-examination** - Candidates who fail an examination shall not be re-examined immediately. The certifying body shall specify a mandatory minimum waiting period between examinations that not be less than 30 days.

**8.14 Decision makers** - The CAB shall ensure that the decision on certification is made by individuals different from those who carried out the evaluation.

## 9. Certificates

**9.1 Mark or Logo** - A CAB that provides a certification mark or logo shall document the conditions for use and appropriately manage the rights for usage and representation.

### 9.2 Issuance

9.2.1 *Form of certificate* - Certificates shall be issued upon the successful completion of all requirements of the certification program. The certificate may take the form of a letter, card or other document, signed or authorized by a responsible officer of the CAB.

9.2.2 *Ownership of certificates* - The CAB shall maintain sole ownership of the certificates.

Note: Individuals who retire and no longer can, or wish to, meet the standards required for recertification may, at the discretion of the certifying body, be given some form of retired status. However, such individuals may not be regarded as being “certified” by that body.

9.2.3 *Signed agreement* - The CAB shall require that a certified individual signs an agreement:

9.2.3.1 *No improper use* - Not to use the certification in such a manner as to bring the CAB into disrepute, and not to make any statement regarding the certification which the CAB considers misleading or unauthorized;

9.2.3.2 *Return of certificate* - To discontinue the use of all claims to current certification that contain any reference to the CAB or certification upon suspension or withdrawal of certification, and to return any unexpired certificates issued by the CAB;

9.2.3.3 *No misuse* - Not to use the certificate in a misleading manner.

9.2.4 *Anti-Counterfeit measures* - The certificate shall be designed to reduce the risks of counterfeiting.

9.2.5 *Corrective measures* - A CAB shall address, by means of corrective measures, any misuse of its certification mark or logo.

### **9.3 Contents**

9.3.1 *Minimal inclusions* -The certificate shall include at a minimum:

9.3.1.1 *Name of CAB* - Name of the CAB or program;

9.3.1.2 *Certificant* - Name of the certificant;

9.3.1.3 *Number* - Certificate number;

9.3.1.4 *Date* - Date issued;

9.3.1.5 *Time period* - Period of validity or expiration date;

9.3.1.6 *Specialty* - Forensic specialty covered by the certificate.

### **9.4 Expiration**

9.4.1 *Expiration* - The certificate shall be valid for a period of no more than five years.

## **10. Changes in Certification Requirements**

### **10.1 Notification**

10.1.1 *Reasonable notification of changes* - The CAB shall give reasonable notice to all certificants (and as practical, other interested parties) of any changes to its certification requirements, the exact nature of the changes, and their effective date.

OBSOLETE