

PROCEDURE 1: OPERATION OF APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC)

PURPOSE

An ARC shall be convened to review all Conformity Assessment Board (CAB) applications submitted to the FSAB for accreditation or reaccreditation. This is one of the principal functions of the FSAB. This procedure is intended to guide that review process.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all FSAB ARC activities.

ARC MEMBERS

The members of the ARC are appointed by the President. The ARC shall consist of three members (Directors or Affiliates). In cases where the review embodies a particularly large or complex application, more than three members, including Affiliates, may be appointed as necessary.

The FSAB identifies the specific tasks or areas for which each ARC member has demonstrated assessment competence. The FSAB ensures that ARC members:

1. are familiar with accreditation procedures, accreditation criteria, and other requirements.
2. have undergone relevant accreditation assessor training.
3. have knowledge of the relevant assessment methods.
4. communicate effectively both in writing and orally in the required language.
5. conduct themselves in a professional manner.
6. do not have a conflict of interest involving the CAB to be assessed.
 - a. ARC members do not vote on the final decision regarding accreditation/reaccreditation of the CAB that the ARC reviewed.
 - b. Directors do not vote on the accreditation/reaccreditation decision regarding CABs in their forensic specialty.

ARC ORGANIZATION

The President shall appoint one member of the ARC to serve as ARC Chair. It is intended that the ARC Chair shall serve in a coordinator role amongst equals.

The ARC Chair must be a Director and shall be responsible for organizing and scheduling the ARC activities. The ARC Chair shall also be responsible for writing the ARC report and presenting the ARC's findings and recommendations to the Board. The report shall reflect any dissenting views. The Board shall vote regarding accreditation or reaccreditation of the CAB. The members of the ARC shall not vote on this matter.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No person appointed to the ARC may be a current member, immediate relative, officer of the CAB being reviewed, or a member of a CAB in the same specialty area.

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED TO THE ARC FROM THE FSAB ARCHIVES

At the beginning of the ARC review, the Administrative Manager shall provide the ARC members with:

1. The accreditation or reaccreditation application submitted to the FSAB by the CAB.
2. The annual reports submitted by the CAB during the current accreditation cycle.
3. In the case of re-applications
 - a. The previous accreditation application.
 - b. The FSAB reviewers' comments/critiques of the previous application, if available.
 - c. The ARC Report Form.
 - d. The site checklist from the previous ARC review.
 - e. The annual surveillance review from the previous accreditation cycle.
 - f. The results of any discussions between the FSAB and the CAB regarding resolution of any deficiencies in the previous application to the FSAB, if available.

REPORTING

The ARC shall report to the President.

DURATION

The ARC is appointed for one year, which may be extended by the President.

THE ARC PROCEDURE

1. The operations of the ARC are to be conducted in confidence.
2. Free communication among members of the ARC is encouraged.
3. The ARC Chair shall make assignments regarding the responsibilities of the ARC members.
4. The CAB's application answers to the FSAB's questions shall be compared to the FSAB Standards.
5. The initial evaluation of the application shall take approximately one month, during which the completeness of the application, questions, problems, and deficiencies in the application shall be identified, as detailed below.
 - a. DEFICIENCIES – This answer is non-responsive, indicating that the CAB does not meet the FSAB Standard in question, so that the application cannot be approved unless it is brought into conformity.
 - b. QUESTIONS – The meaning was unclear. The answer did not directly address the question. An important reference cited was not found.
 - c. EDITORIAL ISSUES – The application format was poorly executed. The tab referenced was incorrect; however, the correct tab was found. A reference table was not present.
6. Communication between the ARC and the CAB shall take place in an effort to resolve any issues identified in Step 5.
7. A report shall be issued by the ARC to the Board on or before January 15. The report shall make a recommendation regarding accreditation.
8. The report shall address those application items found to be out of compliance.
9. The report shall evaluate any unresolved issues found.
10. If there are no unresolved questions or out of compliance issues, the report shall so state.

11. The ARC shall be available for surveillance activities on the CAB over the coming accreditation cycle.
12. The ARC shall use the ARC Report Form.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE CAB

Communication between the ARC and the CAB is critical to resolving questions, problems, and deficiencies. In general, this communication shall take place between the ARC Chair and the designated representative of the CAB. The ARC Chair may designate other members of the ARC to communicate with the CAB regarding the CAB's application.

If there are issues to be discussed with the CAB, the ARC Chair shall inform the other members of the ARC as to how this communication shall proceed. All ARC members shall be kept informed as to the status of contracts with the CAB.

All written communication between the ARC and the CAB shall be preserved in the ARC's file, which shall be archived. A record of all verbal contacts with the CAB shall be maintained by the ARC Chair and preserved in the ARC file. The record may be a recording of a remote meeting.

DOCUMENT RETENTION AND ARCHIVING

The ARC file shall be archived with the CAB's folder at the Administrative Office (refer to Procedure 3: Record Control). The ARC file shall contain the:

1. accreditation application, including any supplemental documentation
2. copy of application payment
3. written correspondence with the CAB
4. record of all communications with the CAB
5. ARC Report Form
6. ARC site Checklist
7. ARC final report to the Board
8. accreditation certificate, if issued