



THE FQS UPDATE



Welcome to "THE FQS UPDATE"

Our thanks this quarter go to the Illinois State Police for providing so much of the material for "The FQS Update." Our cover article is about the accreditation of the ISP Crime Scene Services Command. Accreditation is always a significant achievement, but this has added significance in that it is a "first", as you will see. Innovative ideas for keeping the records required by ISO 17025 are always welcome, and the article by William Frank and Phillip Sallee of the ISP Forensic Sciences Command describes an interesting application of commercially available software.

Pat Wojtowicz, Manager of Accreditations, FQS-I

First U.S. Accreditation of a Stand-alone crime scene unit granted to Illinois State Police

The headquarters and five regional offices of the Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services Command (ISP CSSC) were granted accreditation by FQS-I in the category of "Crime Scene Investigation" on August 6, 2007, thereby becoming the first stand-alone crime scene processing agencies in the United States to be accredited. FQS-I congratulates the ISP CSSC on this achievement.



On September 19, 2007, a formal presentation ceremony and press conference took place in Springfield, Illinois. FQS-I Manager of Accreditations Pat Wojtowicz presented the certificate of accreditation to Illinois State Police Director Larry Trent.

Photo Left to Right: Lt. Col. Scott Giles, Asst. Deputy Director, ISP Div. of Forensic Services; Col. Jack Garcia, Deputy Director, ISP Division of Forensic Services; Larry Trent, Director, Illinois State Police; Pat Wojtowicz, FQS-I Mgr. of Accreditations; Capt. Delia Diamond, Commander, ISP Crime Scene Services Command

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The FQS Board of Directors Meeting and annual FQS Member 's Meeting will be held in conjunction with the ASCLD meeting in Orlando, Florida on Thursday afternoon, October 4, 2007.

“ISO Without Tears” workshops offered

Katy Savage, FQS Business and Academic Programs Manager

In response to many requests, Forensic Quality Services (FQS) is pleased to announce a program of workshops dealing with aspects of ISO 17025 accreditation. These workshops are provided as an alternative to our existing customizable workshop that can be provided to individual agencies in their own laboratories.

The workshop will be held at the Holiday Inn Harbourside, 401 2nd Street, Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785. Phone: (727) 595-9484 or (800) 726-0865, website: www.hiharbourside.com.

Each three day workshop will address the following:

- Overview of ISO 17025
- Review of general and technical requirements
- Discussion of laboratory preparation for ISO 17025 accreditation
- Presentation and discussion of forensic science specific aspects of ISO 17025

The workshop is based on FQS's experiences of training and accrediting laboratories to the ISO 17025 standard. FQS has been in operation for nearly 10 years and its FQS-I business unit has accredited more than 55 agencies (and growing).

Please note that the content of these workshops is generic and relevant to preparation for ISO accreditation from any accrediting body.

The course will be offered on these dates

- ◆ **December 10 – 12, 2007.** Registration deadline November 30, 2007
- ◆ **February 4 – 6, 2008.** Registration deadline January 28, 2008
- ◆ **April 7 – 9, 2008.** Registration deadline March 30, 2008

The registration fee is \$275 per person and includes

- ◆ Instruction
- ◆ Workshop materials
- ◆ Copy of ILAC Guide 19
- ◆ Refreshments

Registration does not cover

- ◆ Travel, meals, or lodging.
- ◆ Lunch
- ◆ ISO/IEC 17025:2005. It is strongly recommended that you have a copy of the Standard. It is a copyrighted document and cannot be provided by FQS for your retention. However, all state and local laboratories received a free copy of the standard as well as a copy of Malcolm and Peel's book "Introduction to Accreditation for Forensic Labs" 2nd edition.

A registration form is available from the FQS web site at www.forquality.org.

GSA rates are available at the Holiday Inn for workshop attendees. The rates are (exclusive of taxes):

December 9-12, 2007 - \$98.00/night

February 3-6, 2008 - \$123.00/night

April 6-9, 2008 - \$98.00/night

Reservations must be made by the following dates and you must ask for the "Forensic Quality Services" room rate to ensure you get the proper pricing.

November 9, 2007 (for December workshop)

January 4, 2008 (for February workshop)

March 7, 2008 (for April workshop)



New and revised FQS-I documents

The following is a list of new and/or revised documents recently authorized for use by FQS-I. The documents are posted on the FQS web site at www.forquality.org

Revision—FRAP-2: Policy on Proficiency Testing. Added a references section; added requirements for maintaining PT records; clarified the FQS-I policy with regard to the list of external PT providers on the FQS web site and added guidance for determining what is “appropriate” PT; defined “satisfactory completion”; added a section explaining possible FQS-I actions for unsatisfactory PT performance

Revision—FRAP-6: Policy and Procedures for Suspension, Withdrawal, Complaints, Appeals, and Extension of the Term of Accreditation. Detail was added to the procedure to be more prescriptive in describing the “who, what, and when” of the steps that are involved. A new section was added on appeal of assessment non-conformities.

Revision—Checklists: All checklists were modified to add the following statement from ISO 17025 clause 5.9.1 that was inadvertently left out of previous versions of the checklists: “The laboratory shall have quality control procedures for monitoring the validity of tests and calibrations undertaken.”

Computer-Based Storage and Retrieval of Training Records

Research Coordinator William E. Frank and Assistant Director of Training Philip J. Sallee
 Illinois State Police, Division of Forensic Services, Forensic Sciences Command
 2060 Hill Meadows Drive
 Springfield, IL 62702

The Illinois State Police, Division of Forensic Services, Forensic Sciences Command (FSC) consists of eight operational forensic laboratories, a research and development laboratory, a training unit, and a central administrative headquarters. Initial training records for new employees are generated by and maintained by the training unit. Continuing education records are maintained by the individual operational laboratories.

Each time the FSC prepares for an external inspection, there is a push to ensure all training records are in order. This is complicated by the number of operational laboratories and the centralized nature of initial training records. In order to make this part of the inspection process easier and more efficient, the FSC has undertaken a project to digitize all training records, storing them on a central computer that is accessible to all laboratories. Records will be accessed via the Blackboard Learning System®, a learning content management system that is primarily used for online training efforts in the FSC.

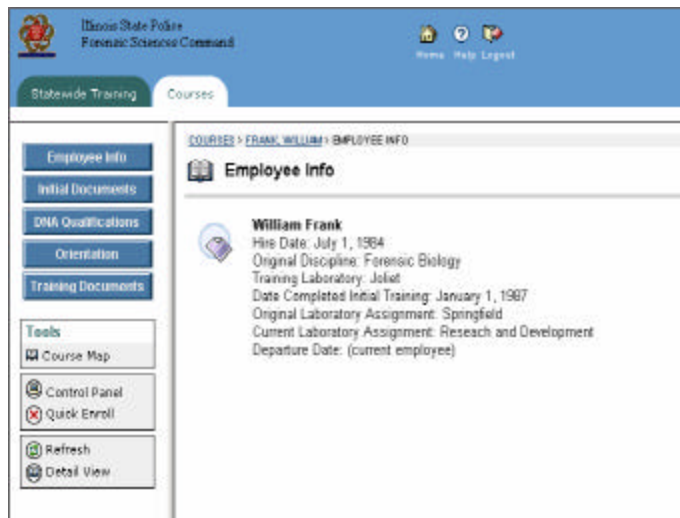
Initial testing of the system involved selection of one laboratory to serve as a pilot site. All initial training records and continuing education records for forensic scientists in that laboratory were entered into the system. The laboratory director and assistant laboratory director were given directions on how to access the Blackboard system, and the training records for their subordinates. They then had two months to test the system and provide an evaluation. The consensus was that the system was easy to use and made document control more efficient. Subsequently we have proceeded with digitizing records for the remaining FSC laboratories.

Each Forensic Scientist has a "course" ("module") on the Blackboard system. The main page in each module lists the scientist's hire date, the discipline they trained in, the laboratory where they trained, the date they completed training, and their operational laboratory assignment history. Additional pages in each module are used to access Initial Documentation (employment application, college transcripts, application resume), Orientation Documents, DNA Qualifications (memorandum from Statewide Technical Leader affirming completion of required coursework, copies of transcripts reviewed by the Statewide Technical Leader, copies of any supporting documentation), and Training Records (initial training records, continuing education records, documentation of attendance at professional meetings).

Each Forensic Scientist has access to their own module. In addition, an analyst's module can be accessed by their laboratory management and managers at the central administrative headquarters (the FSC Commander, Bureau Chiefs, and the Director of Quality Assurance). As scientists transfer from one laboratory to another, enrollment in their module will be modified to reflect their new chain of command. In order to access the content in a scientist's module, an individual must have a Blackboard logon and be enrolled in the module. The files on the database server are access-controlled, preventing direct access to their contents. Our installation of the Blackboard system is not published to the Internet, thus preventing access to content by non-Illinois State Police employees.

For inspection purposes, a special Blackboard user will be created ("Inspector"). This user will be granted access to the re-

Figure 1. Scientist "Course" Module in Blackboard



ords of all or selected scientists, as necessary. One inspector can be designated to review all employee credentials, and can do so from one site through the Blackboard system. At the end of the inspection, the "Inspector" user would then be disabled, preventing any unauthorized access. In the event that an inspector would like to review scientists' credentials before arriving on-site, documents are stored on the server in a file system that mimics the course setup in Blackboard. Each analyst has their own folder on the Blackboard file server. Under that folder are subfolders for Initial Documents, Orientation, DNA Qualifications, and Training Documents. Folders for selected analysts can be burned to a CD-ROM and mailed to the inspector for review. The CD-ROM would be returned to the Illinois State Police during the on-site inspection, at which time it would be destroyed.

As of this writing, courses for 391 scientists, evidence technicians, and managers have been created, completing the digitization of training records. In addition, we have created 94 technical modules on our Blackboard system. These 485 modules plus the Blackboard system software and Windows operating system take up a total of 88 GB on a server with a total of 403 GB of storage space (21.8% full).

The future holds the promise of a paperless training documentation system. As a Forensic Scientist Trainee completes their program, and the necessary documentation is created electronically (for example, a memorandum created via Microsoft Word), the author's signature can be added digitally via software such as Adobe Acrobat. As the documentation is forwarded through the chain-of-command, additional required signatures can be added digitally. The final document can be posted to the scientist's Blackboard module without ever having to be printed. And, given the speed advantage that electronic document transmission has over traditional delivery systems, the time required for this process can be reduced significantly.

FQS-I “TOP TEN” Non-conformities—Part 2

Pat Wojtowicz, Manager of Accreditations, FQS-I

In the last FQS Newsletter we discussed numbers six through ten of the “FQS-I Assessment Non-conformities” Top Ten. In this issue numbers one through five are discussed, as is information about two other clauses that have been problematic for applicants for accreditation. As before, the non-conformities are grouped within major clauses of ISO 17025 (and the forensic supplemental requirements FRA-1).

#5. 5.5 Equipment. The non-conformities were spread out fairly evenly over the clauses in this section, with no single predominant “problem” clause.

#4. 4.13 Control of Records. Non-conformities were clustered in three clauses: (1) 4.13.1.1—Either the laboratory’s procedures did not cover all required elements, or the lab was not following its own procedures; (2) 4.13.2.1—agencies were not following their own procedures for recording data; and (3) 4.13.2.3—Corrections to data were not made properly, with numerous instances of obliterations and/or lack of identification of the person who made the correction(s).

#3 4.1.5 Organization and Management. Non-conformities were distributed throughout the sub-clauses. Examples are citations for lack of required policies/procedures, policies/procedures that did not adequately ensure freedom from undue pressures, and failure to adequately document the responsibilities and position of the Quality Manager and/or designate a deputy for that key managerial position.

#2. 4.3 Document Control. There were numerous findings throughout the clause. Chief among them were the

failure to control all management system documents, most notably some forms or external manuals or standards; master lists of documents that were incomplete; lack of objective evidence for review of documents; and revision identifiers that were either obsolete or completely lacking.

#1 5.4 Test and calibration methods and method validation. 5.4.1 was a problem for agencies seeking initial accreditation, in that they lacked procedures or had incomplete procedures, or simply were not in conformance with the procedures that they had. 5.4.2 and 5.4.5 were cited either in connection with lack of validation records for some tests that were being conducted, or when required aspects of validation were not addressed (particularly true in DNA testing, where the DNA quality assurance standards are quite specific about what is required for validation).

Two other common problem areas that are worth mentioning are **4.11 Corrective Action** and **4.9 Control of Non-conforming work**. With respect to Corrective Action, there have been problems with incomplete or unclear procedures, especially in the area of root cause analysis. There have also been problems with the timeliness of completing corrective action reviews, with documenting actions and analysis, and with follow-up to monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken. The primary problem with control of non-conforming work has been incomplete procedures that did not address all of the requirements of the clause. In particular, sub-clauses “a” and “e” were often missed (which require that the agency define who has the authority to order work halted and re-sumed).

Achievements in accreditation

Congratulations to the following agencies that achieved FQS-I ISO 17025 accreditation, reaccreditation, or expansion of scope of accreditation in the 3rd quarter of 2007:

Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services Command—headquarters and five regional offices (initial accreditation)

Laboratory Corporation of America (reaccreditation)

DNA Labs International (reaccreditation)



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We're on the web!
www.forquality.org

Forensic Quality Services (FQS) provides a range of organizational assistance and training/education services to support Forensic Science delivery.

Forensic Quality Services-International (FQS-I) is the country's longest established provider of ISO 17025 accreditation to forensic testing agencies in the U.S. It is one of the accrediting bodies recognized by the NDIS Procedures Board and the only one that has successfully completed the rigorous scrutiny of operations required for recognition by the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA).

Ad space opportunities in FQS newsletter

Beginning with the December 2007 issue, FQS will provide space for advertisements in "The FQS Update". *Introductory* rates for ad space are as follows:

One-quarter page: \$100/issue, \$300/year

One-half page: \$150/issue, \$500/year

Ads should be in an electronic format such as jpeg. Color and black-and-white are both acceptable.

Submissions should be sent to pcw@forquality.org

Submit an article to "the fqs update"

"The FQS Update" is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by Forensic Quality Services.

FQS welcomes submissions to this newsletter and will evaluate all such submissions with regard to their general interest to the readership. FQS reserves the right to edit submissions for length and editorial correctness. **Deadlines for submissions are March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15.**

Please send your submissions to pcw@forquality.org