



Forensic Quality Services – International

Forensic Requirements for Accreditation

FRA 5--For Agencies that Conduct Crime Scene Investigation

REVISION LOG

| Version | Issued | Changes |
|----------------|---------------|--|
| 2006/1 | May 26, 2006 | Original document |
| 2007/1 | June 6, 2007 | In some statements “should” was changed to “shall’ where the original context clearly meant for a practice to be required. Changed order and format of heading to more clearly align with the ISO 17025 clause numbering system. Added section on ISO 17025 clause 4.13.2.3 to amplify requirements regarding use of non-permanent media in note taking. |
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INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide amplification for the application of ISO 17025 and FQS-I's FRA-1 with regard to crime scene investigation.

They were developed by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of two (2) subject matter experts (including the FQS-I Police Science Accreditation Program Manager) and two (2) representatives of FQS-I.

The TAC developed the document in the context of a program primarily directed to law enforcement agencies ("agency") whose personnel perform crime scene investigation, either as their sole responsibility or as part of a police science unit with broader testing responsibilities.

4.5 and 5.10.6 Subcontracting

An agency may use the services of an outside party to perform aspects of crime scene investigation, but the agency must exercise caution in how the results are reported so that accreditation is not incorrectly inferred for the tests in question.

The requirements of the International Standard regarding subcontractors apply when work is subcontracted for tests that fall within the agency's Scope of Accreditation and the subcontractor's results are included in the agency's own test report. However, an agency is not responsible for the content of test reports issued directly by the outside party.

The agency should ensure the competence of organizations or individuals who are retained by the agency to perform crime scene investigation work that falls outside of the agency's Scope of Accreditation, e.g., forensic entomology; however, the agency is not responsible for the outside party's work. When an agency includes the outside party's test results within its own report, the report must clearly indicate that the results do not fall under the agency's Scope of Accreditation.

4.13.2.1-h (FRA-1) Case records and technical review

Case records may include notes, photographs, latent print lift cards, etc. It is recognized that a "case record" in crime scene investigation units may not be concise, complete, or in a single physical location; nevertheless, a crime scene unit is required to have a program for technical review of case records and reports. A technical review is an evaluation of the sufficiency of a case record with regard to the tests that were conducted and the observations and conclusions contained in the report. The number of case records reviewed and the depth of the review process shall be sufficient to ensure that the agency's procedures are being followed and that the records provide support for the observations and conclusions in the reports.

4.13.2.3 Corrections to case records

Under limited circumstances, such as recording rough sketches at a crime scene, it may be appropriate to use a non-permanent, weather-resistant medium such as pencil. It is expected that the process of creating rough sketches could involve the erasure and redrawing of pencil lines. This does not constitute “mistakes” in note-taking that are subject to the “alterations to records” requirements of 4.13.2.3. When a rough sketch and/or other pencil notes have been completed, the notes must be transferred to a tamper-proof final version for retention in the permanent case record, for example, by scanning the pencil notes.

5.4.1 and 5.4.2 Methods

Crime scene investigation units shall have protocols that contain guidelines on the processing activities that should be done at a crime scene and the order in which they should be performed. Crime scene units may have varying protocols depending upon the nature of the offense being investigated.

There shall be written protocols for chemical screening tests or other tests performed in the office or the field. Non-standard test procedures must be validated by the agency. Positive and negative controls must be used to verify the correct functioning of field test kits or other reagents prior to their use at a crime scene. When conducting testing, care shall be taken to avoid sample consumption, degradation, or contamination that would compromise the integrity of samples for subsequent testing.

5.4.6 Uncertainty of Measurement

The crime scene investigation activities for which uncertainty of measurement may be of significance are those that involve quantitative measurements. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, tire tracks and footwear (length and width), bloodspatter (angles derived from length and width measurements), accident reconstruction (skidmark measurement and diagramming), crime scene plotting (distance/length), toolmark documentation (size and position), and bullet hole documentation (size and position).

A reasonable estimate of uncertainty of measurement for quantitative measurements can be obtained by calculating the mean and standard deviation of a set of repetitive measurements. Small standard deviations should give an agency confidence that the measurements it makes during its crime scene investigations are reasonably precise.

5.6 Traceability

Crime scene units shall be able to ensure the accuracy of their length measuring devices. The steps taken to ensure this accuracy will depend upon the significance that the measurement will have on the reported observations and results. Devices used for measuring relatively small distances, e.g., less than four (4) feet, may require traceability

to a NIST certified ruler. The accuracy of devices used to measure distances over four (4) feet could be established by running a set of experiments.

There is no SI unit for angle of measurement.

5.7.1 Sampling

Crime scene investigation protocols and training programs shall describe how crime scene investigators should approach a crime scene, including guidance for the identification and collection of probative and representative samples.

5.9 and FRAP-2 Proficiency Testing

Agencies that perform screening tests or other field tests as part of their crime scene investigation must maintain a proficiency testing program for those tests. A suitable proficiency test is one that meets the requirements of ISO Guide 43 or is approved by FQS-I.

Alternative approaches are needed for the evaluation of an agency's performance in crime scene investigation activities that are not tests and for which test materials do not exist. An acceptable method is the observation of a crime scene investigation by a qualified individual who is not part of the investigation. The agency shall provide the observer with a protocol for this evaluation process, such as a checklist related to the agency's procedures.

Assessors shall evaluate the adequacy of the proficiency test performance in the light of the agency's overall quality assurance procedures and performance. These shall include internal procedures for competency monitoring and the effectiveness of corrective action policies and procedures.