



Incident Examination Specialist Group (IESG)

Note of the first meeting held on 15 March 2022, via teleconference.

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all the members to this new group and thanked them for joining the group. The Chair noted that the members would provide input from all the key areas relating to scene examination. A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.
- 1.2 The Chair introduced himself to this new group that would be supporting the work of the Forensic Science Regulator.
- 1.3 The Chair commented that his background was as a scene examination practitioner as well as significant experience of managing and leading forensic units and he had an awareness of the challenges of obtaining accreditation.

2. Introduction to the Forensic Regulator Act and remit of the IESG

- 2.1 The Regulator spoke to the group and thanked the members for helping with establishing this specialist group.
- 2.2 The Regulator set out his ambitions for the group and noted that the role for the group would be to advise on how quality standards should be applied for scene examination. The Regulator noted that for incident examination the required quality standard would be ISO 17020 which was an inspection standard rather than a testing standard.
- 2.3 The Regulator listed the activities that the group would be asked to perform, including contributing to the forensic science definitions that would form part of

the statutory Codes and would provide a basis for assessment for accreditation. The Regulator was working with UKAS to align the quality standards with the process of accreditation.

- 2.4 The Regulator highlighted that the key aim was operational effectiveness and it would be important to consider operational implications throughout the process of developing quality standards for incident examination.
- 2.5 The Regulator noted that the term incident examination was used over crime scene examination and there was no assumption that a crime had been committed. The location of an incident could vary hugely from a forest to a house and the group would be asked to identify the core capabilities of incident examination that would apply to all incidents.
- 2.6 The Forensic Science Activities definitions were required to be delivered in a short timeframe so that they could be consulted on more widely.
- 2.7 The incident examination appendix would need to cover the totality of incidents including volume crime and serious crimes.
- 2.8 The Regulator set out his desire to include strategy setting in the incident examination appendix.

3. Agree Terms of Reference and workplan

- 3.1 The draft Terms of Reference (ToR) were shared with the members ahead of the meeting.
- 3.2 A representative from UKAS commented that point 4.2.1 (a) of the ToR, which noted the need to define the scope to be included in the incident examination quality standard, should be a priority activity and would be important to resolve at an early point.
- 3.3 The representative highlighted a typographical error at point 4.3.6. This was corrected during the meeting.
- 3.4 The Terms of Reference were agreed.
- 3.5 The Chair introduced the IESG workplan to the group.

- 3.6 The first item on the workplan was to define the forensic science activities for inclusion in the statutory Codes, this would be discussed at item four.
- 3.7 The workplan also included drafting of an appendix to assist the incident examination community in meeting the Regulator's requirements and gaining accreditation to ISO 17020.
- 3.8 A representative from UKAS noted that the purpose of the appendix needed to be defined, whether it was to assist with accreditation or to cover the areas that an organisation would be assessed against. The Chair responded that the statutory Codes would cover all forensic disciplines and would set out what would be needed to demonstrate compliance with the Codes. The appendix would be a more detailed document and provide guidance on meeting the expectations set out in the Codes. The appendix should be consistent with ISO 17020 but would set out the Regulator's expectations for demonstrating compliance with the Codes.
- 3.9 The UKAS representative noted that this meant there was an expectation to comply with the appendix and this was important in terms of choosing the appropriate language to use and setting out the purpose of the document.
- 3.10 The representative from Beds, Herts and Cambs Police agreed that the appendix should set out what the Regulator expects of those who conduct incident examinations. The representative from Thames Valley Police noted that it should also set out the underpinning standards.
- 3.11 The workplan was agreed.

4. Define forensic science activities (FSA) for scene examination

- 4.1 The representative from the Forensic Science Regulation Unit introduced himself to the group and explained his background in scene examination.
- 4.2 The Forensic Science Regulation Act was expected to come into force in autumn 2022. The Forensic Science Activities (FSA) would define the areas that would be covered by this Act.

- 4.3 The group were introduced to a draft of the incident examination FSA. The FSA would not include activities that were common to a number of activities, such as packaging, strategy setting.
- 4.4 The FSRU representative took the group through the draft FSA which started from the receipt of a request to attend an incident.
- 4.5 The FSRU representative was asked whether the FSA would include the details of how a request to attend should be recorded and the level of detail required, e.g. allocation of resource, identification of crime type. The Chair replied that the FSA should be a high-level outline of the activities that would be expected to be completed, the details of the activities themselves would be organisation specific. However, the Chair acknowledged that there could be some activities that would only apply in certain circumstances.
- 4.6 The group suggested that reference to types of incidents should be removed and instead it should refer to risks and threats and appropriate responses to these. It should also cover whether the organisation had the competence and/or resources to undertake a requested inspection.
- 4.7 A representative from UKAS commented that the FSA should avoid granularity and aim to be global. This was agreed by the group.
- 4.8 The representative from UKAS also noted that inclusion of receipt of a request to attend an incident could bring call handlers under this FSA. It was agreed that the intention of this section of the FSA was to cover calls into a forensic unit and this point should be amended to reflect this. The representative from the FCN agreed with this and noted that there was some existing confusion around whether departments outside of forensic units would be included in the statutory Code. It was suggested that a line be added to the FSA to indicate that it applied only to forensic units and the commissioning and agreed service of an incident examination.
- 4.9 The Chair questioned whether this approach might result in activities being performed by units that would not be described as forensic units but were performing activities that should fall under the scope of the FSA. Careful wording within the FSA would be required to capture all the appropriate

activities. It was suggested that the definition of a forensic unit in version seven of the Codes of Practice and Conduct could be used or adapted.

- 4.10 The group discussed whether activities included in the draft FSA could be performed by non-forensic personnel, such as a Police Officer seizing a knife, and how to avoid this as the FSA was aimed at forensic personnel. The representative from TVP suggested that ensuring appropriate scene management was defined might mitigate against this.
- 4.11 The Chair summarised that the requirements for the FSA were to define the core activities and which personnel they should apply to.
- 4.12 The FSRU representative noted that the FSA could be made more concise and the activities could be reduced to points (g) and (h) of the draft FSA. A representative from UKAS commented that with regard to point (g) this could be taken to include Sexual Assault Referral Centres and questioned whether it was the intention of the FSA to include these centres. The representative also noted that (g)(ii) could include detainees, the examination of whom was covered in another FSA.

Action 1:

- 4.13 FSRU representative to circulate an updated draft FSA.

5. Introduction to draft appendix to Codes of Conduct

- 5.1 The representative from the FSRU presented an introduction to the appendices of the Codes. The representative noted that the appendices may become part of the Codes themselves.
- 5.2 The representative noted that areas where further detail was noted as needed in the FSA could be included in the appendix as an alternative.
- 5.3 The FSRU representative took the group through the various sections within the appendix which included the standard sections and information specific to incident scene examination, such as the request to attend, strategy and examination, recoding and reporting.

- 5.4 The representative asked the group if there were any additional sections that would be required for the appendix. The representative from BCH noted that plan rather than strategy would be the preferred term, this was agreed by the Chair.
- 5.5 The representative from UKAS asked for clarification on the purpose of the document, if the purpose is for UKAS to assess against then the wording would be important. For example the term 'shall' would be used for points where adherence was required and would be something that UKAS would assess against.
- 5.6 The UKAS representative also highlighted that the appendix should not duplicate anything that was in the Codes. The Chair agreed that the appendix should not repeat the Codes but provide additional or supplementary detail and highlighted that the version of the appendix shared was an outline only to demonstrate possible content.
- 5.7 The Chair highlighted to the group that the appendix would be compulsory and confirmed that the group was content with this approach.
- 5.8 The Chair asked the members to send requests for appropriate provisions for inclusion in the appendix to the FSRU secretariat or representative.

Action 2:

- 5.9 All members to review the appendix headings and provide any alternative or additional headings by the 15th of April.
- 5.10 The representative from the AFSP would take this request to the AFSP members and seek broad views from the Forensic Service Providers.

6. Professional and Scientific Updates

AFSP

- 6.1 The members were provided with a written update from the Association of Forensic Service Providers (AFSP). The main points of the update were:

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- a. ISO17020 and implementation – feedback was being gathered from providers going through the accreditation process to share ideas and learning points as a group. This included sharing of experiences between how UKAS had approached the assessment and common actions and expectations to assist others in their assessments.
- b. The AFSP was investigating the availability of Proficiency Trials (PTs) to satisfy requirements for crime scene accreditation and carrying out a review of how each provider was meeting the requirement to complete scene PTs. The AFSP addressed the viability of adding scene PTs to the AFSP programme versus sourcing an external company to set up bespoke PTs on the requirements of each provider, the latter being the favoured option.
- c. The AFSP had held discussions on use of scene houses and approaches that could be undertaken for Collaborative Exercises to support accreditation.

FCN

- 6.2 The members were provided with a written update from the Forensic Capability Network (FCN). The main points of the update were:
- a. An update on the Forces who had achieved positive recommendations towards accreditation to ISO 17020.
 - b. The group were informed that the FCN had carried out scene accreditation support visits to a number of forces over the preceding six months, which had been well received.
 - c. The “Quality Matters” publication had been running for one year and continued to provide a useful method to share learning.

UKAS

- 6.3 The members were provided with a written update from UKAS. The main points of the update were:
- a. An update on the structure within the Forensic Section of UKAS and points of contact for Crime Scene Investigation and CSI assessments.

- b. UKAS had undertaken a range of activities in readiness for CSI assessments. This had included training of CSI Technical assessors and recruitment of additional assessors, training of digital technical assessors in ISO 17020 for digital scene examination, running of a number of ISO 17020 training courses and seminars, provision of technical bulletins, a trial of remote CSI assessment, completion of a dry run for major crime activities, conducting pre-assessments and initial assessments.
- c. The group was provided with a summary of the main themes from recent ISO 17020 assessments which included; insufficient validation, training and competence tests that were not sufficiently challenging, record keeping that wasn't detailed enough to allow evaluation, inconsistent approaches between staff, insufficient anti-contamination measures, lack of effective internal auditing, incomplete risk management, lack of detail in service level agreements, necessary updates to management systems not completed.

7. AOB

- 7.1 There were no matters arising.

8. Date of the next meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting to be held on the 16th of June 2022 via video-conference.

Annex A

Organisation Representatives Present:

Metropolitan Police Service (Chair)

Forensic Science Regulator

Association of Forensic Service Providers

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Police

Forensic Access

Forensic Capability Network

Greater Manchester Police

Scottish Police Authority – Forensic Services

Thames Valley Police

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Forensic Science Regulation Unit

Home Office Science Secretariat