



Forensic Science Regulator

Incident examination specialist group (IESG)

Note of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 via video conference

1. Welcome and introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all the members to the second meeting of the IESG. A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.
- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and would be published by the secretariat.
- 1.2 The Chair informed the group that the formal consultation on the statutory code was expected to start in July 2022 and run for 3 months.
- 1.3 The core code would apply to all forensic science activities and would be applicable to scene examination and this would be supported by a scene specific Forensic Science Activity (FSA) definition. The FSA would set out the scope for regulation.
- 1.4 Appendices of the code would cover elements that were beyond the remit of the core code or FSA but would be part of the statutory requirements. Guidance documents would be separate from the statutory codes.
- 1.5 The Chair highlighted that there would be 4 areas of work for the IESG to consider; discussions around relevant forensic science activities in the code, the incident examination FSA, the incident examination appendix, and any guidance documents needed to support incident examination.

2. Incident scene FSA

- 2.1 The group were informed that the purpose of the FSA was to define incident examination and detail what would be regulated. It would be necessary to define relevant persons, relevant material, and relevant locations.
- 2.2 The Chair noted that much of the feedback from the group on the previous draft of the FSA related to a number of 'what if' situations and therefore it would be important to ensure that the definitions and scope made clear what activities were regulated.
- 2.3 An updated versions of the incident examination FSA had been shared with the group. A detailed and a brief version of the FSA were presented, where the detailed version provided more detailed definitions and expanded on possible issues. Both of these versions differed from the version within the published draft code and were the result of feedback from the IESG.
- 2.4 The representative from Thames Valley Police sought clarification on whether attendance of a scene to record and photograph but not recover physical evidence would be within scope, as the FSA referred to examination for physical evidence. The Chair responded that documenting, recording, and photography should be covered and this may need to be made more explicit.
- 2.5 The representative from the Scottish Police Authority – Forensic Services noted that the long version of the FSA contained a very long list of exclusions that may be better covered in the appendix. The shorter version of the FSA left the description of definitions and exclusions for the appendix.
- 2.6 The members were asked whether their preference was for the short or long version of the FSA and it was agreed that the short version should be used.
- 2.7 A representative from UKAS commented that there should be consistency across the FSAs for different disciplines and the same headings should be used. This was confirmed by the FSRU representative.
- 2.8 The risks of misinterpreting terms used in the FSA were discussed and it was noted that an arbiter would be beneficial to assist with interpretation of the statutory code. The Chair asked if there would be such a role and the

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representative from the FSRU expected this would be the case. A representative from UKAS also commented that it was intended that the statutory Code would more clearly explain what did and didn't need to be accredited.

3. Incident Examination Appendix

- 3.1 It was highlighted that the version of the appendix shared with the group was designed to fit with the longer version of the FSA and would need redrafting to fit with the brief FSA. However the intention of the appendix was to avoid repeating any content from the core codes.
- 3.2 The representative from Greater Manchester Police asked if information on competence was needed in the appendix if the requirements were covered in the core code.
- 3.3 A representative from UKAS noted that there were some differences from the core code, such as linking to College of Policing profiles and testing of baseline competence.
- 3.4 The level of detail of information on competency requirements in the appendix was discussed and it was agreed that the appendix should set out the requirements only. Any changes to the statutory code, including the appendices, would require parliamentary approval so details on how to achieve competence that may change, such as names of recognised training facilities, should be covered in a supporting guidance document.
- 3.5 The Chair asked whether the appendix could replace the UKAS guidance document RG201 and a UKAS representative replied there were elements in RG201 that meant the document needed to be kept but technical requirements would not be repeated.
- 3.6 The FCN representative commented that there was a lack of consistency in terms of competence as a result of a lack of guidance.
- 3.7 Where information on competence should sit was discussed and it was agreed that the codes should include the requirements for competency testing but that detail of how this could be achieved would be covered in a guidance document.

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It was proposed that the IESG capture the requirements for incident examination competence. These could then be reviewed to determine where the information would best sit, in terms of in an appendix or in a separate guidance document.

Action: IESG to capture the requirements for incident examination competency.

3.8 The Chair asked the group if the headings of the appendix covered the necessary areas. A representative from UKAS observed that the structure should follow the codes and this was supported by the group. The Chair asked if there were any headings in the core code that were not included in the appendix and suggested that this be reviewed.

Action: FSRU representative to review the appendix and align the structure with the core code.

3.9 It was suggested that the group review a skeleton appendix document created using the headings from the code and add detail that should be included under each of the headings. This could be circulated around the group for comments and additions. A representative from UKAS suggested that other guidance documents such as RG201 and ILAC G19 could also be referred to when considering content for the appendix.

Action: Secretariat to create a skeleton appendix and circulate for comment by 1 July.

3.10 While the deadline for comments was short the group were reminded that minor changes to the code and appendices could be made during review of feedback from the statutory consultation. Members could submit comments and suggestions to the consultation to be considered. Once the codes and appendices were approved by ministers, further changes would require consultation and parliamentary approval.

4. Professional and scientific updates

AFSP

4.1 The representative from the Association of Forensic Service Providers gave an update on the issues being considered by that group. This included

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accreditation to ISO17020 and the sharing of learning points and ideas. The FSPs were sharing their experiences of assessment and identifying common expectations and reviewing draft documents.

FCN

4.2 The representative from the Forensic Capability Network provided an update and shared the most recent quarterly landscape report from the FCN. This report covered the position of police forces in terms of assessment for accreditation for scene examination.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the landscape report to members.

4.3 The FCN also had an initiative called CSI AST which provided support to police forces requesting assistance with accreditation. This service would be ongoing and provided a good opportunity to be witnessed outside of a UKAS assessment.

4.4 The FCN also continued to publish 'Quality Matters' and encouraged contributions to share learning and information. This report may be expanded to include other disciplines, such as digital forensics in the future.

4.5 The FCN had also launched an innovation fund looking at ways to support engagement in quality standards, anyone who would like to know more or be involved with the project should contact the FCN.

4.6 The Chair asked the FCN representative whether a change in culture in terms of quality standards had been noticed. The representative commented that validation still presented issues and engagement would be improved by the work of the innovation fund.

4.7 The Chair noted that guidance from the IESG should be focussed on the issues that were being observed and common themes. The Chair asked if police forces were seeking accreditation for major crime and it was noted that most forces were focussing on volume crime and expanding the number of hubs accredited.

4.8 The group was asked if there was a minimum scope for volume crime scene accreditation and a UKAS representative replied that the scope was discussed with each applicant, there was no minimum scope. The Chair noted that there

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was no distinction in the incident examination appendix between volume and major crime and there remained a lack of clarity over how digital evidence recovery at an incident would be covered.

- 4.9 The Chair asked the group to consider what the priority topics were for guidance documents.

UKAS

- 4.10 The group were informed that UKAS had appointed 2 new assessment managers and recruitment for a further manager was ongoing. Recruitment of CSI technical assessors was also ongoing and training was expected to commence in the autumn. Another round of technical assessor recruitment was expected to meet business needs, use of operational staff as assessors was being considered.
- 4.11 UKAS had recently run a training course for collision investigator technical assessors.
- 4.12 The UKAS representative noted that five legal entities had been accredited for part of their scope for volume crime scene assessment and extra sites were being granted extensions to scope. UKAS were observing less need for re-assessment.
- 4.13 The group was informed that ILAC G19 was with members of that group for ballot.
- 4.14 A link would be circulated to the group to allow members to check for regular updates from UKAS and feed into consultations.

Action: UKAS representative to circulate link to UKAS updates and consultations.

5. Any other business

- 5.1 There were no other matters raised.
- 5.2 The next meeting was planned for 15 September and would be held over video conference.

Annex A

Representatives present:

Metropolitan Police Service (Chair)

Association of Forensic Service Providers (ASFP)

Forensic Capability Network (FCN)

Greater Manchester Police

Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Police

Scottish Police Authority – Forensic Services

Thames Valley Police

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Forensic Science Regulation Unit

Home Office (secretariat)

Apologies received from:

Forensic Access

National Crime Agency