



Forensic Science Regulator

Incident Examination Specialist Group (IESG)

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024 online via video conference.

1. Welcome, actions, matters arising and note of the previous meeting

1.1. The chair welcomed all the members to the third meeting of the incident examination specialist group (IESG). A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.

1.2. The outstanding actions from previous meetings were reviewed:

Action 10 (July 2023) – UKAS representative to share more information about bespoke assessments. To be addressed later in the meeting.

Action 2 (November 2023) - Members to consider bodies providing ad-hoc activities that would be captured under FSA - INC 100. Members noted that organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive and Independent Office of Police Conduct may carry out FSA – INC 100 activities. It would be useful to understand how the Code would apply to a HSE investigation of corporate manslaughter.

Action 1: OFRS representative to establish whether the Code applies to HSE investigations.

1.3. The Regulator would need to consider how to reach all organisations that may be covered by the Code. The NCA representative mentioned some work mapping organisations that could be used for forensic investigations and offered to share this with the Chair.

Action 2: NCA representative to share organisation map with the Chair.

2. Update from chair

- 2.1. The Chair highlighted the need to workshop the incident examination FSA specific requirements (IE FSA SR) as widely as possible to ensure it was well tested.
- 2.2. In addition the IESG should consider the relevant feedback from the consultation to assist with finalising the IE FSA SR. OFSR representative to arrange this sharing of the feedback once it had been collated and reviewed.
Action 3: OFSR representative to share relevant feedback on v2 of the Code with the IESG.
- 2.3. The Chair raised the issue of the transition to version 2 of the Code and what this would look like. A representative from UKAS commented that a final version of the Code would be required before any comment could be given on transition. UKAS would review the consultation version and submit their feedback towards the end of the consultation period to allow time for a full review.
- 2.4. It was noted that there were more differences between the non-statutory Code and the first version of the statutory Code than between version 1 and version 2, however here were new requirements to be considered and the effect of no distinction between volume and major/complex crime needed to be considered. If accreditation schedules would include “version 2 of the FSR Code” then some kind of assessment to ensure an organisation met the requirements of version 2 would be required. UKAS would expect organisations to be compliant with version 2 before any kind of assessment against the new version of the Code.
- 2.5. The Chair noted that organisations carrying out FSA – INC 100 activities would need to review version 2 of the Code and check their compliance. The Chair asked whether input from the IESG would be useful in considering how transition might be achieved, however a UKAS representative noted that this would be a matter for the accreditation body.

3. Update from the OFSR

- 3.1. The OFSR representative informed members that the consultation on version 2 of the Code was live and would close on the 10th of March 2024. The Office of the Forensic Science Regulator was aiming to review all comments by mid-April 2024.
- 3.2. It was noted that as practitioners had already reviewed the IE FSA SR the feedback submitted may focus on issues already identified.
- 3.3. Members were reminded that feedback could be submitted either individually or through an organisation.

4. Updates from stakeholders and feedback from IESG members on stress testing of FSA SR

CSI Technical Forum/FCN

- 4.1. The representative from the FCN provided an update for the group the main points were:
 - FCN were continuing to provide an accreditation support service team for crime scene examination.
 - The most recent issue of FCN Quality matters signposted the consultation for v2 of the Code. The FCN highlighted the new specific requirements for incident scenes, and encouraged people to review this and provide feedback.
 - The CSI technical forum Chairs meeting had been held in January 2024.
 - The FCN was planning a technology and innovation workshop and working with the College of Policing to establish a central virtual reality resource.
 - The FCN was undertaking a cleaning study for CSI and developing a validation plan for cleaning products, which would also have input from UKAS and would link in with the work on cleaning for Sexual Assault Referral Centres. A trial of 7 cleaning products had been undertaken by a

police force and was expected to conclude in March 2024 with follow up meetings taking place in April 2024.

- The CSI expert network workshop on the IES FSA SR was held at the Regulator's office in Birmingham on the 8th of February and some of the points raised included; use of ATP testing and monitoring of DNA contamination, assessment approaches for remote working, uncertainty around the requirements for scene management and whether the intention was for them to apply only to Crime Scene Managers. It was noted that for the latter point clarification in guidance would be helpful.

4.2. A representative from the MPS suggested that scenarios could be used to test the final version of the FSA SR as they had been in the workshopping. It was also noted that the FSA SR needed to be amended to focus on outcomes as a result of the use of professional judgement, rather a specific activity of professional judgement.

UKAS

4.3. A representative from UKAS provided an update for the group the main points were:

- Nine new technical assessors in post and 8 in training.
- Version 2 of the Code had been distributed v2 to all main technical focal points to collate comments and consult where necessary.
- Applications for incident examination being received for other aspects of examination, particularly digital. Consideration of preassessments and reviewing whether ISO 17020 or ISO 17025 would be the most appropriate standard to use. Will have digital technical assessors.
- Moving to a bespoke approach to assessment and each organisation should discuss their application with their assessment manager to work out the best approach.
- UKAS provided feedback on the CSI expert network workshop on the IE FSA SR including considering the challenges of accreditation of work at non-dedicated locations and approaches to validation and suggested including more links to the main Code in the FSA SR to make sure the

requirements in the main Code were also taken into account by organisations.

- 4.4. The Chair asked whether UKAS were carrying out any workshopping of the IE FSA SR amongst technical assessors. This would be done together with version 2 of the Code as a whole.

AFSP

- 4.5. AFSP meeting to be held later in the week, therefore an update would be circulated to members after that meeting. However, the AFSP representative noted that regarding the suspension of accreditation requirements for bloodstain pattern analysis (FSA – BIO 300) the current accreditation status would be maintained, ISO 17025 for lab and ISO 17020 for scenes, until the requirements for accreditation were determined.

Action 4: AFSP representative to share update to the IESG members once the meeting has taken place.

- 4.6. The AFSP had shared the draft version 2 of the Code with heads of department, focusing on the wider code, and incident specialist technical leads, to focus on sections produced by the IESG.
- 4.7. The AFSP representation suggested an amendment to the IE FSA SR to clarify where the responsibility for an incident lay, for example an expert called to attend an incident should not “become the lead” but should have control over of their specific area of expertise. It would also be useful to clarify whether experts attending and incident scene would need to comply with FSA – INC 100.
- 4.8. The representative from TVP provided feedback from national CSI groups which had called for better linkage in the IE FSA SR to existing standards and documents such as ILAC G19. A representative from the MPS suggested that interactive documents could be used to assist with this.
- 4.9. A representative from UKAS noted that they were following up internally on some of the issues raised at the IE FSA SR workshop, such as remote working and ATP testing and noted that ATP testing as a method may not be suitable for all organisations.

5. Subgroup updates

Fire sub-group

- 5.1. The Chair of the fire investigation sub-group provided an update for the group and the main points were:
- The next meeting of the sub-group would be the 21st of March 2024.
 - The fire investigation community was proactively working towards compliance with the Code and accreditation, had set up a national forum, and was developing validation plans and process map.
 - The FCN had established a technical forum and created a number of technical working groups.
 - The Chair of the sub-group, a representative from the OFSR, the FCN fire leads and UKAS representatives would be meeting to discuss a draft schedule for accreditation to take the process of compliance forwards.
- 5.2. The IESG Chair asked if an FSA SR for fire investigation was needed. This was being considered but there was also significant cross over with other sub-groups and incident investigation. The aim would be to have guidance and/or an FSA SR for fire investigation.

Collison investigation sub-group

- 5.3. The Chair of the collision investigation sub-group provided an update for the group and the main points were:
- The next meeting of the sub-group would be the 22nd of February, which would be the 2nd meeting of the group.
 - The membership of the sub-group now includes members from the commercial sector.
 - Have been addressing the cross over of collision investigation (CI) with a number of FSAs that require compliance with the Code and issues with declarations of compliance.

- The number measurement-based methods in CI mean that this area of forensic science needs to blend requirements for both ISO 17025 and ISO 17020.
- A representative on the CI sub-group would be sharing learning from their work towards accreditation for post-collision examination of heavy goods and passenger carrying vehicles.
- The Forensic Collision Investigation Network (FCIN) was working with Staffordshire University on a validation plan and the CI and FI sub-group Chairs would be linking up to share learning.
- The focus of the FCIN had been focussing on speed estimation from video and had published an SOP for speed estimation and shared a tool for estimation of uncertainty with Policing.

Covert sub-group

5.4. The Chair of the covert forensics sub-group provided an update for the group and the main points were:

- The next meeting of the sub-group would be the 20th of February.
- Covert forensics remained excluded from version 2 of the Code of Practice, however the sub-group would be reviewing the IE FSA SR to ensure there would be no conflict with its application for covert forensics. The wording of the exclusion needed to be reviewed as activity was wider than “covert recovery”, this would be fed back in the consultation.
- Activity in covert forensics was continuing as if compliance were required, an SOP had been developed and funding for validation needed to be secured as activity was cross-organisations.
- The priority area was to build a training and competency framework around training and competency. This would also look at the different roles within covert forensic activity.

Counter Terrorism (CT) sub-group

5.5. The Chair of the counter-terrorism sub-group provided an update for the group and the main points were:

- The group had provided feedback on the IE FSA SR and version 2 of the Code in general, particularly around examination strategies, professional judgement and infrequently used methods.
- CT had developed an agreed scope of accreditation, which had been separated into pre-planned CT incidents and spontaneous CT incidents.
- The sub-group had been considering whether presumptive testing of noxious substances at scenes would fall under FSA – INC 100 or FSA – DTN 500 as different accreditation standards apply to each FSA. The OFSR representative would follow this up with the relevant lead in the Regulator’s office.

Action 5: Establish whether presumptive testing of noxious substances at scenes would be INC 100 or DTN 500.

- 5.6. The IESG Chair noted that discussions had been held with Dstl and one thing the members would need to look at would be how technical advice provided for incident examination would be covered by the Code.
- 5.7. The Chair of the CT sub-group also noted that there may be occasions where emergency teams attend a scene to make a device safe and this would be outside of the control of the forensic practitioners.

6. Actions and next steps to produce an IE FSA SR to recommend to the Regulator

- 6.1. The Chair discussed the workshop of the IE FSA SR and drew out the five main themes that the IESG would need to address:
- Facilities and environment
 - Forensic scene management
 - Professional judgement and competency
 - Control of contamination
 - Commissioning of others at crime scenes
- 6.2. The Chair noted that there were three main opportunities to address these issues, although a combination of these may be needed:

- Amend the wording within the FSA specific requirement.
- Consider whether the main Code would require some amendments
- Draft guidance to assist practitioners undertaking the FSAs.

6.3. Before producing guidance, the Chair proposed that members review the workshop and consultation feedback and identify any further areas/themes need clarification.

Action 6: Summary of feedback from the IE FSA SR workshop to be shared with the IESG.

6.4. A UKAS representative suggested that a copy of the IE FSA SR logging all the changes made would be beneficial.

Action 7: OFSR representative to create a summary of decisions made on the IE FSA SR.

6.5. A UKAS representative raised concerns about changes being made to the IE FSA SR before the consultation on version 2 of the Code had concluded. It was noted that consultation feedback would be taken into account in making any changes and that the CSI expert network workshop was targeted consultation as permitted by the Act.

7. Any other business

7.1. No other business was raised.

7.2. The Chair thanked members and closed the meeting. The date of the next meeting was to be confirmed.

Annex A

Representatives present:

Online

Chair

Metropolitan Police Service

Thames Valley Police

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Association of Forensic Service Providers (AFSP)

Forensic Capability Network (FCN)

Forensic Collision Investigation Network (FCIN)

Office of the Forensic Science Regulator

SPA

Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Cambridgeshire Police

GMP

NCA

West Yorkshire Police

No apologies received.