

Call for Comments

FEPAC Standards 2019

At its recent Interim Meeting, the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) conducted an in-depth five-year review of the current standards for forensic science programs as is required by the FEPAC Policies & Procedures Policy 4.1.1 Review of Standards. The review resulted in the following change which are now presented to you for comment. Additions/changes appear in red.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.5 Expansion of the Scope of Accreditation

A need may develop for FEPAC to expand the scope of forensic educational programs, which it accredits to include disciplines other than ~~criminalistics~~ forensic science, natural science with a concentration in forensic science, digital forensics or computer science with a concentration in forensic science. FEPAC would first determine if there is sufficient demand among laboratories and programs to sustain the growth of the new educational discipline. Such an expansion would require a new set of curricular and other standards, and very likely, the development of sub-committees (Working Groups) comprised of at least one member of the FEPAC and others with expertise in the given profession. Members of the Working Groups will only offer accreditation recommendations for consideration by the FEPAC. When completed and reviewed by FEPAC, the standards will be published for public comment and disseminated to programs with potential interest in accreditation.

Rationale: As a result of the recent "Scope of Accreditation" Survey and the support expressed by many constituents of the expansion of accreditation to other forensic science disciplines, the Commission revised Standard 1.5 Expansion of the Scope of Accreditation to identify tracks/concentrations. The Standard does not impact program eligibility or curricular requirements.

3.0 GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL PROGRAMS

3.3 Planning and Evaluation

The program shall have explicit written processes for:

1. evaluating and monitoring its overall efforts to fulfill its mission, goals, and objectives, currently and for the future;
2. assessing its effectiveness in serving its various constituencies;
3. modifying the curriculum as necessary, based on the results of its evaluation activities; and demonstrating continuous improvement.
4. ~~Planning to achieve its mission in the future; and (moved to #1)~~
5. ~~Demonstrating continuous improvement. (moved to #3)~~

Rationale: The changes more clearly define the FEPAC's intent and the program's need for appropriate documentation.

3.5 Faculty

All faculty members shall be appropriately qualified, by education and experience, to implement the instructional program. Forensic science faculty includes any faculty or instructional staff member who teaches a forensic science course or a support course designed specifically for the program.

1. The scientific and educational capabilities of the faculty shall be distributed over the major areas of the program. The number of faculty members shall be sufficient to ensure regular offerings of all courses needed for the degree program. Students shall not experience delays in graduating because of lack of course offerings.
2. Faculty members with working experience in a forensic science laboratory are preferred. However, overreliance on part-time or adjunct faculty members may be deemed inadequate institutional support.
3. Full-time faculty teaching in graduate programs shall have demonstrated research activity appropriate to their institution's mission.
4. Full-time faculty members shall oversee all coursework and ensure its applicability to the program's mission, goals, and objectives.
5. The following requirements apply separately to each degree program (e.g. B.S., M.S.):
 - a) at least 50% of the full-time forensic science faculty shall have an appropriate doctoral degree; and,
 - b) at least 50% of the forensic science credit hours in a program (4.1a, b, c; 4.2.1c; 4.2.2c; 4.2.3c; 4.2.4c) for undergraduate programs and (5.2.2a,c,d; 5.2.3 a, b, c, d) for graduate programs must be taught by full-time faculty.
6. The program shall have well-defined policies and procedures to recruit, appoint, and promote qualified faculty, to evaluate the competence and performance of faculty, and to support the professional development and advancement of faculty.

Rationale: The addition of the specific Standards was added to clearly identify to which Standards and coursework applies.

3.7 Student Support Services

The program shall provide adequate student support services, including mentoring, academic advising, and career and placement services. The program shall also provide an environment and culture that are congruent with professional standards and behaviors.

Students must be advised of specific curricular requirements of individual disciplines. For example, if pursuing a career as a forensic DNA analyst **the student should be made aware of any applicable Quality Assurance Standards (QAS) or current state requirements**, ~~nine cumulative hours of course work in biochemistry, molecular biology, and genetics is required; course work in population genetics and statistics is desirable. Employers will require documentation, such as a syllabus, for course work with other titles.~~

Rationale: Edited for clarity and updated to reflect the changes in state or government requirements.

3.9 Distance Learning and Other Alternative Delivery Mechanisms

FEPAC considers distance learning to be one of several acceptable forms of instructional methodology. Therefore, FEPAC does not maintain separate standards for distance learning or other alternative delivery mechanisms and expects all programs to meet the same standards for accreditation, regardless of the instructional methodology used.

FEPAC acknowledges that laboratory-based instruction is integral to any science-based discipline such as forensic science. Therefore, any program that offers at least some instruction via distance learning shall demonstrate that it includes an appropriate **hands-on** laboratory experience for all students.

Rationale: "hands-on" was added for clarity. Virtual laboratories lack the experience/education required in forensic science.

3.10a Interaction with Forensic Science Laboratories

The program shall demonstrate formal, *biennial* interaction with at least one operational forensic science laboratory **relevant to the curriculum offered by the program**. This interaction must be on-going and documented. This relationship must take the form of two or more of the following:

1. student internships;
2. training opportunities in which the program provides instruction to laboratory personnel;
3. faculty serving on laboratory advisory committees;
4. coordinated research initiatives between the laboratory and academic program;
5. professional activities coordinated between the laboratory and the academic program; and,
6. laboratory personnel serving in an advisory capacity to the academic program.

Rationale: Added for clarity. The laboratory should provide interaction and support to the program, i.e. forensic science, forensic computer science, or forensic concentrations.

3.10b Interaction with Forensic Science Organizations

The program shall demonstrate formal, *biennial* interaction with at least one professional forensic science organization **relevant to the curriculum offered by the program**. Interaction must take the form of two or more of the following:

1. faculty participation at a local, regional, national, or international forensic science conferences;
2. student attendance or participation at local, regional, national, or international forensic science conferences;
3. service activities to or for a professional organization; and,
4. hosting an educational, training, or outreach program with an external professional organization.

Rationale: Added for clarity. The forensic science organization should provide interaction and support to the program, i.e. forensic science, forensic computer science, or forensic concentrations.

4.1 CURRICULUM

4.1a Forensic Science Professional Practice Topics

The following topics must be covered in the curriculum:

- Courtroom testimony
- Introduction to law
- Quality assurance
- Ethics
- ~~Professional practice~~
- Evidence identification, collection, processing

Normally, a topic will involve multiple class meetings and may involve multiple learning modalities, such as lectures, laboratories, and demonstrations. Evaluation of student mastery of each topic may be done through a number of modalities, but the topic material must be specifically addressed in a syllabus and assessed. The program shall have clear procedures for assessing and documenting each student's progress toward fulfillment of these objectives.

Rationale: The title for 4.1a states Professional Practice which includes all of the bullet points

5.0 GRADUATE PROGRAM STANDARDS

5.2.2c Graduate Seminar

A formal seminar, presented by a combination of invited experts, faculty, and/or students covering topics such as published work, original research, and other relevant topics must be included within the curriculum as a requirement of a course.

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