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AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

Spring 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope this finds you and your families well during these unusual times. Like everyone, the ABC has been affected. We started off the year very excited as we began field testing our two new exams at the AAFS meeting in Anaheim. All went off as expected. We had great expectations that we would be done field testing this year, then the pandemic hit.

The ABC is still forging forward with the Recertification Task Group in an effort to make improvements to our recertification program. We are also reviewing our certification schemes and I think there are some exciting developments that will be coming out of this in the near future.

As always, the ABC Registrar is there to help you through any questions you may have. You can reach them at ABCRegistrar@criminalistics.com or by phone at 941-729-9050.

Stay healthy!

Jason L. Linder, F-ABC

COVID 19 - Statement

The ABC is monitoring the current situation regarding COVID19. We are aware of the hardships that the current situation will create for our certificants. We will continue to work with candidates and certificants to ensure that they are not penalized as a result of shutdowns, work-stoppages, meeting cancellations, etc. As the situation progresses, the Board will be making decisions on how to proceed with regards to recertification deadlines and application extensions.

If you anticipate sitting for an examination or field test, we encourage you to check our website frequently as the situation continues to evolve. The ABC will strive to offer certification and field testing examinations in a manner that complies with the most currently accepted healthy and safety practices.

If you have further questions, please contact the Registrar's Office via e-mail at abcregistrar@criminalistics.com.

ABC Statement Re: Preparation Course Endorsement

The ABC does not endorse any commercial courses or publications alleging to prepare an individual for any of the ABC certification examinations.

Recertification Task Group Update

In the fall of 2019, the Recertification Task Group sent a survey to all certificants and affiliates, approximately 1100 individuals. We received 478 responses! We appreciate everyone taking the time to complete the survey. Most of the survey responses indicated that our certificants agreed with the point structure that we were proposing. A few questions required further discussion by the task group and the Board.

- **Is 2 points/year for full time forensic work adequate?**

Approximately 73% felt this is fair in assessing continued competence and 25% of respondents believed that this should be higher. The ABC determined that the points allocation would remain at 2/year. Attaining 2 points per year for full-time employment would account for up to 20% of a certificant's points. The ABC feels that the point structure should encourage individuals to seek professional engagement opportunities beyond normal casework duties.

- **Is 1 pt/day adequate for an Internal Audit of a Technical Specialty?**

Approximately 76% felt this is fair in assessing continued competence and 21% of respondents believed this should be higher. This was reviewed in comparison to the 2 points/day allocated for External Audits (approximately 81% agreed with this allotment and 12% felt this should be higher). The ABC determined that the points allocation for internal audits would remain at 1/year. Internal audits are not as formal as external audits, do not require the same level of preparation work and do not require as much work on the overall quality system.

- **Is 1 pt/day adequate for a Technical Training Presentation?**

Approximately 71% felt this was fair in assessing continued competence and 28% of respondents believed this should be higher. The ABC felt that the respondents may not have been clear on what this category was trying to capture. As a result, more examples were added to the comments of the points chart and the points chart was re-ordered to try to make it clearer. This category was added to allow certificants an opportunity to earn points for providing training that did not fit in other categories. Examples include: an examiner who attends a training and returns to the laboratory to provide

Recertification Task Group Update - continued

an overview training to other laboratory staff or providing discipline-specific training to attorneys or law enforcement. This is not designed to encompass general laboratory capability training or laboratory overview training.

- **Certificants will be required to attain 50 points over 5 years.** Approximately 72% felt that this is fair in assessing continued competence and 22% of the respondents felt that this number should be lower over the 5-year recertification cycle. The ABC feels that the 50-point requirements is fair. Certification is an extra level of professional recognition and should require an additional level of professional commitment. We do recognize that continuing education and professional involvement opportunities are limited. We do want to ensure that recertification is attainable. We have reallocated points and anticipate that recertification will be easier to attain for most of our certificants.
- **Certificants will be required to attain 15 points for each specialty over 5 years.** Approximately 72% felt that this is fair in assessing continued competence and 17% of the respondents felt that this number should be lower over the 5-year recertification cycle. The ABC feels that the 15-point requirement is fair, for reasons similar to those stated above.

There was not a clear consensus on whether the revised point structure will make it easier to earn recertification and complete your recertification paperwork. I can say that the Recertification Task Group is well-aware of the difficulties associated with our current recertification process (we are certificants and have to complete the paperwork too). We are working hard to deploy a new recertification reporting process for next year. I realize this has been a slow process and it may seem as if we are not taking this seriously. What may not be apparent is that we have been focusing on work within our own organization to improve the review process, the quality and timeliness of the reviews. A simplified reporting process should further improve the review process. Further, the ABC will be completing a comprehensive review of our recertification process every 4-5 years. We are aiming to keep the process stable in between review cycles.

One question appeared to cause a significant amount of confusion, which I hope to clarify briefly. The ABC has been looking at the future of Fellow status. Because we do not provide the proficiency tests, the accreditation body has

Recertification Task Group Update - continued

indicated that we may not be able to attain accreditation for our Fellow status. This is regardless of the accreditation status of the proficiency testing provider. Many of you commented that this should be a non-issue if proficiency tests come from an ISO/IEC 17043 or ISO/IEC 17025 accredited provider. While this may be true under ISO/IEC 17025, it is not true under ISO/IEC 17024 (our accreditation document). These conversations were had with the accreditation body prior to any discussion ABC had about the future of the program. Further consideration is the cost of the accreditation. Under ISO/IEC 17024, the certification scheme is accredited, not the certification body. Each certification scheme requires additional assessing, therefore additional costs. Each status (Diplomate and Fellow) would be a separate certification scheme for each type of examination. ABC currently offers 6 certification examinations, each with the option of Diplomate and Fellow. That amounts to 12 separate certification schemes, each with an associated cost of accreditation. To be clear, ABC was not suggesting that we would be providing proficiency testing to allow for Fellow testing. What we were trying to determine was how important the Fellow status is to our certificants and if we should try to get Fellow status accredited and if our certificants would be willing to incur the costs for us to do so.

Thank you to all of our certificants for your patience during this lengthy process. The new points structure document will be available on our website soon. I anticipate that it will be ready by the end of June. Additionally, the full survey summary will also be made available on our website.

Gretchen Lajoie

Accreditation Manager



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Consider sharing your expertise by presenting a scientific talk or interesting case: Deadline June 5



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ICE CREAM SOCIAL - AAFS 2020

As a thank you to all our certificants, the ABC tries to host an Ice Cream Social at every AAFS meeting. It's a great opportunity to meet members of the ABC Board of Directors and other certificate holders. This year a record number of people made the trek from the AAFS primary hotel to an adjacent property to attend the event. It was great seeing all those who attended to join us in do-it-yourself sundaes.



ICE CREAM SOCIAL - AAFS 2020 - Continued



One of our Ice Cream Social sponsors joined us for the event to personally meet and greet the attendees. She requested the following statement be shared.

Dear ABC members,

It was great meeting many of you at the AAFS Ice-cream Social at AAFS. It was not that long ago but how the world has changed since then. I spoke to many of you regarding the Forensic Foundations' Proficiency Testing Program and I'd like to reassure you that the Proficiency Testing is still on track. There may be a delay in 2020-4 Fibers examination, but there should be no change to the timing of the other Proficiency tests.

We understand that in this current climate, there may be less emphasis on proficiency testing within your organization - for that reason we plan to be flexible with regards the due dates.

Please let us know how we can assist you.

Kind Regards,

Anna Davey

Director

Forensic Foundations

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- ✓ Cost affordability

For more information visit

forensicfoundations.com.au/proficiencytesting

or email quality@forensicfoundations.com.au



BUREAU
VERITAS



Thank You to Susan Blankenship

A few years back the ABC Board of Directors established term limits for it's Directors. As a direct result of this action Susan Blankenship was required to end her term on the ABC Board of Directors this year. She is the longest continuous serving Board member with over 19 years of service. We all sincerely thank her for her dedication to the American Board of Criminalists. She has made a lasting impact on the organization and the certification process.

For this newsletter she was asked to express in her own words her thoughts on service to the ABC.

"I started with the ABC in February 2001, at the Seattle AAFS meeting. That was my introduction to a dedicated group of people who have worked throughout the past 19 years to promote personal certification throughout the US. I originally volunteered not only to help the ABC but to have access to AAFS meetings, but that changed to becoming really interested in the direction the ABC was taking. When I started, there were 2 in person meetings each year, with not as much getting done the rest of the year... not everyone had an email address! Things have changed over the past 19 years, to the point where the ABC only holds 1 in person meeting per year, but has web meetings the other 11 months, as well as ad hoc web meetings! Prior to starting with the ABC, I had started taking some accounting classes. So, in 2004, when the previous treasurer, Dani Bergman, decided to leave the ABC Board, it was easy for me to slot into that position.

Through the past 19 years, I have worked with many others on the ABC Board and those on the Exam Committee... and like most volunteer organizations, while some have not lived up to their potential, most of the people I have worked with have been dedicated to the ABC, working to improve the organization and personal certification in general. And while there have been some missteps over the past 19 years, the ABC as an organization has moved so far ahead of where it was when I joined it is incredible to me! I am so proud of everything the ABC has been able to accomplish over the past years, especially when factoring in the mostly volunteer aspects of the operations. And, with the newer test development procedures the ABC is following, I expect nothing but good things from the ABC in the upcoming years. I look back on my years on the Board with fondness, remembering the work but also the good times and the friends I made. It has been an honor and a privilege!
Susan"

Thank you again Susan. You will be missed

Accreditation Manager Update

Accreditation and the Development of Examinations

Many of you may be asking why we are seeking ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation. It is pretty simple, really. We are seeking an outside agency to review our processes and assess us to an internationally accepted standard. We want to ensure that we are providing the highest quality certification process for our candidates and certificants. Having a certification accredited by an impartial, outside agency should give our candidates and certificants confidence in our program. As with any accreditation, there are significant costs that we will incur. The following is a list of our anticipated APPROXIMATED costs:

- \$3000 application fee (one-time fee)
- \$20,000 for a first-time assessment for one certification scheme (\$1250/ assessor per day for document review and onsite assessment)
- \$7,000 for each additional certification scheme (we currently maintain 12 separate certification schemes, 6 exams with two levels of certification each)
- \$5,000-\$8,000 per year for annual assessments
- \$2,500 for annual fees

The TOTAL cost for the first assessment is anticipated to be approximately \$30,000.

These numbers are substantial for a small non-profit organization, but these are not all the costs associated with accreditation.

For each examination we offer, we must ensure that the certification and recertification scheme are relevant to the certification examination and the certification we offer. Each of these steps require an in-depth review of our process and our product. We are able to complete many of these reviews ourselves, but they take a significant amount of time and dedication by the volunteers and contractors doing the work. The most critical reviews are of our examinations and we cannot do these ourselves; we must rely on the assistance from other practicing examiners.

Accreditation Manager Update - Continued

The ABC has always routinely evaluated the certification examinations to ensure they are timely and performing appropriately. ISO/IEC 17024 changes the way we are conducting these reviews and the frequency with which they are conducted. Much like many of the new ISO/IEC 17025 standards changed the way forensic laboratories conducted business, the transition to ISO/IEC 17024 is no different for ABC. The standards are much stricter than our current work process and the assessments will be much more involved. However, this will only improve our organization and will provide a better product for our candidates and our certificants. One of the biggest complaints we hear is that our examinations are outdated or not relevant to the field. This examination development and maintenance process will ensure that our examinations remain relevant and up-to date.

A brief summary of how these examinations are/were put together:

- Members of the examination committee received training on examination development. This consisted of two separate one-week training courses. These members then became the facilitators for the examination development and maintenance process. Eventually, more members will need to receive this training. (Approximate cost is \$8000 or approximately \$2700 for each exam currently in development)
- A survey is sent out to determine the needs of the community. The responses are analyzed, and a certification scheme planned.
- The Examination Committee assembles a group of approximately 6-12 Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will meet in-person to list out and prioritize jobs and tasks associated with a specific certification. This requires costs associated with travel and meeting space. (Approximate cost is \$10,000)
- Based on the lists developed by the SME, the Examination Committee sends out surveys to discipline-specific practitioners to determine the frequency and importance of each job and task.
- The facilitators meet, in-person, to analyze the data from the survey to develop a frequency and importance chart, by which the examination blueprint is developed. This again has meeting and

Accreditation Manager Update - Continued

travel costs associated. (Approximate cost is \$4500)

- Based on the examination blueprint, the Examination Committee, in conjunction with other discipline-specific practitioners, develops examination questions. This becomes the Field Test. The Field Test will have more questions than the final examination.
- The Field Test will be offered, free of charge, until sufficient candidates have taken the test to perform psychometrics on the examination. The number of completed examinations is determined by the number of questions on the examination. Each field test we offer amounts to \$250 in lost revenue. Additionally, we still incur the costs of the meeting room fees, TSM, etc. (Approximate cost \$500)
- Once sufficient numbers of examinations have been obtained, qualified Subject Matter Experts are brought together to assist in developing a cut-score for the examination. (Approximate cost is \$10,000)
- The psychometrics will be conducted by an organization with special training to perform this work. The report from the psychometrician will assist the Examination Committee in determining the final contents of the examination. (Approximate cost is \$4000)
- Once the final examination is determined, the test will begin being offered by the ABC. We anticipate that it will take offering an approximately 127 certification examinations, at \$250 per sitting, to recoup the costs of examination development ONLY. This does NOT include the additional costs of accreditation or the cost of administering the certification program.

The TOTAL cost for developing one examination is approximately \$31,700.

I would like to note that we have worked creatively to defray some of these costs, so some of our expenses were not as significant as they were budgeted to be. Examples include: having SMEs meet in conjunction with other meetings such as Promega or CODIS; having facilitators meet at the home of

Accreditation Manager Update - Continued

one of the facilitators; utilizing remote meeting options instead of using in-person meetings, when possible (though it should be noted that in-person meetings are recommended); and some agencies were willing to provide the travel costs for the SME members.

Once the examination is developed and in use, the examinations must be maintained. The above process, or one similar, will be repeated approximately every 5 years to ensure that the examination stays relevant to the field. With the costs associated with accreditation and maintenance for each examination, it should be clear why we must choose which examinations we carry through the entire process. Some of our examinations are rarely or never offered. From 2013 through 2019, we have had the following examination sittings:

Molecular Biology	407 examinations offered
Drug Analysis	252 examinations offered
Comprehensive Criminalistics	147 examinations offered
Fire Debris	23 examinations offered
Hair and Fiber	3 examinations offered (last sitting in 2013)
Paint and Polymer	3 examinations offered (last sitting in 2015)

In addition to the costs associated with accreditation and examination development, the ABC also pays three contractors, one full-time and two part-time (Registrar's Office, Question Database Manager and Accreditation Manager), to ensure that the daily work gets completed. Most of our income comes from our certification program (including recertification) and the fees collected through FSAT program. Additional income comes from Membership Organization fees and sponsorship fees. We do not have an individual membership contingency or a training contingency to assist with the fees associated with these costs. We have tried to be creative in identifying means of income. We have sought out grant funding, but there is not much available to an organization such as ours. We have sought out sponsors to advertise with us. Some of our member organizations have supported our efforts with grants or providing additional funds to assist with training and examination development costs. We have cut our spending by removing some of our in-person meetings, relying mostly on online meetings. We are always trying to balance the needs of our organization with the needs of the certificants. We do understand that the price increases we have imposed over the past few

Accreditation Manager Update - Continued

years are a burden to our certificants. However, there is significant cost of providing a quality certification program.

Gretchen Lajoie

Accreditation Manager

Recertification Committee - Review of 2019 Packets

The Recertification Committee is preparing to review the 2019 packets. We are continuing to listen to your feedback. The following changes were instituted for 2019 points:

- Liaison updated the course approval spreadsheet and it is now live (this allows you to check the spreadsheet for numerous courses that are accepted for points)
- Courses are NOT required to be pre-approved (but the Liaison does appreciate a steady stream throughout the year that can be added to the spreadsheet)
- Contact hours are no longer required
- A point structure that follows the recertification paperwork outline was updated and includes examples of acceptable documentation- we hope this was an easier-to-use reference this year

Additional changes are on the horizon for 2020 points to further ease the recertification process. Please look out for the new point structure coming soon!



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Becoming a Sponsor of the ABC

The ABC incurs significant expenses associated with maintaining the organization, servicing our certificants, developing new examinations, and maintaining the high quality of existing examinations. The major sources of income utilized to meet our obligations comes from application fees, sitting fees and recertification fees.

As an organization we are keenly aware of the load this places on certificate holders and professionals seeking certification. The load on the certificant is increased when their employers do not recognize the importance of certification and provide fiscal support.

The cost of operation is always increasing. To mitigate the need to constantly increase fees, the ABC Board of Directors seeks the financial assistance of private enterprise in the form of sponsorships. Though we do not specifically endorse the products or services of our sponsor, we do recognize and appreciate our sponsor's recognition of the importance of certification and their willingness to provide financial assistance to further an important activity of our profession.

We need your help to let your vendors know about this opportunity to support the ABC. Provided below are the costs of support and what they get for their participation.

Benefits

The ability to reach out to our over 1100 certificants through marketing on our website, our annual ice cream social event at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), and advertising through our newsletter

Costs

The annual cost of an advertisement package which includes your logo/link on the ABC website, a full page advertisement (minimum 2 issues – no additional cost if more are produced annually), and sponsor recognition at the ice cream social is only \$1500. That is a \$100 savings over purchasing all three items via the a la carte option.

Annual a la carte opportunities include:

\$500 Website only

\$500 Ice Cream Social Sponsor only

\$300 per newsletter (full page advertisement).

Message from the ABC Registrar

Our office would like to take this opportunity to remind and/or inform everyone about several important topics.

- Update contact information on members side of website when necessary. Current email address assists our office to get important information out to you.
- ABC Registrar's office has a limited printing budget. If a document cannot be submitted electronically via ABC website, please mail it to our PO Box.
- Please do not staple any documents. Our office must scan many documents and staples will interfere with operation of scanner.
- If a certificate holder has already met point requirements for recertification, the recertification packet will not be reviewed, and points will not be entered on the website.
- If results from a proficiency test are not available at the time PT form is submitted, please send another PT form reporting only the pending PT when results are available. The ABC policy is reporting of PT results is required within 60 days of receiving results.
- In Test Identifier column on PT form, please do not enter participant code or webcode. Enter Manufacturer's Test Identification Number. Such as for CTS: 19-501, 19-5702.
- Annual proficiency testing is required by all Fellows. If you did not perform one, you can apply for conversion to Diplomate or submit a written request to the Board for a one year reprieve . These are the options for non-participation.
- Notify our office when you want to resign your certification. If you are retiring from the forensic field, you might be eligible for Emeritus status. Visit ABC website for information regarding this status.
- Certification exam application deadline is 75 days prior to exam date.
- Field Testing exam application deadline is 45 days prior to exam date.
- If your agency is interested in hosting a certification exam offering, contact our office. If there are less than 5 exam candidates, there may be additional expenses.

Although, this office works for ABC, we are here to help You as best we can.

Mike and Debbie Healy

MISSING IN ACTION

The ABC has lost contact with the following individuals:

Aceves, Margaret
Billie, Todd
Boileau, Michelle
Buszka, Jeffrey
Coniglio, Dolores
Dingman, Meeann
Dooley, Gregory
Femreite, Jamie
Frontz, Michael
Gorn, Michael
Graham, Laura
Hellstrom, Scott
Hines, Sophia
Hollyday, Henry
Johns, Melissa
Johnson, Janine
Jones, William
Keel, Alan

Koge, Brian
Kusluski, Michael
Maletic, Virginia
McFrederick, Erica
Mendez, Jose
Netzel, Linda
Nezezson, Theresa
Petersack, Joseph
Pineman, Steven
Pruiett, Carol
Purcell, Dale
Ray, Tracey
Salazar Ralph
San Pietro, David
Schneck, William
Watts, Aliece
Wicks, Song
Yip, Dennis

**MANY OF THESE CERTIFICATE HOLDERS
RECERTIFY THIS YEAR OF NEXT**

If you know anyone on this list, please help them get in touch
with the ABC Registrar as soon as possible!
If they have retired, remind them of the ability to seek Emeritus status!

ABC Registrar
abcregistrar@criminalistics.com

P. O. Box 1358
Palmetto, FL 34220

ABC - About Us

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Jason Linder

Vice President
Danielle Hankinson

Secretary
Shawn West

Treasurer
Angelica Noyola

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AAFS Criminalistics Section
Shawn West (Secretary)

ASCLD
Jason Linder (President)

ASTM-E30
Chris Taylor
Appeals Committee Chair

CAC
Greg Matheson
Newsletter Editor

MAFS
Danielle Hankinson (Vice-President)
Recertification Committee Liaison

MAAFS
Susan Blankenship

NEAFS
Peter Diaczuk
Marketing Coordinator
FSAT Task Force Leader

NWAFS
Stacy Guess
Ethics Committee Chair

SAFS
Desiree Reid

SWAFS
Angelica Noyola (Treasurer)

At-Large Directors (3)

Christine Pinto - Supported by CAC
Quality Assurance Committee Chair
Ed Rhodes Scholarship Coordinator
Credentials Committee Liaison

David Koppenhaver - Supported by
MAFS
Proficiency Review Liaison

Sandra Koch - Supported by AAFS

Public Member - Open

ABC - About Us Continued

Committees

Examination Committee

AAFS Criminalistics Section
Amy Reynolds
Comprehensive Criminalistics Coordinator
Hairs & Fibers Coordinator

ASCLD
Stewart Raley

ASTM-E30
Lisa Brewer
Micro Biology Coordinator

CAC
Laura Silva (Chair)

MAFS
Audra Curry Yovanovich (Vice-Chair)
Drug Analysis Coordinator

MAAFS
Ruth Damaso Neely

NEAFS
Amy Duhaime
Fire Debris Coordinator

NWAFS
Tana Brown

SAFS
Tammy Jergovich
Paints and Polymers Coordinator

SWAFS
Miriam Kane

Quality Assurance Committee - Chair Christine Pinto
Credentials Committee - Liaison Christine Pinto
Recertification Committee - Liaison Danielle Hankinson
Proficiency Review - Liaison David Koppenhaver
Appeals Committee - Chair Chris Taylor
Ed Rhodes Scholarship - Coordinator Christine Pinto
Ethics Committee - Chair Stacey Guess
Newsletter - Editor Greg Matheson

Contractors

Registrar - Mike Healy (Certificate Preparer)

Accreditation Manager - Gretchen Lajoie

Question Database Master - David Stockwell

Bookkeeper - Susan Blankenship

ABC - About Us Continued

Individuals Assisting the ABC

Jenna Crawford
Recertification Committee Co-Chair

Sheri Lyn Jenkins
Proficiency Review Co-Chair

Crystal Kissel
Proficiency Review Co-Chair

Sara Roper
Webmaster of the ABC Website

Julie Conover Sikorsky
Credentials Committee Chair

Amy Winters
Recertification Committee Co-Chair

Task Groups - Leads

Recertification - Gretchen Lajoie

Proficiency Testing - Greg Matheson

Member Organizations (10)

American Academy of Forensic Sciences - Criminalistics Section (AAFS)

ASTM Committee E-30 (Forensic Science)

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (AAFS)

California Association of Criminalists (CAC)

Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists (MAAFS)

Midwestern Association of Forensic Sciences (MAFS)

Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists (NEAFS)

Northwest Association of Forensic Scientists (NWAFS)

Southern Association of Forensic Scientists (SAFS)

Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists (SWAFS)