**Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science**

# ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

## 1. Mission

The mission of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science is to strengthen the nation's use of forensic science by facilitating the development of scientifically sound forensic science standards, and by promoting the adoption of those standards by the forensic science community.

## 2. Aims

Consistent with the Charter and Bylaws the aims of the OSAC are to:

- populate the *OSAC Registry of Standards*
- promote the use of OSAC-endorsed standards by the forensic community, accreditation and certification bodies, and by the legal system
- provide insight on each forensic science discipline's research and measurement standard needs
- enlist stakeholder involvement from a broad community; and to
- establish and maintain working relationships with other similar organizations.

## 3. Purpose

This document identifies overarching elements necessary for OSAC to achieve its mission and identifies organizational priorities of the OSAC.

Where applicable, Scientific Area Committees (SACs) should work with a Standards Developing Organization (SDO) and should incorporate the principles identified in this document. All standards approved for inclusion on the OSAC Registries must be developed by a process that follows the four core OSAC principles of openness, balance, consensus and harmonization[1].

## 4. Legal Precedence

Statutory, legislative or regulatory requirements may take precedence in some jurisdictions and scientific disciplines (*e.g.*, FBI DNA Quality Assurance Standards).

[1] Organization of Scientific Area Committees, Charter and Bylaws.

## 5. Accreditation

The OSAC supports the accreditation of all entities engaged in the delivery of forensic services, including those who provide services on a part-time basis.

a) The OSAC supports accreditation programs based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards (*e.g.*, ISO/IEC 17025[2], ISO/IEC 17020[3]), supplemental standards specific to forensic science and associated guidance documents (*e.g.,* based on ILAC G19[4]).
b) The OSAC supports the use of an accrediting body that is a signatory to the ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation) Mutual Recognition Arrangement in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011[5].

## 6. Code of Conduct

The OSAC supports adherence to an ethical Code of Conduct for forensic practitioners and those who interact with the forensic science community.

## 7. Competency

All Scientific Area Committees/Subcommittees (SAC/SC) shall support the development of standards that address competence within their respective disciplines, including (where applicable) the following criteria:

a) Formal education requirements
b) Discipline specific training programs
c) Competency testing
d) Continuing education
e) Certification
    i. Certification is strongly encouraged where available. In order to achieve universal certification across all disciplines, development of additional certification programs will be necessary.
    ii. The OSAC supports the use of a certification body accredited to ISO/IEC 17024[6] by an accrediting body that is a signatory to the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011[7].

[2] ISO/IEC 17025, General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.
[3] ISO/IEC 17020, Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.
[4] ILAC G19, Modules in a Forensic Science Process.
[5] ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.
[6] ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.
[7] ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.

## 8. Scientific Validity & Research

The OSAC encourages research and investigation to verify or establish scientific validity, advance forensic science, and support the standards development process. One of the OSAC's objectives is to inform the forensic science community of research priorities that are uncovered during OSAC's activities. Scientific Area Committees and/or Subcommittees (SAC/SC) shall identify areas in which additional scientific inquiry are warranted. The OSAC will make these prioritized lists available to the public[8]. These research priority recommendations may be considered by other agencies and organizations when they develop their own agency research priorities, and when soliciting funding for forensic science research. The OSAC encourages collaborative, interdisciplinary and industrially relevant research that will promote a forward-looking profession, broaden scientific awareness, and strategically advance the standard and practice of forensic science.

## 9. Method Validation

All Scientific Area Committees and/or Subcommittees (SAC/SC) shall support the development of method validation standards within their respective disciplines.

The OSAC promotes the development of method validation standards that verify the scientific validity of test methods, provide data to support the establishment of ongoing quality and reliability parameters, identifies limitations of the test method and confirms that the method employed for a specific test is suitable for its intended use.

## 10. Results and Interpretation

Scientific Area Committees and/or Subcommittees (SAC/SC) shall support the development of reporting standards appropriate for the discipline. These standards shall cover results and, as applicable, conclusions, interpretations or opinions.

## 11. Terminology

The OSAC, through the Scientific Area Committees and/or Subcommittees (SAC/SC), shall promote the use of consistent and unambiguous terminology within all forensic disciplines.

## 12. Proficiency Testing

Scientific Area Committees and/or Subcommittees (SAC/SC) shall support the development of standards that address proficiency testing for the discipline.

a) The OSAC supports proficiency testing programs to help demonstrate adherence to OSAC standards.
b) Standards shall include, where applicable, the scope, nature and frequency of proficiency testing.

[8] http://www.nist.gov/forensics/osac/osac-research-needs-assessments.cfm

c) The OSAC supports the use of a proficiency test provider accredited to ISO/IEC 17043[9] by an accrediting body that is a signatory to the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011[10].

## 13. Outreach

The OSAC recognizes the complexity of the forensic sciences and its far reaching impact on the criminal justice system. In order to strengthen the nation's use of forensic science and advance professional practice, the OSAC is committed to effective communication and outreach with the following:

a) International standards organizations
b) Standards developing organizations (SDOs)
c) Criminal justice system
d) Forensic science service providers
e) Accrediting bodies
f) Certifying bodies
g) Professional scientific organizations
h) Professional forensic science organizations
i) Academia and the broader scientific community
j) Peer-reviewed scientific journals
k) Public and/or private sector funding agencies to support research
l) Suppliers of forensic related products
m) The general public

[9] ISO/IEC 17043, Conformity assessment – General requirements for proficiency testing
[10] ISO/IEC 17011, Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies