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Purpose

This procedure describes: Proficiency Test Requirements for all analyst/examiner(s) who conduct casework for the Pitt County Sheriff's Office Forensic Services Unit.

Scope / Field of Application

This procedure applies to all analyst/examiner(s) who conduct casework for the Pitt County Sheriff's Office Forensic Services Unit.

Definitions and Acronyms

Proficiency Test – test to evaluate the continuing capability to perform their specific job function.

External Proficiency Test – A test prepared by, provided by, and reported to a source outside the laboratory, in which the results are unknown to the analyst/examiner.

Internal Proficiency Test – A test produced by the Laboratory in which the expected results are unknown to the analyst/examiner.

Proficiency Test file – All documentation related to a proficiency test, either in paper or electronic format.

Quality Assurance – An integrated system of management activities involving planning, assessing, reporting, and implementing quality improvements to ensure that a process or service is 1) of the type and quality needed and expected by the client and 2) in conformity with accreditation standards and norms of the scientific community.


Responsibilities

The Quality Manager (QM) shall maintain and monitor the status of the proficiency testing program.

Materials Required

Proficiency Test Review Form
Proficiency Test Destruction Verification Form
Proficiency Test Log
Proficiency Test Issuance Memo

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Procedure

External proficiency tests shall be given annually in each discipline. One test per discipline shall be from an approved external source provider accredited to the ISO 17043 standard. Each year, analyst/examiner(s) who perform case work in the discipline/sub-discipline shall be given an internal or external proficiency test with each individual having to complete one external test during each accreditation cycle.

Analyst/Examiner(s) who perform forensic testing on casework in multiple sub-disciplines shall successfully complete at least one external proficiency test during each four year accredited cycle in each category of testing appearing on the Laboratory's Scope of Accreditation, in which the analyst performs testing.

When working proficiency tests, analyst/examiner(s) shall follow the approved technical procedures. The Laboratory proficiency testing program shall comply with the requirements of the accrediting body.

All analyst/examiner(s) engaged in testing activities shall successfully complete at least one internal or external proficiency test per calendar year in his/her forensic science discipline(s).

The QM shall maintain a list of all the current proficiency testing the laboratory participates in, monitor the results, and notify the appropriate personnel of both problematic and successful results.

Details:

The QM shall maintain a proficiency test schedule for all proficiency tests. The laboratory shall take an external primary sub-discipline test each year that the test is offered. Each analyst/examiner shall take a primary sub-discipline proficiency test each year.

The disciplines and sub-disciplines are defined as follows:

Drug Chemistry:


Drug Analysis
Plant Material Analysis

Latent Evidence:

Latent Print Processing
Latent Print Comparison

Toxicology:

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Blood Alcohol Analysis

The Laboratory shall participate in external, open proficiency test programs purchased from vendors approved by the accrediting body in each area of expertise where such tests are available. If there is no approved test provider, the laboratory shall locate and use a source of an external proficiency test in the discipline. All external proficiency tests shall be purchased and distributed to the various laboratory sections by the QM.

The Laboratory may also manufacture internal proficiency tests for trained analyst/examiner(s) and shall document the administration of such tests on the proficiency test log. Internal proficiency test procedures may include, but are not limited to, simulated cases and known standard techniques. Both external agency samples and intra-laboratory test samples may be used. If old external proficiency tests are administered as internal tests, all test manufacturer identifiers must be removed prior to issuance. If the test is created by the Laboratory, the expected answers must be verified prior to distribution.

Proficiency tests shall be treated like case work and shall be performed to the full extent in which the analyst/examiner is qualified to participate. Analyst/Examiner(s) shall follow approved technical procedures. All proficiency tests shall be reviewed technically prior to submitting the results to the proficiency test provider.


The proficiency test file shall contain all the supportive documentation for results that case files contain. All analysis notes shall be on approved forms. The files shall contain a copy of the test results returned to the vendor, or in the case of internal proficiency tests, the proficiency test submitted for grading.

Documentation for each proficiency test shall include at least the following:

- Test identifier.
- Proficiency Test file number.
- Method by which samples were obtained or created.
- Discipline or sub-discipline tested.
- Identity of the person taking the test.
- Date of analysis and completion.
- Originals or copies of all data and notes supporting the conclusions.
- Test results.
- Discrepancies noted.
- Documentation of review and feedback to the analyst/examiner.
- Details of corrective action, if necessary.

Proficiency tests shall undergo a technical review; however, all work and reviews shall be independent. The name of each person completing a test (or any portion of the test) and/or reviewing the re-

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sults shall be documented and each person shall be responsible for the accuracy of the results. If several analyst/examiner(s) are taking identical tests simultaneously, the QM shall collect all independent tests as they are completed and distribute them for peer review.

For all proficiency tests, the following steps shall be followed when the analyst/examiner(s) has/have completed the test and any reviews have been conducted:

The original proficiency test file shall be stored or returned to the QM or designee. The test results shall be sent to the vendor on, or prior to, the due date for it to be a valid external test.

When proficiency test results are received from the vendor, the QM shall forward this material to the Technical Leader. The Technical Leader or designee shall then review the performance of the analyst/examiner, provide feedback to the analyst/examiner taking the test and to the reviewer and document this review on a Proficiency Test Review Form. The completed proficiency test file, including the review forms, the test answers, and expected proficiency test results, shall be forwarded to the QM within thirty days.

Upon receipt of the documentation, the QM shall review the file to ensure complete documentation is present and make entries in the proficiency test log. If the test is internal in nature, the Technical Leader or designee shall have graded the test prior to sending it to the QM. Proficiency tests shall be returned to the QM for storage. After QM review, the Proficiency Test Review Form shall be stored in the Proficiency Test file and a copy placed in the analyst/examiner training folder.

Proficiency test records shall be stored indefinitely.

Corrective Action:

Any deficiencies, discrepancies, or errors shall be handled as provided in the Procedure for Corrective Action, QSP 4-11-1.

Monitoring of the Proficiency Test Program:

The QM shall monitor the status of the proficiency testing program. An annual status report of the proficiency testing program shall be prepared by the QM in conjunction with the Annual Laboratory Quality System Review as provided in the Procedure for Management Review, QSP 4-15-1.

Documentation

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Required Record	Custodian
Proficiency Test Review Form	Quality Manager
Proficiency Test Destruction Verification Form	Quality Manager
Proficiency Test Log	Quality Manager
Proficiency Test Issuance Memo	Quality Manager

References

N/A

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REVISION HISTORY

CURRENT VERSION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
1	2019/01/02	Original Version

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