

SWGWILD Recommendations for SWFS FORENSICS CERTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Version 1.1

(12/19/2012 Approved by SWGWILD)

SWFS FORENSICS CERTIFICATION BODY STRUCTURE

SWFS (Society for Wildlife Forensic Science)

SWFS Board of Directors

Certification Body Chair/ SWFS Director of Certification

Certification Body Members

Certification Scheme Committee (when needed)

Assessment Panel Committee

Record Keeping Committee

Treasurer

1.0 Scope

These policies and procedures provide a framework for the establishment and maintenance of a certification body to provide certification to non-human forensics practitioners. The disciplines covered by this certification are defined by the active certification schemes.

2.0 Normative References:

2.1 ISO/IES 17024 (April 2003)

Conformity assessment - General requirements for certification bodies operating certification of personnel

2.2 FSAB Standards (February 2011)

Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board- Standards for Accrediting Forensic Specialty Certification Boards

2.3 ENFSI Standards (July 2004)

ENFSI Standing Committee for Quality and Competence- Performance based standards for forensic science practitioners

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 **Appeal-** request by applicant or certified person for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by the certification body related to her/his desired certification status
- 3.2 **Applicant-** individual who has fulfilled specified prerequisites, allowing his/her participation in the certification process
- 3.3 **Applicant Declaration-** a document that addresses an applicant's rights and the duties of certified persons, including ethics intended for Applicants and Certified persons.
- 3.4 **Assessor-** Certification Body member that has the responsibility of completing applicant evaluations and providing a certification recommendation to the Certification Body Chair.
- 3.5 **Certification-** confirmation of the competence of an individual
- 3.6 **Certification Body-** a group that administers the certification process and issues certificates of competence.
- 3.7 **Certification Body Agreement-** a document that covers confidentiality, conflict of interest, and ethics intended for Certification Body Members.
- 3.8 **Certification process-** all activities by which a certification body impartially establishes that a person fulfills specified competence requirements, including application, evaluation, decision on certification, competency monitoring and recertification
- 3.9 **Certification scheme-** specific certification requirements and evaluation processes related to specific disciplines
- 3.10 **Competence-** demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and/or skills as defined in the certification scheme and, where relevant, demonstrated personal attributes and experience as defined in the certification scheme
- 3.11 **Complaint-** conformity assessment request, other than an appeal, by any organization or individual to a certification body
- 3.12 **Controlled Document-** a document which is protected from alteration
- 3.13 **Evaluation-** process that assesses an applicant's fulfillment of the requirements of the scheme, leading to a recommendation on certification
- 3.14 **Examination-** mechanism that can be part of the evaluation, which measures an applicant's competence by one or more means such as written, oral, practical, and/or observational
- 3.15 **Non-human forensic practitioner-** practitioners applying a range of scientific disciplines to legal cases involving evidence of non-human biological origin.
- 3.16 **Proctor-** supervisor of the applicant who oversees any exams taken during the course of the certification process

- 3.17 Proficiency Test-** a method by which an applicant's performance in a scientific discipline is evaluated against pre-established criteria by means of interlaboratory comparisons.
- 3.18 Records-** documents created during the process of certification including completed forms and documents submitted by applicants
- 3.19 Specialty Assessor-** someone with specialty knowledge that would be applicable and useful for the Certification Body's ability to make a determination of competence

4.0 Requirements of the SWFS Forensics Certification Body

4.1 The Certification Body-The Certification Body is responsible for all aspects of certification, including granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding the scope, reducing the scope, suspending, and withdrawing certification.

4.1.1 The Certification Body will make the criteria for certification available to all applicants. All applicants are treated fairly and equitably. Applicants are held to the criteria of the scheme they are applying for and are not evaluated on anything outside that scope.

4.2 Organizational Structure-The certification body has three standing Committees: Assessment Panel Committee, Record Keeping Committee, and Treasurer. A Certification Scheme Committee is regularly convened during the operation of the certification process. Additional Committees may be convened with the approval of the Certification Body Chair.

4.2.1 Certification Body Membership:

4.2.1.1 The following are the responsibilities of the entire Certification Body Membership:

- a) Request policy and procedure changes to the Record Keeping Committee.
- b) Approve changes to this document of policies and procedures as drawn up by the Record Keeping Committee. Grammatical and formatting changes do not need to be approved by the Certification Body.
- c) Approve the budget presented by the Treasurer.
- d) Approve any new committees proposed by the Certification Body Chair.
- e) Approve all schemes.

4.2.1.2 When replacement of a member of the Certification Body or expansion of the Certification Body is necessary, new Certification Body members are added to maintain the Certification Body membership as needed to implement the certification program.

- 4.2.1.3** When determining the makeup of the Certification Body, every effort is made to ensure that no one interest predominates and that diversity among disciplines and members is preserved.
- 4.2.1.4** The SWFS Board proposes new members for the Certification Body and invites the SWFS membership to nominate additional individuals. The SWFS Board votes and these individuals are accepted as Certification Body members upon approval of 2/3 of the votes received. In the case of a tie, the Certification Body Chair has the deciding vote.
- 4.2.1.5** Normal terms commence on May 1. A call for nominations needs to be made by February 1. Nominations for Certification Body Members must be received by March 1. Voting closes April 1. Voting by the SWFS Board is by email or other electronic means.
- 4.2.1.6** All Certification Body members serve a three (3) year term after nomination and approval. All Certification Body member terms commence upon nomination and approval. There is no maximum number of terms for a Certification Body member, but if their nomination is not approved by the required vote, their service ends. Certification Body members may choose to retire at any time during their term and may or may not be immediately replaced. In the case of the Certification Body Chair retiring, replacement will occur immediately from among current Certification Body membership by 2/3 majority vote by Certification Body membership.
- 4.2.1.7** Certification Body members are responsible for removing themselves from any conflict of interest regarding applicants they review for certification.
- 4.2.1.8** Certification Body members may be removed from the Body at any time if it is brought to the attention of the Body by a member or other individual that the member is not upholding the SWFS's Code of Ethics or for lack of fulfillment of responsibilities or misconduct. The Certification Body member in question has the right to address the concern before voting occurs. The Body must vote by at least a 2/3 margin to agree on removal of an existing Certification Body member.
- 4.2.1.9** Past Certification Body Members may serve on Appeal Panels as needed or requested by the Certification Body Chair provided they left the Certification Body in good standing and did not perform the evaluation of the applicant as part of that applicant's original Assessment Panel.
- 4.2.1.10** All members of the Certification Body must serve on at least one committee.

4.2.2 The Certification Body Chair:

4.2.2.1 The Certification Body Chair has the following responsibilities:

- a) Create, delegate, and oversee standing and new committees, pending approval of the Certification Body.
- b) Administer the Certification Body member election and membership disputes.
- c) Delegate individuals to serve on appeal/complaint committees.
- d) Determine and authorize specialty assessors' participation in Assessment Panels. The Chair may propose specialty assessors, who are leaders in their field, to the Certification Body. They shall be accepted by 2/3 vote of Certification Body membership.
- e) Coordinates Assessment Panels for evaluations of specific applicants including managing specialty assessors if applicable.
- f) Authorize all certification recommendations made by the Assessment Panel committee.
- g) Communicate with applicants including notifying applicants of certification decisions, or designate other insured committee members to do so.

4.2.2.2 This position also acts as the SWFS Director of Certification.

4.2.2.3 The Certification Body Chair is a non-voting member of each of the committees.

4.2.3 The Certification Scheme Committee:

4.2.3.1 The Certification Scheme Committee is composed of 3-5 members.

4.2.3.2 The Certification Scheme Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Develop the methods and mechanisms that are used for certification using 4.3 as a foundation.
- b) Develop required credentials for certification of applicants. This may involve creating more than one Certification Scheme. If this is the case, the Certification Scheme Committee, with the approval of the Certification Body Chair may form subcommittees for each scheme.
- c) Develop any exam as required by the schemes developed.
- d) Develop the certification process for the scheme using the requirements in 6.0 as a foundation.

- e) Produce a final scheme document upon completion of development, present this to the Certification Body for approval after which it is given to the Record Keeping Committee for document control and distribution.

4.2.4 The Assessment Panel Committee:

4.2.4.1 The Assessment Panel Committee is composed of at least 3 members. These members will be the Assessors.

4.2.4.2 The Assessment Panel Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Determine if an application is complete as defined by these policies and the requirements of the applicable scheme.
- b) Determine if applicants have met all requirements of the applicable scheme.
- c) Evaluate all applicants using the completed application documentation and any forms or checklists defined by the scheme.
- d) Provide the final certification recommendation, be it renewing, expanding, reducing, suspending, or withdrawing certification, to the Certification Body Chair for authorization and the final decision.

4.2.5 The Record Keeping Committee:

4.2.5.1 The Record Keeping Committee is composed of 1-3 members.

4.2.5.2 The Record Keeping Committee has the following responsibilities:

- a) Formulate policies and procedures as requested by the Certification Body Members. Present these policies to the Body for approval.
- b) Maintain these policies and procedures, including document control and record storage. Any document that is released by the Certification Body must first go through the Record Keeping Committee to become a controlled document, and finally distributed.
- c) Complete annual reviews and monitor to ensure that the operations of the Certification Body adhere to these policies and procedures.
- d) Receive and compile all application materials into a system accessible by the Assessment Panel Committee.
- e) Securely store all application material when it is not actively being used by the Certification Body or a standing committee.
- f) Send call for applications.

- g) Send reminder emails to applicants regarding monitoring and recertification.
- h) Process and curate any exam results.

4.2.6 Treasurer

4.2.6.1 The Treasurer is responsible for the following:

- a) Track fees for certification and pay all expenditures.
- b) Create and maintain the budget in association with the Certification Body Chair.

4.3 Development and maintenance of Certification Schemes

4.3.1 Scheme Committees ensure that the schemes developed define the methods and mechanisms used to evaluate the competence of applicants.

4.3.2 Any new scheme proposal shall be presented to the SWFS Board by the Certification Body Chair prior to scheme development. Upon approval, a Scheme Committee is created by the Certification Body Chair.

4.3.3 Initial Development of Schemes:

4.3.3.1 Schemes must thoroughly define the certification process using the requirements in 6.0 as a foundation.

4.3.3.2 During development, all interested parties, including the general public, are consulted about the following:

- a) Which persons are responsible for the development of the scheme
- b) Defining the specific field the scheme will cover
- c) Qualification/Competence requirements
- d) Evaluation requirements
- e) Competency Monitoring and Recertification requirements
- f) The degree of acceptance of the scheme by interested parties

4.3.3.3 Schemes should include a periodic analysis to confirm that:

- a) The target applicant population and purpose of the scheme is still applicable.
- b) The list of critical tasks in the discipline is updated.
- c) The certification requirements, including rationale and evaluation mechanisms, still apply.
- d) Any examinations or proficiency/competency testing that are required are appropriate.

e) The scheme promotes transparency.

4.3.4 Review of Schemes: These mechanisms are determined by the Certification Scheme Committee and must include the following:

4.3.4.1 Review of the final scheme includes requesting feedback from interested parties and is applicable.

4.3.4.2 In the case of exams, review should include analysis to ensure the examination is fair, well-constructed, and clearly worded.

4.3.4.3 Examinations, if they are included in a particular scheme, must be planned and designed in such a way that sufficient information is gathered to determine competence.

4.3.4.4 After review a final scheme document is presented to the Certification Body that includes the methods and mechanisms, the certification process, and the fees associated with that scheme.

4.3.5 Approval of all schemes requires a 2/3 vote of the Certification Body membership in favor.

4.3.6 If changes to a scheme are proposed, the Scheme Committee is convened, and a decision about the change made. If the change is accepted, all documents affected by the change are updated, and all affected certified persons informed. Changes are not retroactive. Scheme change proposals must be made to the Certification Body Chair.

4.3.7 The criteria against which the competence of a person is evaluated must be defined specifically in the scheme.

4.3.7.1 All schemes shall include review of casework.

4.3.8 The scheme cannot restrict certification on the grounds of undue financial conditions or membership in a particular group.

4.4 Management system

4.4.1 The Certification Body operates under the following management system, which is implemented and maintained by the Record Keeping Committee.

4.4.2 The Certification Body and all specialty assessors associated with the Body are under this management system.

4.4.3 Document Control

4.4.3.1 The current Certification Body documents are available on the SWFS website.

4.4.3.2 Changes to Certification Body documents are tracked.

4.4.3.3 Certification Body documents are kept indefinitely.

4.4.3.4 The following are considered Certification Body documents and are subject to this document control:

- a) Policies and Procedures including all related forms as appendices
- b) Final scheme documents including all related forms as appendices
- c) Guidance to Assessors

4.4.4 Annual Review

4.4.4.1 The Certification Body must annually review the activities of the past year including the following:

- a) Review these Policies and Procedures to ensure they are current.
- b) Review any appeals to determine if changes need to be made to any schemes.
- c) Review any complaints received and determine if changes need to be made in response.
- d) Determine if the current schemes require any changes in structure.

4.4.4.2 Records from these Annual Reviews are retained indefinitely.

4.5 Subcontracting

4.5.1 If subcontracting is done in order to facilitate examinations, the following apply:

4.5.1.1 An agreement is drafted that holds the subcontractor to the same confidentiality and conflict of interest commitments as the Certification Body members.

4.5.1.2 The competency and work product of the subcontractor is the responsibility of the Certification Body.

4.6 Records

4.6.1 All application materials and examinations are retained in an organized manner and kept indefinitely in electronic form.

4.6.2 Sufficient records are obtained to demonstrate that the certification process defined in these Policies and Procedures was fulfilled.

4.6.3 All documents related to individual applicants or certified persons must be noted with that applicant's name.

4.6.4 All records related to the certification process are stored securely.

4.6.5 When records are disposed of, this is done in a way to preserve the confidentiality of the information.

4.7 Confidentiality and Privacy

- 4.7.1** All members of the Certification Body, as well as any specialty assessors and proctors, must sign the Certification Body Agreement, which covers both Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest.
- 4.7.2** All information gained during the certification process falls under this Certification Body Agreement.
 - 4.7.2.1** Information may be released with written consent of the individual from whom the information was obtained.
 - 4.7.2.2** Information may also be released when required by law. In this case the individual from whom the information was obtained is informed prior to the release of that information.

5.0 Requirements of Certification Body Members

5.1 General

- 5.1.1** Certification Body Members must meet the following requirements:
 - 5.1.1.1** Initial Certification Body members must meet all requirements for certification.
 - 5.1.1.2** Except the initial Certification Body members, all subsequent Certification Body members must be certified.
 - 5.1.1.3** All Certification Body members shall have three years non-human forensics casework experience. With the unanimous agreement of the Certification Body, this requirement may be waived at the discretion of the Certification Body (e.g. numerous or complex cases over a shorter period of time).
- 5.1.2** All Certification Body Members must sign the Certification Body Agreement.
- 5.1.3** Records of the following are kept on each member of the Certification Body:
 - a)** Name and address
 - b)** Organization
 - c)** Education and professional status
 - d)** Experience and training
 - e)** Duties within the Certification Body
 - f)** Date of most recent updating of this record

5.2 Requirements of proctors

- 5.2.1** Proctors for examinations are usually the supervisor of the applicant.
- 5.2.2** Proctors must sign the Certification Body Agreement.
- 5.2.3** Those involved in the examination of an applicant cannot be involved in making the certification decision for that applicant.

6.0 Certification Process- These requirements act as the foundation for the application process utilized by each scheme. Specific schemes can require additional steps in the certification process.

6.1 Application

- 6.1.1** Application for certification is defined by the scheme. The final scheme documents are available to all potential applicants.
- 6.1.2** A call for applications will be made three (3) months prior to due date by the Record Keeping Committee. Complete applications are due by January 31 and July 31.
- 6.1.3** The application for SWFS Forensics Certification shall include at least the following:
 - 6.1.3.1** The scheme of the desired certification
 - 6.1.3.2** A statement that the applicant agrees to comply with the requirements for certification and supply any information needed for the evaluation.
 - 6.1.3.3** The Applicant Declaration.
 - 6.1.3.4** General information and contact information, including name, email, telephone, and postal address.
 - 6.1.3.5** Any initial information required by the scheme document to include:
 - a)** Statement of highest academic degree obtained, granting institution, and date granted.
 - b)** Transcripts associated with highest degree
 - c)** Most recent proficiency test results
 - d)** Statement of experience
 - e)** A letter from a professional reference addressing the applicant's character.
- 6.1.4** All application materials should be submitted together along with the non-refundable application fee. Applications will not be considered until they are complete. If the application is considered incomplete, further communication by the Certification Body Chair, or designated insured committee member, with the applicant is necessary.

- 6.1.5** Applicants will be notified once their application is deemed complete.
- 6.1.6** If an exam is administered, the applicant will pay an examination fee. If re-examination is requested, the applicant will pay an additional examination fee.
- 6.1.7** The Certification Body can, within reason, accommodate special needs of the applicant.

6.2 Evaluation

- 6.2.1** The Record Keeping Committee compiles an electronic application packet containing all application materials for an applicant and distributes it to the Certification Body Chair.
- 6.2.2** The Certification Body Chair assigns each applicant to an Assessment Panel, who determines if the application is complete and evaluates the applicant to determine if their submitted materials are compliant with the scheme. Communication with the applicant is done through the Certification Body Chair or other designated insured committee member.
- 6.2.3** If examinations are required for a particular scheme, the applicant is notified by the Certification Body Chair, or other designated insured committee member once their application is accepted as complete with sufficient information for evaluation. Once the application is accepted, the applicant may take any required examinations.
- 6.2.4** All applicants are notified of the status of their application in a timely manner.
- 6.2.5** After acceptance of the application and receipt of any examination records, an assessor evaluates the competence of the individual following the particular scheme that applies.
- 6.2.6** Records of all stages of the certification process must be kept.

6.3 Decision on certification

- 6.3.1** The recommendation and decision on certification is made based solely on the information gathered during the certification process.
- 6.3.2** No one who participated in the training or examination of an applicant can be involved in the certification recommendation or decision.
- 6.3.3** Once any examination results are obtained and evaluations complete, the Assessment Panel meets and determines the certification recommendation.
- 6.3.4** If there is decisive disagreement among Assessment Panel members, additional assessors must be brought in and allowed to make an evaluation and recommendation. If disagreement still exists after this step, the Certification Body Chair decides.

- 6.3.5** Certification is effective the day that the Certification Body Chair authorizes a certification decision.
- 6.3.6** The recommendation to certify must be unanimous.
- 6.3.7** Certification is valid for a period of three (3) years from the date it becomes effective.
- 6.3.8** Applicants are notified of the certification decision by the Certification Body Chair, or designated insured committee member, in a timely manner.
- 6.3.9** If certification is not granted, the reason is clearly stated.
- 6.3.10** A Certificate is provided upon certification. The following are present on the certificate:
 - 6.3.10.1** The name of the certified person and a unique certification number.
 - 6.3.10.2** The name of the certification provider.
 - 6.3.10.3** A reference to the scheme, including revision, on which the certification is based.
 - 6.3.10.4** An effective date of certification and a date of expiration.
- 6.3.11** The certificate is mailed to the applicant within thirty (30) days of the certification decision.

6.4 Competency Monitoring

- 6.4.1** Annual proficiency testing (internal or external) is considered the principal form of surveillance used by the Certification Body.
- 6.4.2** If internal proficiency tests are used, a summary including how it was administered must be provided to the Certification Body.
- 6.4.3** Reminders to submit proficiency information are distributed every July. Reminders will be sent by the Record Keeping Committee.
- 6.4.4** Forty (40) hours of self-reported continuing education over the last 12 months (including meetings, workshops, publication, and journal reading) are suggested for monitoring.
- 6.4.5** Certification is revoked if proficiency test records and any other required forms of monitoring or fees stated in the scheme have not been received by three months after the certification effective date anniversary.

6.5 Recertification

- 6.5.1** Each scheme must incorporate a recertification method to ensure the continued compliance of certified persons. This recertification method must impartially evaluate the certified person to confirm continuing competence.

- 6.5.2** Continuing education is required for recertification. Forty (40) hours of self-reported continuing education over the last 12 months (including meetings, workshops, publication, and journal reading) is acceptable.
- 6.5.3** Applicants are notified by the Record Keeping Committee three (3) months prior to certification expiration. Reminders will be sent by the Record Keeping Committee.
- 6.5.4** Recertification is recommended by the Assessment Panel Committee when at least the following conditions are met:
 - 6.5.4.1** Evidence of continuing education is provided.
 - 6.5.4.2** The Applicant Declaration is re-signed.
 - 6.5.4.3** The individual submits a recertification fee.

6.6 Certificates, marks/logos

- 6.6.1** If the Certification Body decides to provide a certification mark or logo, they must document the conditions of its usage and representation.
- 6.6.2** All certified persons must sign an agreement that includes at least the following:
 - 6.6.2.1** Compliance with the particular certification scheme
 - 6.6.2.2** Claims regarding certification are only made within the scope of the certification that was granted them.
 - 6.6.2.3** Certification will not be used in any way that will cause the Certification Body any disrepute, or that is misleading or unauthorized.
 - 6.6.2.4** No claims regarding certification are made if that certification is suspended or withdrawn.
- 6.6.3** Inappropriate references to certification or misleading use of certificates is grounds for suspension or withdrawal of certification upon decision by the Certification Body.

6.7 Appeals and Complaints

- 6.7.1** Decisions can be appealed within 30 days in writing to the Certification Body Chair.
- 6.7.2** Appeal Panels, as delegated by the Certification Body Chair, convene and review the certification decision as defined by the scheme. If the examination is under question, communication with the applicant in regard to the questions is a new and necessary part of the certification process and must be done by the Certification Body Chair, or designated insured committee member.

- 6.7.3** Appeal Panels cannot include members who served on the Assessment Panel Committee at the time application was made. The original Assessment Panel members shall be available for clarification.
- 6.7.4** Upon receipt of the written appeal, an appeal decision will be provided to the applicant in a timely manner.
- 6.7.5** If, after the appeal process, certification is not granted, the applicant may reapply after not less than six (6) months.
- 6.7.6** Complaints to the Certification Body shall be addressed in a timely manner.

Appendix 1- Certification Body Agreement

SWFS Certification Body Agreement

This agreement is between the Society for Wildlife Forensic Sciences (SWFS) Board and _____(name)_____, who agree to abide by all of the following provisions:

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of any applicant or their application materials disclosed during the Certification process. Application materials will be used solely for the purpose of the evaluation of the applicant.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I shall refrain from participating in any certification decision that will directly or predictably conflict with my business or personal interests. I shall notify the SWFS Board promptly when such conflicts arise and shall recuse myself from Certification deliberations.

ETHICS

I agree to abide by the terms of the SWFS Code of Ethical Conduct.

**Society for Wildlife Forensic Science
President:**

Signature/Date

Signature/Date

Printed Name

Printed Name

SWFS Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification Scheme

(12/19/2012 Approved by SWGWILD)

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Scope

This is a general scheme for the certification of forensic practitioners working on any evidence of non-human biological origin, including wildlife, domestic animals and plants. Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification encompasses all non-human biological materials.

Criteria

The following constitute the criteria for the Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification:

1. Annual Proficiency Test Requirements-
 - a. External proficiency tests when possible for your discipline as applied to wildlife forensic science. Submit a letter of satisfactory completion of the most current test.
 - b. If external proficiency tests are not available in your discipline, an internal wildlife proficiency test may be substituted. Submit a summary of the test including design, implementation, whether it was blind or not, and whether the analyst completed the test satisfactorily with the signature of the supervisor.
2. Education Requirements- Minimum requirement of a bachelor degree (or equivalent degree) in any related field such as biology, chemistry, environmental science, forensic science or equivalent as evidenced by official transcripts or actual diploma/certificate.
3. Experience Requirements- One year casework experience. If extensive casework training is completed prior to conducting actual casework, mock casework may be used for a portion of the one-year requirement.
4. Casework evaluation to assess competent performance in wildlife forensic practice.
5. Agreement to follow the SWFS Code of Ethics and Standards and Guidelines.
6. Satisfactory Letter of Reference from supervisor or professional familiar with the applicant and his/her abilities and experience subsequent to being declared competent to undertake casework.

Organization

The Certification Body is made up of the Certification Body Chair, Assessment Panels (composed of at least two (2) assessors and the Certification Body Chair), the Record Keeping Committee, and the Treasurer. All paperwork and electronic documents are submitted to the Record Keeping Committee via the website or mail. Evaluation of an applicant is completed by the members of the assigned Assessment Panel who unanimously make a certification recommendation. The final decision is authorized and communicated by the Certification Body Chair or designated member of the Assessment Panel.

Certification Cycle

There will be two application cycles per calendar year. A call for applications will be made three (3) months prior to each due date. Complete applications are due by January 31 and July 31. All documents, including requested case files, are to be submitted electronically. Forms requiring the signature of the applicant must be submitted electronically with other application materials, however those forms must subsequently be submitted by mail with a physical signature. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the required Letter of Reference (Appendix 2) be sent by the recommender directly to the indicated web address. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application in a timely manner. Incomplete applications will not be considered in that cycle. If applications are incomplete, the application fee will be refunded less a US\$50 processing fee. The Certification Body Chair, or designated committee member, will notify the applicant of the certification decision in a timely manner.

Application

All application materials must be submitted in English. If this is not possible, exceptions will be considered.

A complete application must include:

1. Application Form (Appendix 1)
2. Casework Summary Form (Appendix 3)
3. Additional Materials
 - a. Official Transcripts or Diploma for highest degree earned
 - b. Evidence of all annual proficiency tests
 - c. Letter of Reference (Appendix 2)
 - d. SWFS Ethics Agreement
 - e. CV
4. Application Fee (US\$250)

Official transcripts or actual certificates/diplomas are required to document the educational component of certification. If original certificates/diplomas are sent, they will be returned upon completion of the certification process.

For first-time applicants, the US\$250 application fee includes your proficiency test fee for either the Mammal or Fish Genetics Proficiency Test, if enrolled in the SWFS Proficiency Testing Program.

Evaluation

The Record Keeping Committee compiles an electronic application packet for each applicant and distributes it to the Certification Body Chair. Each applicant is assigned to an Assessment Panel, who determines if the application is complete and evaluates the applicant to the criteria listed above. Exceptions to education and experience requirements of this scheme will be considered at the discretion of the Certification Body Chair. Communication with the Assessment Panel is done through the Certification Body Chair or other designated panel member.

The Casework Summary Form (Appendix 3) consists of a list of the last 10 cases completed by the applicant. The Assessment Panel will choose 3-5 cases from this list for review. At this time any other clarifications about the applicant's application packet may be communicated. All cases submitted for review must be redacted or otherwise cleared of personally identifiable or sensitive information. The performance will be evaluated based on the criteria stipulated in the Casework Evaluation Form (Appendix 5).

When each member of the Assessment Panel has completed an evaluation of the applicant, the Assessment Panel meets and determines the certification recommendation. This recommendation is made based on specific criteria that are defined in the Application Evaluation Form (Appendix 4) to

ensure transparency.

Certification Decision

The recommendation to certify must be unanimous among the Assessment Panel. The decision to certify is authorized and communicated by the Certification Body Chair in a timely manner. If certification is not granted, the reason is clearly stated. If certification is granted, a Certificate is sent to the applicant within 30 days of the certification decision.

Certificates contain the following:

1. Name and Certification Number of the individual
2. Name of the Certification Body
3. Effective Date of Certification: This is the date the Assessment Panel makes the certification decision.
4. Expiration Date: Three (3) years from the effective date.

Annual Monitoring

The following must be submitted to fulfill annual monitoring requirements:

1. Annual proficiency test records
2. Case log listing all cases completed in the last 12 months (use Casework Summary Form (Appendix 3))
3. Continuing Education documentation
4. Processing Fee (US\$50)

All certified persons must send a copy of their annual proficiency test letter to the Certification Body Record Keeping Committee or file a Proficiency Test Release Waiver with their external proficiency provider to automatically provide this information (see SWFS Proficiency Testing Program). If internal proficiency tests are used, a summary must be sent including the design, implementation, whether it was blind or not, and a verification of successful completion signed by the supervisor.

They must also submit a case log of all cases completed during the last 12 months using the Casework Summary Form (Appendix 3). This list is used to determine the activity of practitioners. If casework hasn't been completed in a given year, the Certification Body Chair is notified and the client is contacted for explanation and clarification. In the case that a practitioner is no longer practicing, this will be considered at the time of recertification.

Forty (40) hours of self-reported continuing education over the last 12 months (including meetings, workshops, publication, and journal reading) are required for monitoring.

Reminders will be sent about this monitoring three (3) months prior to certification effective date anniversary. Certification is revoked if proficiency test records, case log and processing fee have not been received by three months after the certification effective date anniversary.

Recertification

Recertification applications must include the following:

1. Casework Summary Form (Appendix 3)
2. Recertification Application Form (Appendix 6)
3. Additional Materials
 - a. SWFS Ethics Agreement
 - b. Evidence of all annual proficiency tests
 - c. Continuing Education documentation
4. Recertification Fee (US\$200)

Forty (40) hours of self-reported continuing education over the last 12 months (including meetings, workshops, publication, and journal reading) are required for recertification.

Applicants are notified by the Record Keeping Committee three (3) months prior to certification expiration. Recertification applications are handled under the same certification cycle as initial applications.

Appeals

Decisions can be appealed within 30 days in writing to the Certification Body Chair.

Appeal Panels, as delegated by the Certification Body Chair, convene and review the certification decision for that applicant as defined above. Appeal Panels cannot include members who served on the Assessment Panels at the time application was made. The original assessor shall be available for clarification. Upon receipt of the written appeal a decision will be provided to the applicant in a timely manner.

If, after the appeal process, certification is not granted, the applicant can reapply after not less than six (6) months.

Fees

Payment is made electronically through the SWFS web site. Once an application is accepted, fees are non-refundable.

Appendix 1- Application Form



Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification Application Form

Be aware that any false or misleading information may disqualify you from certification. All application materials are to be submitted in English with exceptions to be made on a case by case basis.

Your application is complete when you have submitted the following:

- Application Form
- Letter of Reference
- Casework Summary Form
- SWFS Ethics Agreement
- Official Transcripts or Diploma for highest degree earned
- Evidence of all annual proficiency tests
- CV
- Application Fee

Official transcripts or actual certificates/diplomas are required to fulfill the educational component of certification. If original certificates/diplomas are sent, they will be returned upon completion of the certification process.

For all sections, if additional space is needed, please attach additional sheets noting which section the information relates to. Please note that not all applicants will have information to supply for certain fields, (e.g., publication or teaching). While some of this material is intended to assist in the evaluation process, the applicant will not be disadvantaged by leaving these areas blank.

Section A Applicant Information

Please provide us with additional contact details. It is important that you complete the section below as fully as possible as we may need to contact you quickly.

Last name: _____ Title: _____

First name/s: _____

Address: _____

Country of Practice: _____

Other names used: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Phone: _____ Preferred call time of day: Morning Afternoon Evening

Email: _____

Fax: _____ Preferred method of communication: Email Phone

Section B Employment History

Please give the full name and address of the organization you work for:

Work place: _____

Address: _____ (if different from above)

Job Title: _____ Years at position: _____

If you started in this post within the last three years, please give the same information about previous relevant employment (covering a period of three years in all):

In your forensic work, do you use laboratory standardized policies, procedures or SOPs? Yes No

Section C Education

Please list your educational degrees below. Include both undergraduate and graduate levels education.

Institution	Degree (BS, MS, PhD etc.)	Subject and concentration (include degree classification if applicable)	Year degree granted	What evidence of this are you enclosing?

Additional Information regarding formal education qualifications:

Section D Professional Training and Qualifications

Please list all relevant training and qualifications/certifications.

Training or Qualification Received	Training Provider	Date Completed	What evidence of this are you enclosing?

Additional notes on professional training and qualifications:

Section E Professional Memberships

Please list memberships in relevant professional organizations.

Body	Membership status (ie Member, Associate, etc)	Date accepted into membership

Additional notes on professional training and qualifications:

Section F Relevant Teaching, Research, Publication and Testimony

Please list relevant teaching experience, research projects and publications you have undertaken in your specialty.

Teaching

Post/engagement	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Teaching

Research

Area of Research	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Research

Publication

Area of Research	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Research

Testimony

Area presented opinions or evidence in court	Date(s)	Court

Section G Letter of Reference

Please list below the contact information for the supervisor or other professional you have requested a Letter of Reference form.

Full name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Preferred method of communication: Email Phone

Email: _____

How does this person know you and your work?

Section H Fitness to Practice

Please answer the questions below and provide any explanations for "Yes" answers in the space provided.

Question	Yes	No
1) Are you aware of any physical or mental condition which might impair your fitness to work as a forensic practitioner?		
2) Are you aware of any past issues of professional conduct or performance which might raise a doubt as to whether you should be certified as a forensic practitioner?		
3) Do you have any criminal convictions?		
4) Is any action pending against you in the criminal courts or by a professional or regulatory body?		

Area for Explanation:

Section I Declaration

Please print your name in the first blank and initial in the area provided for each statement. In addition to submitting this form electronically with other application materials, please send the signed original of this page to:

SWFS Certification Body Record Keeping Committee
c/o UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory
One Shields Ave.
Davis, CA 95616

I _____ hereby declare that:

Upon receiving Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS) Forensics Certification, I do hereby swear to maintain the requirements of certification. _____

I will not make any false claims as to the scope of my certification. _____

I understand that I am entitled to a fair certification process and may appeal any certification decision. _____

I agree to abide by the standards adopted by the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS).

I will not use my certification in any way that will cause the Certification Body any disrepute, or that is misleading or unauthorized. _____

I understand that if my certification is revoked or suspended for any reason, I may not continue to use the certification in any manner. _____

I agree to continue participation in the SWFS proficiency program as required by the Certification Body. _____

I understand that by signing below I agree to not sue (to hold harmless the Certification Body?)....

All the information I have given in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. _____

I will notify SWFS of any substantive changes in the information I have provided. This includes information about my professional conduct or performance, or any criminal convictions. _____

I understand that any false or misleading information I have given, or any deliberate omission of relevant information, may disqualify me from certification. _____

I am aware that certification, if granted, will be for three (3) years. After this period, recertification will be required. _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(DD/MM/YYYY)

Witness Signature _____

Appendix 2- Letter of Reference Form



Society for Wildlife Forensic Science
Letter of Reference
Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification

Name of applicant: _____

Name of Recommender: _____	Position: _____
Address: _____	City: _____ Zip Code: _____
Telephone: _____	Fax: _____ Email: _____
Would you like your recommendation to remain confidential? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

The Certification Committee of the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science is reviewing the credentials of the applicant named above. The Committee is interested in any relevant information that will aid in making a decision regarding certification. Please speak to the applicant's abilities, professional ethics, quality of work, and any other aspect of their professional career with which you are familiar. Please state any relevant information that will aid the Committee in making their decision as to certification of the individual. Use additional pages as needed.

Signature of Recommender

Printed Name

Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

Appendix 3- Casework Summary Form

Forensic Wildlife Scientist Certification Casework Summary Form

Applicant Name: _____

Recertification

Case log for annual monitoring

Please list the last 10 cases you have completed. You must be prepared to supply redacted copies, including any protocols or published methods utilized in the case, for evaluation by the certification assessor. If this form is being used to provide a case log for annual monitoring, additional pages may be attached if more than 10 cases were completed.

Item	Case Ref No.	Date you completed your work	Analysis Performed	Did you prepare a formal report based on the findings?	Did you provide expert witness testimony or participate in consultation before trial?	Any other comments relevant to the case (e.g. case complexity, high number of evidence items, rush case, etc.)?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Note on redaction:

When redacted copies of case files are requested during the certification process it is the applicant's responsibility to redact or blacken-out all identifying information that is not essential for evaluation of casework (e.g., names, contact information, locations, etc.).

Appendix 4- Application Evaluation Form
Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification Application
Evaluation Form

Applicant Name: _____
Assigned Assessor: _____

Recertification
Date Received by Assessor: _____
 (DD/MM/YYYY)

Application Evaluation

	Elements	Yes	No	Comments/Notes <i>(Give details of evidence used to assess competence)</i>
Ethics and Standards & Guidelines Agreement				
A	Is the Declaration page of the Application Form signed?			
Education				
B	Stated education verified by comparison with Transcripts/Diploma submitted?			
C	Education experience meets or exceeds minimum requirement of a bachelor degree (or equivalent degree) in any related field such as biology, chemistry, environmental science, forensic science or equivalent?			
Experience				
D	Experience meets or exceeds minimum requirement of one year casework experience subsequent to being declared competent? (See Casework Summary Form- Appendix 3)			
Proficiency Testing				
E	Areas covered by proficiency tests accurately reflect the type of work present in the submitted casework and stated in the application form?			
F	The most recently completed proficiency test was successfully completed within the last year?			
Letter of Reference				
G	Letter of Reference is completed by a professional reference with sufficient experience with the applicant to address all areas required?			
H	Does the Letter of Reference address all areas required?			
Other relevant information				
I	Information provided by the applicant regarding relevant experience, publication, teaching, training, and professional membership is reflected in the application materials?			
Casework Review				

J	Sufficient casework has been submitted to make a determination of compliance with SWFS Standards and Guidelines as delineated in the Casework Summary Evaluation forms attached?			
---	--	--	--	--

Additional Comments and Notes:

Assessor Signature of Completion

Sign below when the Application Evaluation Form is complete and all casework evaluations are complete (one Casework Evaluation Form per case file reviewed) and attached

_____ **I recommend this applicant for certification**

_____ **I do not recommend this applicant for certification**

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(DD/MM/YYYY)

Printed Name: _____

Appendix 5- Casework Evaluation Form

Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification Casework Evaluation Form

Casework Evaluation *(Complete one copy for each case file evaluated)*

Case file reference no.: _____

	Elements	Yes	No	Comments/Notes <i>(Give details of evidence used to assess competence)</i>
Evidence Handling				
1	Is there adequate documentation of secure evidence handling? <i>S&G 3.2</i>			
2	Were the samples examined appropriate for the case? <i>S&G 3.3</i>			
3	If evidence was consumed in analysis, were the pertinent parties consulted? (applicable for US applicants) <i>S&G 3.2.5</i>			
Equipment, Methods, Standard Operating Procedures, and Protocols				
4	Do bench notes refer to protocols, SOPs, or published methodologies? <i>S&G 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4</i>			
5	Are deviations from SOPs properly documented? <i>S&G 3.5, 3.7</i>			
6	Were the analyses chosen appropriate for the evidence and question? <i>S&G 3.4</i>			
7	Are instruments used in the analyses identified in the bench notes? <i>S&G 3.5</i>			
8	Were controls used appropriately (if applicable)? <i>S&G 4.2.2, 4.2.3</i>			
Reference Materials and Collections				
9	Were the relevant reference materials used correctly? <i>S&G 3.4, 4.3.2</i>			
10	Are specimens and databases used in casework uniquely identified in the case file? <i>S&G 3.4.3</i>			
11	Is information on geographical origin used in taxonomic identification documented in the case file (if applicable)? <i>S&G 3.4</i>			

Case Documentation				
12	Does the case file include chain of custody, submittal request, bench notes, location of any electronic data, and final report? <i>S&G 3.2, 3.5</i>			
13	Is there documentation of technical and administrative review in the case file? <i>S&G 3.5.1, 3.6.2</i>			
14	Are bench notes sufficient to enable another analyst competent in the reporting subject to repeat the analysis conducted under the same methodology and testing conditions? <i>S&G 3.5.3</i>			
15	Are all participating analysts listed? <i>S&G 3.6.4</i>			
Data Interpretation				
16	Are the results interpreted in accordance with established scientific principles? <i>S&G 3.3</i>			
17	If statistical tests were used, were they appropriate? <i>S&G 3.3.4</i>			
18	Are conclusions supported by the data? <i>S&G 2.17, 3.5.1, 3.6.2, 3.6.1</i>			
Reporting				
19	Are general methods used stated in the report? <i>S&G 3.6.1</i>			
20	Are all results accurately and clearly expressed in the report? <i>S&G 3.6.1, 3.5.3</i>			
21	Were any statistical tests used to support conclusions reported? <i>S&G 3.3.4, 3.6.6</i>			
22	Are there stated conclusions in the report? <i>S&G 3.6.1</i>			
23	Does the report use scientific names when making taxonomic identifications? <i>S&G 3.4.6</i>			

Additional Comments and Notes

Assessor

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Appendix 6- Recertification Application Form



Wildlife Forensic Scientist Recertification Application Form

Be aware that any false or misleading information may disqualify you from certification. All application materials are to be submitted in English with exceptions to be made on a case by case basis.

Your application is complete when you have submitted the following:

- Recertification Application Form
- Casework Summary Form
- Ethics Agreement
- Evidence most recent proficiency test
- Continuing Education information
- Recertification Application Fee

For all sections, if additional space is needed, please attach additional sheets noting which section the information relates to. Please note that not all applicants will have information to supply for certain fields, (e.g., publication or teaching). While some of this material is intended to assist in the evaluation process, the applicant will not be disadvantaged by leaving these areas blank.

Section A Recertification Applicant Information

Please provide us with additional contact details. It is important that you complete the section below as fully as possible as we may need to contact you quickly.

Last name: _____ Title: _____

First name/s: _____

Address: _____

Country of Practice: _____

Other names used: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Phone: _____ Preferred call time of day: Morning Afternoon Evening

Email: _____

Fax: _____ Preferred method of communication: Email Phone

Section B Employment History

Please give the full name and address of the organization you work for:

Work place: _____

Address: _____ (if different from above)

Job Title: _____ Years at position: _____

If you started in this post within the last three years, please give the same information about previous relevant employment (covering a period of three years in all):

In your forensic work, do you use laboratory standardized policies, procedures or SOPs? Yes No

Section C Education

Please provide an updated list of your educational degrees below. Include both undergraduate and graduate levels education.

Institution	Degree (BS, MS, PhD etc.)	Subject and concentration (include degree classification if applicable)	Year degree granted	What evidence of this are you enclosing?

Additional Information regarding formal education qualifications:

Section D Professional Training and Qualifications

Please provide an updated list of relevant training and qualifications/certifications completed in the last three years.

Training or Qualification Received	Training Provider	Date Completed	What evidence of this are you enclosing?

Additional notes on professional training and qualifications:

Section E Professional Memberships

Please provide an updated list of memberships in relevant professional organizations.

Body	Membership status (ie Member, Associate, etc)	Date accepted into membership

Additional notes on professional training and qualifications:

Section F Relevant Teaching, Research, Publication and Testimony

Please provide an updated list of relevant teaching experience, research projects and publications you have undertaken in your specialty concentrating on those completed or occurring in the last three years.

Teaching

Post/engagement	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Teaching

Research

Area of Research	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Research

Publication

Area of Research	Date(s)	Nature and Extent of Research

Testimony

Area presented opinions or evidence in court	Date(s)	Court

Section G Update and Continuing Education

Please provide a narrative below of any substantive changes to your position, scope of work etc. that could be important for an assessor to consider during recertification, if applicable.

Please provide a list comprising forty (40) hours of continuing education in the form of meetings, workshops, publication, and journal reading completed in the last 12 months.

Section H Fitness to Practice

Please answer the questions below and provide any explanations for “Yes” answers in the space provided.

Question	Yes	No
1) Are you aware of any physical or mental condition which might impair your fitness to work as a forensic practitioner?		
2) Are you aware of any past issues of professional conduct or performance which might raise a doubt as to whether you should be certified as a forensic practitioner?		
3) Do you have any criminal convictions?		
4) Is any action pending against you in the criminal courts or by a professional or regulatory body?		

Area for Explanation:

Section I Declaration

Please print your name in the first blank and initial in the area provided for each statement. In addition to submitting this form electronically with other application materials, please send the signed original of this page to:

SWFS Certification Body Record Keeping Committee
c/o UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory
One Shields Ave.
Davis, CA 95616

I _____ hereby declare that:

Upon receiving Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS) Forensics Certification, I do hereby swear to maintain the requirements of certification. _____

I will not make any false claims as to the scope of my certification. _____

I understand that I am entitled to a fair certification process and may appeal any certification decision. _____

I agree to abide by the standards adopted by the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS). _____

I will not use my certification in any way that will cause the Certification Body any disrepute, or that is misleading or unauthorized. _____

I understand that if my certification is revoked or suspended for any reason, I may not continue to use the certification in any manner. _____

I agree to continue participation in the SWFS proficiency program as required by the Certification Body. _____

I understand that by signing below I agree to not sue (to hold harmless the Certification Body?)..... _____

All the information I have given in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. _____

I will notify SWFS of any substantive changes in the information I have provided. This includes information about my professional conduct or performance, or any criminal convictions. _____

I understand that any false or misleading information I have given, or any deliberate omission of relevant information, may disqualify me from certification. _____

I am aware that re-certification, if granted, will be for three (3) years. After this period, recertification will be required. _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(DD/MM/YYYY)

Witness Signature _____