

SWFS Wildlife Forensic Scientist Certification Scheme

(Approved by SWFS Board June 13, 2013)

Contents

Scope

Criteria

Organization

Certification Cycle

Application

Evaluation

Certification Decision

Recertification

Appeals

Fees

Appeals

Fees

Appendices

Appendix 1- Application Form

Appendix 2- Letter of Reference Form

Appendix 3- Casework Summary Form

Appendix 4- Application Evaluation Form

Appendix 5- Casework Evaluation Form

Appendix 6- Recertification Application Form

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 on the applicants login page. 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.

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.