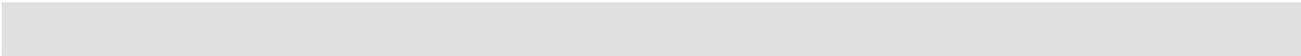




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Proficiency Testing criteria - Forensic Science



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Proficiency Testing criteria - Forensic Science

1. Introduction

The proficiency testing criteria specified within this document supersedes those criteria included in the July 2013 version of the Forensic Science Application Document. Accredited or applicant facilities in the field of Forensic Science must ensure compliance with this Technical Circular from the date of publication.

1.1 Participation

NATA's Proficiency Testing Policy Circular 2 requires each applicant or accredited facility to participate in appropriate proficiency testing, where available.

Where proficiency testing meets the needs of the facility, participation is mandatory and at least one test per discrete testing activity must be undertaken annually, where available. A facility must complete all proficiency tests for which it is enrolled.

Note: For the example of DNA analysis, this would refer to body fluid identification, DNA mixtures, semen and blood.

PT samples/items should be handled in the same way as routine casework as far as practicable. The facility's routine test procedures must be used. Additionally, the following requirements apply:

- Performance in PT programs must be reviewed;
- Feedback must be provided to all relevant staff; and
- Where necessary, corrective action must be taken.

PT samples are expected to be representative of items examined in normal forensic case work. A PT sample may be apportioned among a number of examiners if doing so does not alter the character of the testing.

In addition to participating in external PT, or where external PT is unavailable, a facility should consider conducting interlaboratory or intralaboratory comparisons. This could include blind tests prepared internally (or externally) and circulated, or re-examination of a completed case by a different examiner.

To obtain the optimum benefit from PT, the facility should emphasise the educational aspects of the program and avoid a punitive approach when taking any corrective actions.

Current external PT programs available for the field of Forensic Science include:

- Illicit drugs;
- Forensic toxicology (including blood alcohol, drugs in drivers);
- DNA (biological material);
- Trace evidence (paint, glass, metals, fibres, flammables, gunshot residues);
- Document examination;
- Firearms;
- Toolmarks;
- Impressions (shoe and tyre);
- Fingerprints;
- Bloodstain pattern analysis;
- Crime scene investigations;

- Electronic evidence (data analysis, data preservation);
- Parentage testing.

Known PT providers are currently listed on the NATA website www.nata.com.au under *NATA accreditation guidance and information*.

1.2 Performance

A facility's performance in PT will be assessed on-site, during assessments and surveillance visits. Evidence of review of returned results and any corrective action taken in response to outliers is also required to be available and will be reviewed by the NATA assessment team.