



MINUTES
FORENSIC SCIENCE
ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

26th Meeting

9th May 2019, commencing at 10am

Venue: NATA, 2-6 Railway Parade, Camberwell VIC 3124

Chairman: Mr Chris Pearman

Secretary: Mr Andrew Griffin

Minutes: Ms Kirsty Putsey

1. Meeting introduction and associated administrative matters

1.1 Confirmation of attendance and apologies

AAC Members

Mr Chris Pearman	Forensic Science SA
Mr Dean Catoggio	National Institute of Forensic Science
Dr Dimitri Gerostamoulos	Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine
Mr Graeme Kinraid	Australian Federal Police
Ms Pam Scott	Forensic Science Service Tasmania
Dr Michael Collins	National Measurement Institute
Dr Carlyne Bird	Forensic Science SA
Ms Hayley Brown	Forensic Science SA
Ms Melanie Marty	Victorian Clinical Genetics Service
Mr Ian Robert Franca	Australian Federal Police
Mr Paul Peacock	Queensland Police Service

NATA Staff

Mr Andrew Griffin	Sector Manager - Legal and Clinical Services
Ms Gillian Treloar	Deputy Sector Manager - Legal and Clinical Services
Mr John Styzinski	General Manager - Operations and Technical
Ms Danielle Dicker	Technical Manager
Ms Kirsty Putsey	Senior Client Coordinator
Ms Thu-Anh Pham	Stakeholder and Technical Coordinator

Observer

Ms Sharon Thomas	IANZ
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Apology

Ms Sue Harry	Stakeholder Relations and State Manger
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1.2 Chair's opening remarks

Chair welcomed members including new members Paul Peacock and Ian Franca, and observer Sharon Thomas. Announced meeting will include a presentation and discussion on facial identification from AFP guest speaker.

1.3 Reminder regarding conflict of interest and confidentiality

The Chair asked if there is any conflict of interest to be declared by members. Graeme Kinraid from AFP highlighted he is from the same organisation that facial identification presenter is from. No concerns identified.

Committee members are reminded of their declaration regarding conflict of interest e.g. commercial interest, existing or prior association, in relation to a person or issue considered by the Committee.

Members of the Committee are asked to consider the agenda papers prior to the meeting and to declare at the beginning of the meeting any actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to any of the items under consideration.

The other members of the Committee will determine the course of action in relation to the declared conflict. Such action may include exclusion from the meeting during discussion of the item in question, exclusion from any decision making process such as voting or no action if the conflict is judged immaterial by the Committee.

The minutes of the meeting will record the member declaring the conflict of interest; the nature of the conflict interest; if it was judged material or immaterial by the Committee and any subsequent action. If a member is excluded from the meeting on the basis of a conflict of interest, his/her copy of the minutes will not include information on the item in question.

Committee members are also reminded of their confidentiality obligations and their agreement to hold confidential any information about the activities and deliberations of the Committee unless a decision is made to disclose such information.

1.4 Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting held 4th May 2018

FSAAC minutes from the 2018 meeting accepted by Graeme Kinraid, seconded by Dimitri Gerostamoulos.

Carolyne Bird highlighted typographical errors (examiners page 2, trick page 8).

1.5 Review of action items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

FSAAC Action Log from 2018 was discussed and progressed.

1.6 Other business

Nil

2. Committee membership

2.1 Review of current membership and composition of the Committee

There are three AAC positions due to expire in March 2020 before the next meeting (Toxicology, Biology and Electronic evidence/Signal processing). Expressions of interest will need to be sent out for next year. Chair stated current members are welcome to apply. If there are more than one applicant a vote will be required.

ACTION 1/19 – Expressions of Interest for expiring positions to be sent out for next year by sector manager.
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Question asked by Pam Scott regarding the need for an AAC representative from the Quality SAG. Graeme Kinraid indicated the meeting already has quality members and highlighted by Dean Catoggio that this forum is for technical matters. NATA also attends the Quality SAG.

Andy Griffin highlighted to members that NATA can attend additional SAG meetings to discuss the requirements of the new standard and its application during assessments.

3. Reports from committee members

- **Paul Peacock** – taken as read

Pam Scott discussed the further need for Polilight checks as this equipment is used by many disciplines. A minimum requirement should be established and should something be in place to demonstrate the equipment is still fit for purpose? Ian Franca highlighted that this may then be relevant to other equipment used for similar screening techniques. Paul Peacock discussed that the issue with the Polilight is more to do with the deterioration of the filters and that Rofin have recommended a five year service/check be conducted to ensure software updates and to check the equipment.

ACTION 2/19 – Chris Pearman to look into Polilight checks requirements for fields using this equipment (other than fingerprints).

- **Dean Catoggio** – taken as read
- **Carolyn Bird** – taken as read

Hayley Brown discussed possible risk as the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) document examiners course is now open for enrolment to people outside the forensic examiners sector. The change by CIT could be due to low uptake numbers.

Carolyn Bird indicated that this is not considered a risk as this course does not qualify you in the field.

- **Hayley Brown** – taken as read
- **Melanie Marty** – taken as read
- **Graeme Kinraid** – taken as read

Asked what value does voice enhancement add as individuals seem to be exposed to enhancements. Practitioners listen to recordings and provide only the evidence; they don't make a judgement on the words.

- **Dimitri Gerostamoulos** – taken as read
- **Pam Scott** – taken as read
- **Chris Pearman** – taken as read

Discussion was undertaken regarding the appropriateness of ISO/IEC 17025 for electronic evidence and asked is there another standard that is better suited.

Dean Catoggio noted that the electronic evidence standard is a good practice guide and not a replacement for ISO/IEC 17025. This document is focused on digital evidence rather than a physical sample/exhibit being examined. Should this be referred to the SAG for comment? Graeme Kinraid discussed that this should be more of a stakeholder consideration as the SAG won't cover all the facilities accredited in this field.

- **Michael Collins** – taken as read

Hayley Brown discussed the application of the illicit drug group being selected for blind testing. Some groups had volunteered to be part of blind testing.



4. General Manager update

4.1 The General Manager Operations and Technical, Mr John Styzinski provided an update to AAC members on major NATA initiatives and other matters as relevant.

The take home message is that NATA accreditation has not grown.

The charter of service is at 89%, we aim to achieve 90%.

Each job has service standards; standard 9 is for granting of accreditation. Members who are asked to perform ADC reviews are reminded to act on these as quickly as possible to meet this standard. If unable to review, please advise us as soon as possible.

The new database AIMS part three is under development and this part will focus on accreditation workflow management.

During April – June 2018 roadshows for new ISO/IEC 17025 were conducted and delivered to all NATA staff. We are on track with assessing facility's to the new standard with approximately 50% completed.

The APAC ISO/IEC 17011 evaluation of NATA was conducted in February 2019 and considered the AAC as a committee and how the members perform their role. Evaluation raised nothing against the forensic science field, just a general document update to specify how members' competency is captured. The evaluation team spent two days in the office then the rest of their time at assessments. Four non-conformities and two concerns noted. Main discussion around the timely close out of assessments as there was a tendency to keep giving facility's more time to address non-conformities. NATA have now changed process on how we manage this. After four months, the discussion of possible suspension will be required. We are also now required to make publicly available laboratories that are suspended and confirm fraudulent material generated by facilities we suspend.

Pam Scott asked John about the issuing of preliminary reports and how the criteria in section 7.8 of the Standard Application Document can be met regarding linking reports where preliminary reports are electronically provided. The preliminary report may not contain all of the results in the final reports. The result is captured in the electronic system and then a court report issued later. Discussion indicated that the purpose of the two reports is for different recipients so this is not an issue as the two reports are issued to different clients (police and court). If the result is confirmed then the report is not considered a preliminary report, just a simplified report.

5. Stakeholder engagement

Members were asked to propose additional stakeholder engagements which may be considered useful to enhance the Forensic Science program. Nil noted for discussion.

6. Review of accreditation criteria and processes

6.1 Review of the relevant NATA Accreditation Criteria

Newly published documents include:

- Legal – Forensic Science ISO/IEC 17025 Annex – Parentage Testing for the Australian Family Law Act
- Legal Management of Facility Activities (Forensic Operations Module)

Documents under review include:

- Legal – Forensic Science ISO/IEC 17025 Appendix

6.2 Review of scope of accreditation descriptors

Nil comments for discussion.



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6.3 Feedback from AAC on technical issues raised during accreditation recommendation reviews

No comments for discussion.

7. Technical matters

7.1 Issues arising from assessments

No comments for discussion.

7.2 Proficiency testing matters

No comments for discussion.

7.3 Metrological traceability / Measurement uncertainty (sampling)

Danielle Dicker advised that the requirement for determining sampling measurement uncertainty (sMU) has been raised with ILAC with no resolution. The previous version of the standard required measurement uncertainty for analytical parts only. ISO 17025:2017 now requires sMU as appropriate.

This is only applicable if the facility is accredited or responsible for sampling. sMU estimates tend to be larger which could pose a commercial disadvantage.

Facilities reporting sMU can report an overall estimate or report the sMU separate, however this must be clearly stated.

Decision rules for the application must be established. A possible disadvantage is that many products may be seen as non-conforming. NATA's approach is to document the decision rule if agreed with customer (exclude sMU budget).

NATA has been tasked with writing a position paper for ILAC. The next step is to approach ISO about the practicality of applying this clause. If included in the method, then you don't need to worry about uncertainty estimates. No impact with qualitative testing.

Mainly quantitative testing such as illicit drug labs or toxicology labs reporting a concentration (fits within conformity statement). All labs would have measurement uncertainty estimates around the analytical portion of the testing.

Michael Collins discussed that this is difficult to summarise, for example AFP get huge seizures. Prosecutors are not aware of how much sampling is needed to be done to say this is enough of a representative. Facilities usually take a sample from each group (portions usually homogenous). Danielle reminded members that this requirement only relates to the collection of the sample.

Michael indicated that jail time is based on how much drug is seized and asked how sampling would then apply to the police, e.g. 300 bricks. A sampling plan would be adopted; square root of total 100 bricks or alternatively sample every brick? This is a huge cost involving sampling and photography and the measurement uncertainty goes down the more you sample. Hayley Brown suggested you would select a number of bricks for quantification, homogenise the sample and then test duplicate samples. The requirement is about the decision rule that you apply, not the sampling plan. If one sample is collected, tested, then another one, then there is a sMU.

Danielle reiterated that this requirement is more relevant to environmental testing and NATA will be handling this gently and as an education process. There is a European CITEC guide for sMU. Andy Griffin stated that there have been cases where some laboratories have set up separate companies to get out of this requirement.

Chris Pearman reminded members that they mostly do sub-sampling which is excluded from this clause and considered under the handling of test items as the process is conducted in the laboratory rather than onsite. This requirement is being looked at internally and internationally and laboratories just need to be aware of this requirement and consider it further.



7.4 Major projects

No comments for discussion.

7.5 Precedents

No comments for discussion.

8. Assessors

8.1 Summary of new appointments and retired assessors since the previous meeting

New Appointment:

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|-------------------|--|
| • Adam Poy | Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre |
| • Lisa Federle | Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre |
| • Kate Outteridge | Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre |
| • Julie McCall | Victoria Police Forensic Services Centre |
| • Justone Wong | NSW Police Force |

Retired assessors

None retired since the last meeting.

8.2 Specific technical assessor training needs

No comments for discussion.

8.3 Identification of areas/disciplines where technical assessors need to be recruited

All areas have limited numbers.

9. Other business

- Discussion on providing accreditation for facial identification services. Presentation from Jodie Green, facial image examiner from AFP.

A request has been made to NATA to consider this activity for accreditation. Facial identification is currently used for intelligence purposes only.

John Styzinski asked is this a science that is accepted and we cannot use the accreditation process as a means to validate a method. We should look into how other accreditation bodies have accredited this process. Perhaps we can contact SWEDA to source technical assessors? We will need to develop a framework for this discipline and need to be careful regarding the requirement for validation.

Chris Pearman suggested we seek documentation from NIFS or SAG on expected criteria to determine how this science is accepted in the community and what issues need to be considered. Is there a recognised method in place or has an in-house method been developed?

Dean Catoggio highlighted that it will be difficult to verify how the method has been validated and how staff have been trained, what is the ground truth. We need to ensure our expectation is not greater than what is expected for other disciplines. Forensic Fundamentals is a document already in place to help demonstrate a science has been appropriately validated.

Committee agreed that the Facial Identification discipline had sufficient underpinning studies to demonstrate the validity of the methodology.

ACTION 3/19 – Dean Catoggio to put together dot points for the facility to consider for accreditation including how the methodology has been validated.

ACTION 4/19 – Chris Pearman to document the studies undertaken which demonstrate the validity of the facial identification discipline.

- Parentage testing issues: does each reporting officer need to be interviewed at each assessment? Is there a minimum number of reports a reporter has to issue each year to maintain their reporter status? (CP)

Melanie Marty stated that no, this is not a requirement. the interviews are initial only which depends on checking training and competency records. There is no minimum number of reports required for the process. JS suggested following up with Family Law to ensure there is no such requirement.

- Multi crime scene sites (CP)

Chris Pearman wanted to clarify if there is a need to visit every multi crime scene site. Andy Griffin explained that currently we visit one site per hub facility visit. Paul Peacock explained that the site reviews are conducted by desk top using the forensic register. Chris suggested that we consider skype/electronic visits for collection sites periodically.

- The inclusion of a risk rating to each condition in the assessment findings (CP)

A risk rating may be determined to be low, medium or high based on the outcome of the risk to the client. This is to help further clarify C and M conditions. Andy Griffin asked if members think its use in the forensic field could be considered. Dean Catoggio stated that an example of a low risk could be not having a page number on a casefile; however this could have a consequence to the file in court. Andy Griffin indicated that its use is to help the focus be on the more important aspects of the visit. It will help to outline the range of consequences, guidance on the likelihood of the impact of the findings. Pam Scott asked how this change will impact how an organisation addresses a condition.

Graeme Kinraid highlighted some concern that NATA lead assessors are sometimes pushed to complete assessments in the allocated visit timeframe, so this will be something additional for the lead assessors to negotiate with the facility and the technical assessors. Andy stated that it will be the technical assessor making their decision and bringing that to the NATA lead assessor to consider.

Gill Treloar brought up the new inclusion of a cause analysis into reports. Sharon Thomas stated that its inclusion has achieved two things in NZ. Firstly, it has not changed the findings, just helped to prioritise them and has provided structure on what to address first. Dean Catoggio stated that this helps to highlight the adverse outcome of the condition as the focus and encourages discussion about the severity of conditions. Also helps create a structure for what is put into reports.

Gill discussed that there are ideas and boundaries on how we implements this and that there is a risk matrix in place. The summary of findings from reports determined that there are a lot of conditions raised that do not necessarily pose risks. For example there is a high number of document control conditions and this is common across all fields even though the risks in this area are quite low.

Higher risk examples include control of records and test report errors, also technical methods or equipment not being properly validated or verified before being implemented. Dean asked if there is a procedure designed based on risk analysis to help determine risks that we will/wont accept. Pam highlighted that there are different was to measure risk and how do you classify this, what level of detail is needed and is this required for all methods.

Andy indicated that pathology (Medical testing) has adopted a risk rating and focuses on the risk to the patient. What would forensic science use as its focus?

- Impartiality (Phil Hill)



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ISO/IEC 17011 now has an increased emphasis on impartiality. One of the requirements is to ensure we seek the input from interested parties about the role the AAC members play in the assessment process and to ensure this is impartial. We need to ensure the involvement is appropriate with safe guards built in with regards to impartiality.

Dimitri Gerostamoulos discussed the use of retired/no longer practising technical assessors for visits. How does NATA assess their competence and their appropriateness? Is there a risk that assessors will miss things such as no validation for a method? Pam Scott indicated that we should be able to rely on our technical assessors to declare if they are not up to date with testing and technology. Andy Griffin discussed that we do look into why assessors are rejected by facilities and what the reason for the rejection is. Carolyn Bird stated that all technical assessors have the responsibility and opportunity to self-declare concerns or risks to impartiality. Andy discussed that we seek supervisor approval now for new technical assessors and we follow up on assessors retired for extended periods of time. Dimitri suggested we review and renew the list of technical assessors.

ACTION 5/19 – All AAC members are to review the list of current technical assessors for currency and consider retired/current competency in their specific areas.

10. Accreditation statistics

Laboratory list and technical assessor appendix discussed. Nil comments for discussion.

11. Next meeting & close

Meeting concluded at 4.10pm. It was agreed that the next meeting will take place next year during the first week of May 2020.