AAFS General Section Disciplines

Generally, each section of the AAFS is comprised of individuals with developed expertise in a discipline traditionally associated with one or more of the Forensic Sciences. Those sections are: Criminalistics, Digital & Multimedia Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Jurisprudence, Odontology, Pathology/Biology, Physical Anthropology, Psychiatry/Behavioral Sciences, Questioned Documents, and Toxicology. Persons involved in disciplines, sub-disciplines or specialty areas not suitable for membership in one of these sections may be eligible for membership in the General Section.

The General Section accepts candidates for membership who are qualified by nature of study and experience in a forensic discipline, sub-discipline or specialty area accepted by the General Section. In general, the guiding principle for eligibility for membership in the General Section is that all of the following can be demonstrated:

(1) An academic background in a field of study or a branch of knowledge which is traditionally taught at the college or university level appropriate to the practice of the specialty in the Forensic Sciences that the applicant possesses;

(2) Appropriate and demonstrated expertise in a forensic technique which may be based on new or emerging technologies (e.g., computerization, digital media), or new or developing cross-disciplinary efforts (e.g., geophysics, biochemistry, neuropsychology) when the technique is generally recognized and accepted in the forensic community;

(3) The forensic technique or specialty area is not unique to an individual or small group of individuals but represents a developing area of expertise recognized as having forensic application.

Discipline Definition

An academic discipline, or field of study, may be defined as a branch of knowledge which is taught or researched at the college or university level. Generally, disciplines are defined and recognized by the existence of a scholarly journal in which research is published and the existence of a society, department or faculty to which practitioners belong. Fields of study often have sub-disciplines or branches, and while there is no fixed definition of a discipline acceptable to the General Section, disciplines, sub-disciplines and specialty areas which have found to be acceptable are:

Disciplines, Sub-Disciplines and Specialty Areas Accepted by the General Section

**Forensic Accounting** (1991)

Persons who are trained in the application of accounting principles, theories, and disciplines to facts or hypotheses at issue in a legal dispute.

**Forensic Archaeology**
Persons who apply archeological theory and methods to the resolution of medico-legal issues. Forensic archeologists may assist scene investigators by performing controlled searches, aiding in location, survey, sampling, recording and interpretation of evidence as well as the recovery and identification of human remains and associated relevant evidence at forensic scenes.

**Forensic Art and Sculpting** (prior to 1991)
Persons who reconstruct the face and/or body features of an unidentified individual from their skeletal remains for identification purposes.

**Forensic Aviation and Land Vehicle Accident Investigation** (1994)
Persons who investigate collisions, mechanical failures, and other causes of accidents and who may reconstruct accident scenes for legal purposes.

**Forensic Consulting** (1991)
Many disciplines, sub-disciplines and specialty areas of expertise may be subsumed under this category. Consultants who specialize in the death investigation process, police procedures, evidence collection, and so forth may be included. Other persons who, for example, reconstruct crime scenes and death scenarios, may also be included. Generally, applicants shall be active as a consultant and must meet the requirements of the Academy as a whole and the General Section mandates as follows:

1. Must have previous full time experience in a forensic discipline approved by the General Section or another section of the AAFS.
2. Must be an active full-time consultant in a forensic science field acceptable to the General Section

**Forensic Credibility Assessment**
Persons who assess the reliability and validity of information, using instrument-based (e.g., Polygraph, fMRI, etc.) or non-instrument based methods (e.g., interview, Statement Validity Analysis, etc.). This information includes physiological and behavioral measures acquired overtly or covertly.

**Forensic Death and Crime Scene Investigation**
Persons who attend sudden death scenes for purposes of investigation of the circumstances and examination of the body, and who recognize, document, collect, and preserve evidence at crime scenes.

**Forensic Coroner (non-pathologist)** (1985): Persons who are responsible for investigating deaths with the goal of determining and certifying the cause and manner of death.

**Forensic Medicolegal Death Investigator** (1984): Persons who are responsible for assisting the medical examiner/coroner in investigating deaths and determining and certifying the cause and manner of death.

**Forensic Education** or **Research** (1985)
Persons who research or teach in college or university forensic science programs or who teach courses on forensic science topics. Applicants shall be a professor (instructor, assistant professor, associate professor) or adjunct professor or professional who meets the requirements of the Academy and the General Section mandates as follows:

1. The applicant shall be an active full-time educator of fully matriculated students of a two-year program of a community college, a four-year degree program and/or graduate program of a college or university in forensic science or one of its disciplines, or,

2. The applicant shall be an instructor or adjunct instructor of employed professional law enforcement investigators, medico-legal investigators, coroner’s investigators, or persons in a forensic-science technical specialty.

**Forensic Firearms Analyst (1993)**
Persons who analyze firearms and ammunition usage in crimes.

**Forensic Geologist (1997)**
Persons who assess evidence relating to minerals, soil, petroleums, and other materials found at a crime scene or suspected crime scene to address questions raised in legal proceedings.

**Forensic Management or Administration**
Persons who work in management or policy-making positions in crime laboratories, medical examiner’s offices or other laboratory settings carrying out forensic examinations or investigations.

**Forensic Nursing**
Persons who apply nursing science to public or legal proceedings; the application of the forensic aspects of health care combined with the bio-psycho-social education of the registered nurse in the scientific investigation and treatment of trauma and/or death of victims and perpetrators of abuse, violence, criminal activity and traumatic accidents.

**Forensic Photography (1976)**
Persons who produce photographic reproduction of a crime scene, accident scene, or autopsy for the benefit of court and other legal proceedings.

**Forensic Radiologist –**
Persons who utilize radiological techniques to assist physicians, pathologists and others in matters pertaining to the law such as, the identity of human remains, the location of foreign bodies, and documentation of fractures.

**Forensic Veterinary Science –**
The General Section recognizes that Veterinary medicine is performed by persons trained in and licensed or certified to practice in the Veterinary Sciences. Forensic Veterinary Science is the branch of medicine concerned with the health and welfare of animals through the recovery, identification, and examination of material evidence of inhumane destruction, treatment, abuse, neglect, or illicit trade in animals or animal parts for legal purposes. This definition is intended
to include all levels of veterinary sciences including but not limited to those individuals who are trained in and licensed or certified in the Veterinary Sciences as educators, researchers, practicing Doctors of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary technicians and practitioners, and as laboratory specialists and technicians.

DISCIPLINES PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED BY THE GENERAL SECTION BUT REMOVED AS OF 2/18/08:

Forensic Biology
Forensic Digital Media
Forensic Image Enhancement Specialist
Forensic Medical Practices
Forensic Packaging Specialist
Forensic Rehabilitation
Forensic Social Worker
Forensic Speech Scientist

DISCIPLINES PREVIOUSLY NOT ACCEPTED BY THE GENERAL SECTION

Forensic Podiatry
Forensic Pharmacology
Forensic Dental Hygienist (1999)
Forensic Chiropractor (1999)
Forensic Realtor
Forensic Architect

Forensic Stylist (2004)
Forensic Agronomist
Forensic Linguistics
Forensic Librarian
Forensic Secretary