



Criminalistics Section – 2006

B149 Assessing Academic Competency in Criminalistics

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the use of a national examination for the assessment of academic competence in forensic science.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating how a national examination in forensic science will have a large impact on forensic science education and employment by forensic laboratories.

The National Institute of Justice's 2004 special report on the *Education and Training in Forensic Science: A Guide for Forensic Science Laboratories, Educational Institutions, and Students* provided a framework for undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education within the forensic science community. This report also provided the impetus for the creation of the Forensic Science Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), and hence the beginnings of a formal and national assessment of academic competency in the field of forensic science. The American Board of Criminalistics (ABC) has provided one component of a standardized national assessment of academic competency through the use of a General Knowledge Examination (GKE); however, this test is designed for practitioners in the field, and includes experience based questions presuming a working knowledge of the field of criminalistics. FEPAC and ABC are working toward a national examination similar in design and reporting to the Graduate Record Examinations which would be appropriately designed for undergraduate and graduate forensic science students. The national Forensic Science Aptitude Test (FSAT) would provide a standardized and national score of forensic science program graduates. These scores could be used by FEPAC and other forensic science educational institutions to assess on a national level and in standardized format the quality of forensic science programs. This would be consistent with the NIJ 2004 report and FEPAC accreditation standards and goals targeting program improvements and a high level of competency for forensic science graduates. A national Forensic Science Aptitude Test (FSAT) could also be used by crime laboratory directors to assess the overall forensic science knowledge of applicants, and subspecialty scores could be used as indicators of relative strengths or weaknesses in specific academic areas. A national examination would provide an important, reliable, and relevant tool for educators and crime laboratory directors for assessing academic competency in the field of criminalistics.

FSAT Forensic Science Assessment Test, Assessment, Competency