



Breakfast Seminar - 2016

BS3 A Primer on the Structure and Activity of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC)

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After attending this presentation, participants will be able to discuss the structure and activities of the various committees and subcommittees that comply with the new NIST OSAC process established to develop standards and guidelines for the professional practice of forensic science.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by introducing the OSAC process, its accomplishments, and its plans to the forensic science community, AAFS members, and meeting attendees. Information will be presented to assist attendees in becoming involved with and contributing to the process.

This presentation is designed to provide a brief introduction to the new and important structure created and driven by the forensic science community in partnership with NIST to develop standards and guidelines for professional practice of forensic science. If you have heard about this new organization and its assignment but want to better understand how it works, its potential to create systemic change in the forensic sciences, and opportunities for everyone to be involved; this is the session for you.

In 2013, NIST, in consultation with the Department of Justice (DOJ), began the process of seeking input from the forensic science community to create a registry of standards that represented the priorities and consensus of the practitioners of forensic science, but that was also subject to review, scrutiny, and input from other stakeholders including the criminal justice community (lawyers and judges), researchers, statisticians, and the general public. The intent was to create an open, transparent, and accountable process that would reduce the risk of bad science being used in the courtroom and create a means for more consistent practice and continuous improvement in the application of scientific methods and practice to criminal investigations.

In 2014, NIST created the OSAC to take on this task and began recruiting members. The organization is structured with a governing board, the Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB), and served by three resource committees (Human Factors, Legal Resources, and Quality Infrastructure) and five scientific area committees (Biology/DNA, Chemistry/Instrumental Analysis, Crime Scene/Death Investigation, Digital/Multimedia, and Physics/Pattern Interpretation) to manage and support the work of the subcommittees, and the subcommittees themselves. The OSAC currently has 24 subcommittees (enumerated on NIST's web site) which either replaced or augmented the previous Scientific Working Group's (SWG's) standards development activities. The subcommittees and their derivative task groups work on the creation of new or adoption of existing United States or international standards, developed in a manner consistent with the widely recognized ANSI standards development process, subject to public comment, and publication in OSAC's approved standards and guidelines registries.

The process has been enthusiastically adopted by the forensic science community and, as of August 2015, standards were already in development for submission to the review and adoption procedure. In July 2015, the AAFS announced its intent to become an ANSI approved Standards Development Organization (SDO) and to take a leadership role in support of this new process.

Although there are many OSAC events which take place during the AAFS meeting, this presentation is designed to act as a primer to AAFS members and meeting attendees wanting to quickly get up to speed with the new process and the organization. The presentation will feature brief discussions from members of the various levels of the OSAC organization who will describe their roles and their progress to date and answer questions about how to become involved in this critical new process in support of the future and continued professionalization of forensic science.

OSAC, NIST, Forensic Science Standards