



A73 Core Competencies and Entrustable Professional Activities: A Model for Forensic Anthropology Qualifications

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to discuss the potential for clearly delineated competencies to guide education, training, and certification in forensic anthropology.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by proposing a model for defining and assessing competencies of forensic anthropology trainees and practitioners.

A cascade of changes in forensic research, practice, and training has occurred since the landmark 1990s court rulings (e.g., *Daubert* and *Kumho*) and the 2009 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report, *Strengthening Forensic Sciences in the United States: A Path Forward*. As a result of work in this arena by the Department of Justice and National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Organization of Scientific Area Committees was created to replace the Scientific Working Group model for developing evidence-based standards and guidelines for forensic disciplines.

The forensic anthropology community has risen to the challenge of validating methods and improving reliability in our practice. The American Board of Forensic Anthropology has continually improved the certification process, and several forensic anthropology laboratories have undergone the rigorous process of accreditation. However, the discipline currently lacks uniform standards for education, training, and qualifications. In this environment of scientifically rigorous research and practice, the trickle-down implications of this absence of uniformity may be costly for our discipline.

A potential model for defining competencies to guide education, training, and certification is that of medical education: core competencies and Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs). In 1999, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) selected six core competencies that captured the foundational skills every practicing physician should possess. These competencies have shaped educational programs and assessments of residents and undergraduate medical students. The ACGME is now laying the groundwork for using EPAs for resident competency assessment. EPAs are units of professional practice to be entrusted to an unsupervised trainee once he/she has attained sufficient competence in the task or responsibility. EPAs provide a means to translate the more abstract competencies into clinical practice. Whereas core competencies are descriptors of physicians, EPAs are descriptors of work—activities that characterize clinical and professional skills directly linked to the core competencies.

Competencies constitute a framework that describes the qualities and qualifications of professionals, and EPAs translate this framework into the world of practice. A competency-based model of education would ensure that trainees demonstrate a sufficient level of proficiency at the completion of the training. Furthermore, the competencies would provide uniform standards for assessment and certification of practitioners, as well as guide curriculum development and program accreditation. Competencies are outcomes-based, not process-based, and they evaluate the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes into practice.

This presentation outlines seven core competencies for forensic anthropology and will provide examples of EPAs for each of these competencies: (1) Knowledge for Practice: Knowledge of established and evolving practices in forensic anthropology and the application of this knowledge to casework; (2) Practice-Based Learning and Improvement: The ability to evaluate casework and research, to appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and to continuously improve methods based on constant self-evaluation, reflection, and lifelong learning; (3) Interpersonal and Communication Skills: Interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with colleagues, students, medicolegal professionals, decedent families, and media representatives; (4) Professionalism: A commitment to maintaining professionalism and adhering to ethical principles in interactions with students, colleagues, medicolegal professionals, decedent families, and media representatives; (5) Systems-Based Practice: An awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context of the medicolegal system, as well as the ability to utilize system resources and collaborate with appropriate forensic subdisciplines to ensure optimal case outcomes; (6) Interprofessional Collaboration: The ability to engage in interprofessional collaborations in a manner that exemplifies the role and application of forensic anthropology in medicolegal settings; and (7) Professional Development and Personal Growth: The qualities and commitment required to sustain lifelong learning, professional development, and personal growth.

This presentation seeks to gather audience feedback and integrate input from various stakeholders regarding the potential for this competency-based model.

Competency, Certification, Professional Practice