

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 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 within legal proceedings.

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)

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

Forensic Archaeology

Professionals 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)

Professionals who reconstruct the face and/or body features of an unidentified individual from skeletal remains for identification purposes.

Forensic Aviation and Land Vehicle Accident Investigation (1994)

Professionals who investigate collisions, mechanical failures, and other causes of accidents and who may reconstruct accident scenes for legal purposes.

Forensic Consulting (1991, revised 2017)

Professionals who provide independent consultation based on their training and experience on a specific forensic science discipline and who are often designated as an expert witness or a consulting expert. The applicant must meet the membership requirements of the AAFS, be an active consultant with a significant portion of their employment in their consulting area and must provide consultation in a forensic science discipline recognized by the AAFS and the General Section.

Forensic Coroner (non-pathologist) (1985) and Medicolegal Death Investigator (1984) (revised 2016)

Professionals who investigate deaths falling under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner or coroner including sudden and unexpected deaths and are responsible for performing scene investigations emphasizing information developed from the decedent and determining the extent to which further investigation is necessary, in order to assist in the determination of cause and manner of death.

Forensic Credibility Assessment

Professionals 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 Crime Scene Investigator (revised 2016)

Professionals who recognize, document, process, preserve and collect physical evidence at crime scenes for further forensic analysis or courtroom presentation. Crime Scene Investigation includes, but is not limited to, the use of techniques such as photography and sketching, fingerprint processing with powders and chemicals, casting of impression evidence, the use of presumptive tests and enhancement reagents and the examination of evidence using alternate light sources.

Forensic Education or Research (1985, revised 2016, revised 2017)

Professionals who research or teach in a college, university, or government forensic science program or who teach courses on forensic science topics. Applicants shall be a professor (lecturer, instructor, assistant professor, associate professor) or adjunct professor or researcher who meets the requirements of the Academy and the General Section mandates as follows:

1. The applicant shall be an active 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, during which a significant portion of the applicant's teaching effort is in forensic science courses or,
1. The applicant shall be an active instructor or adjunct instructor of employed professional law enforcement investigators, medico-legal death investigators, coroner investigators, or professionals in a forensic science technical specialty during which a significant portion of the applicant's teaching effort is in forensic science courses, or
2. The applicant shall be an active forensic science researcher who is affiliated with a college, university, government agency or company that performs research which advances forensic science and is in a discipline recognized by the General Section or another section of the AAFS. The applicant shall also be currently funded to conduct research which often leads to publication.

Forensic Firearms Analyst (1993, revised 2017)

Professionals who are firearms examiners that apply valid scientific procedures to the forensic examination of firearms, ammunition components, serial number restoration, gunshot residue analysis, bullet trajectories, shooting incident reconstruction and/or other closely related physical evidence.

Forensic Geologist (1997)

Professionals 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

Professionals 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 who previously worked in a discipline recognized by the General Section or the AAFS.

Forensic Nursing

Professionals 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)

Professionals who produce photographic reproduction of a crime scene, accident scene, or autopsy for the benefit of court and other legal proceedings.

Forensic Radiologist –

Professionals who utilize radiological techniques and apply the results to assist physicians, pathologists and others in matters pertaining to the law such as, the identity of human remains, the location of foreign bodies, the documentation of fractures and other related forensic investigations.

Forensic Veterinary Science –

Professionals who are trained in and licensed or certified to practice in the Veterinary Sciences and are associated 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 of animals or animal parts for legal purposes.

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 Stylist (2004)
Forensic Pharmacology	Forensic Agronomist
Forensic Dental Hygienist (1999)	Forensic Linguistics
Forensic Chiropractor (1999)	Forensic Librarian
Forensic Realtor	Forensic Secretary
Forensic Architect	Forensic Gynecology (2017)