

Standard for Qualifications in the Practice of Forensic Anthropology

*Anthropology Subcommittee
Crime Scene/Death Investigation Scientific Area Committee
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science*

OSAC Proposed Standard

Standard for Qualifications in the Practice of Forensic Anthropology

Prepared by
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Disclaimer:

This document has been developed by the Anthropology Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science through a consensus process and is *proposed* for further development through a Standard Developing Organization (SDO). This document is being made available so that the forensic science community and interested parties can consider the recommendations of the OSAC pertaining to applicable forensic science practices. The document was developed with input from experts in a broad array of forensic science disciplines as well as scientific research, measurement science, statistics, law, and policy.

This document has not been published by an SDO. Its contents are subject to change during the standards development process. All interested groups or individuals are strongly encouraged to submit comments on this proposed document during the open comment period administered by the AAFS Standards Board (ASB) <https://www.asbstandardsboard.org/>.

Standard for Qualifications in the Practice of Forensic Anthropology

Keywords: Forensic Anthropologist, Associate Forensic Anthropologist, Assistant Forensic Anthropologist, Forensic Anthropology Technician

Foreword

The Anthropology Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC), under the guidance of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), recognizes that the practice of forensic anthropology requires an extensive and diverse education and skill set. Using this document initially published by the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Anthropology (SWGANTH), the subcommittee has reformatted the best practice guideline into a standard following the American Standards Board requirements. This document is intended to define levels of qualification in Forensic Anthropology.

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1. Scope

This document defines four levels of qualifications and responsibilities in the field of Forensic Anthropology:

1. Forensic Anthropologist,
2. Associate Forensic Anthropologist,
3. Assistant Forensic Anthropologist, and
4. Forensic Anthropology Technician.

Qualifications shall be commensurate with the duties performed in the laboratory.

2. Normative References

None.

3. Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions and acronyms apply.

3.1

American Board of Forensic Anthropology

ABFA

An accredited organization that provides certification in forensic anthropology.

3.2

Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board

FSAB

An organization that assesses, recognizes and monitors organizations or professional boards (e.g. ABFA) that certify individual forensic scientists or other forensic specialists.

3.3

Forensic Science Service Provider

FSSP

A forensic science agency or forensic science practitioner providing forensic science services.

4. Qualifications in Forensic Anthropology

Forensic anthropology requires qualifications that have both breadth in the scope of anthropological inquiry and depth in specific areas of related practice. A holistic understanding of anthropology is desirable for the practice of forensic anthropology.

Practitioners shall possess the appropriate qualifications relevant to the forensic anthropology-related duties and shall demonstrate competency in any analyses they are expected to perform.

Forensic science service providers (FSSP) should strive to employ the most qualified forensic anthropologists appropriate to their case-working functions and organizational requirements.

4.1 Forensic Anthropologist

4.1.1 Responsibilities

Forensic Anthropologists independently conduct forensic anthropological analyses and author reports. Forensic Anthropologists may supervise individuals at all levels.

4.1.2 Minimum Qualifications

Forensic Anthropologists shall possess a Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.) or equivalent in Anthropology or a closely-related field, with a significant emphasis on forensic anthropology, human osteology, skeletal biology, human skeletal variation, human anatomy, and statistics.

Forensic Anthropologists shall maintain active certification in forensic anthropology by an accredited organization (e.g. the ABFA).

4.2 Associate Forensic Anthropologist

4.2.1 Responsibilities

Associate Forensic Anthropologists independently conduct forensic anthropology analyses and author reports. Whenever possible, reports should be reviewed or approved by a Forensic Anthropologist.

4.2.2 Minimum Qualifications

Associate Forensic Anthropologists shall have a Master's Degree with certification by an accredited organization, or a Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.). The degrees shall be in anthropology or in a closely related field with significant emphasis on forensic anthropology, human osteology, skeletal biology, human skeletal variation, human anatomy, and statistics. Equivalent degrees are acceptable.

4.3 Assistant Forensic Anthropologist

4.3.1 Responsibilities

Assistant Forensic Anthropologists may conduct forensic anthropology analyses and may author reports that shall, at a minimum, be reviewed or approved by a Forensic Anthropologist.

4.3.2 Minimum Qualifications

Assistant Forensic Anthropologists shall possess a Master's Degree (MA or MS) or equivalent in Anthropology or closely related field, with a significant emphasis on human osteology, skeletal biology, human skeletal variation, human anatomy, and statistics.

4.4 Forensic Anthropology Technician

4.4.1. Responsibilities

Forensic Anthropology Technicians may collect data (e.g. taking measurements and notes), assist with forensic anthropological analyses or other laboratory duties involving remains, and perform specific tasks that create specimens, samples, or other items that can be used for analyses (e.g. sampling for DNA). Forensic Anthropology Technicians shall not independently author reports.

4.4.2. Minimum Qualifications

Forensic Anthropology Technicians shall possess a Bachelor's Degree (BA and/or BS) in Anthropology or a closely related field and shall have training in laboratory protocols and evidence handling procedures.

5. Considerations

Outside of the United States, consideration should be given to the availability of comparable education, certification, and professional development programs.

Individuals such as students, interns, and laboratory assistants who do not qualify as Forensic Anthropology Technicians may be involved in other forensic anthropology-related roles and should be adequately supervised.

Annex A

Bibliography

(informative)

- 1] American Board of Forensic Anthropology. www.theabfa.org.