

STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE FOR CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: The paper describes what standards of performance are and how they are developed and agreed, in this case internationally. It gives an indication of an assessment protocol on which an assessment strategy may be based. The standards developed, and agreed, in this manner can be used as a focus for training programme development. It emphasises that it is the outcome, the competence of an individual, which is important and not the process by which that outcome was achieved – training. It explains that the process is not for trainees and in so doing probably takes a bold stand against traditional thinking.

KEY WORDS: Competence; Standards of performance; Crime scene management; Evidence of competent performance; Focus for training development; Outcome not process.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1999 funding under the OISIN programme was secured by the Forensic Science Service on behalf of the ENFSI Scenes of Crime Working Group to establish a project to develop standards of performance for Crime Scene Management together with an associated assessment protocol.

A working group comprising representatives of: Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom was established to take the proposals forward. The project leader was to be the Forensic Science Service.

The principles, decided upon by the working group, were that the standards would cover the management of a crime scene in a typical homicide case but they would be presented in such a manner that they, and the assessment protocol, would apply equally to any type of incident.

The standards are aimed at personnel from law enforcement and criminal justice agencies who participate in the management process through all of the activities which will be described.

The entire range of activities may be carried out by one person or several people whatever the situation the standard of performance required will be the same.

The standards will cover the examination from initial call and attendance to the closing down of the scene having completed the recovery of all information and evidence.

The standards do not cover the management of subsequent laboratory examination or court presentation.

Since the main purpose of the standards is to ensure that practitioners achieve the “standard” in their work it is important that they are written in a way which will support this. It is also important that they are presented in a manner which will not dictate how individuals in organisations carry out their tasks whilst at the same time ensuring that all of the different ways of doing a job are valid and systems must be in place to ensure this is so.

THE STANDARDS AND THE ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

The standards, often called occupational standards, are structured using a model that:

- Identifies the separate areas of work activity that are covered by the standards.
- Sets down the measures of performance, these are statements of what a competent person would be expected to demonstrate within each work activity.
- Describes through a range statement the parameters and conditions under which the work activity will be carried out.
- Sets out the underpinning knowledge and understanding that would be expected of a competent individual undertaking this activity.

Although not part of the standard the standards also give guidance on what evidence of performance is required to prove competence, this is given under evidence requirements. The standards also offer some suggestions as to likely sources of evidence of competence described under assessment guidance.

The working group identified the following activities associated with crime scene management:

1. Assessment of requirements;
2. Agreeing a scene examination strategy;
3. Deployment of resources;
4. Monitor the recovery of evidence;
5. Monitor the packaging and storage of evidence;
6. Provide and maintain information and communication systems;
7. Monitor and maintain health and safety;
8. Manage and respond to welfare needs of personnel;
9. Ensure documentation is complete and produce closing report;
10. Maintain knowledge of trends and developments.

Associated with each of these activities are a number of Measures of Performance and by taking activity 2 “Agreeing a Scene Examination Strategy” as an example we see that the Measures of Performance for this activity were agreed as:

- a) The evidential potential of the scene is evaluated and a scene examination strategy is agreed with relevant personnel and documented.
- b) Investigative requirements regarding the collection, continuity, integrity and recovery of evidence are identified and communicated to relevant personnel.
- c) Expert advice is sought in instances where additional specialist information and skill is required.
- d) Appropriate methods of evidence preservation, recording and recovery are identified and agreed with relevant personnel.
- e) Briefings are delivered to scene personnel in a way that facilitates understanding of operational requirements and understanding of the scene examination strategy.
- f) Effectiveness of resources and investigation activities is evaluated for use in future incidents which have similar requirements.
- g) Information regarding resource effectiveness and investigation activities is recorded and filed so that self and others can retrieve it when required.
- h) The scene examination strategy is recorded and takes account of both the potential to recover forensic material and the needs of the investigation.

The Range Statements and Knowledge and Understanding associated with these Measures of Performance are also presented but will not be described as part of this presentation. A knowledge of the Measures of Performance will give a valuable insight into the requirements of the assessment process and the applicability of the proposals to all organisations.

Taking Activity 2 “Agreeing a Scene Examination Strategy” and Measure of Performance a) “The evidential potential of the scene is evaluated and a scene examination strategy is agreed with relevant personnel and documented”.

This statement does not say how the evidential potential is evaluated neither does it say how the strategy is agreed. However, since the assessor will be occupationally competent it will be the assessor who will put the how into the equation. There may be several valid ways in which the job can be done and the assessor must be satisfied that the way demonstrated in each situation is acceptable. An examination of the wording of other measures of performance further reveals their generic nature. This is a crucial point and is worth emphasising. The standards are expressed generically, recognising the fact that there is more than one acceptable way of doing a job. There

must be a procedure in place to ensure that the way a candidate does the job is acceptable to the crime scene examination community. To accommodate this a verification procedure is used.

A verifier will be appointed by a body independent of the Crime Scene Examination Community. This could be the ENFSI QA Working Group or indeed a new ENFSI body. The appointed verifier will be knowledgeable of the work under assessment but will report to the independent body regarding assessments. The verifier will not assess but will ensure that the evidence of competence collected by the candidate and accepted by the assessor is valid against the standards concerned.

Since the success of the verification process depends on the evidence of competence presented by the candidate, and accepted by the assessor being valid, all of this evidence must be available for scrutiny by the verifier and for any appeal which may follow. To ensure this is so the candidate will be given guidance on how to prepare a portfolio of evidence of competence. This portfolio could be little more than an audit trail relating to casework and suitably cross referenced.

This is not a training procedure and the timing of assessments is important. Trainees would never achieve success under these proposals. The procedure is for those practitioners who have achieved “competence” following training and supervision within their organisations and who are at a point where they are carrying out “real” casework. This procedure will give an external accreditation against agreed standards of performance using an externally monitored assessment procedure.

The process must not be treated like an examination, It is not. In future, once such a process is accepted into the “culture” of organisations potential candidates will on an ongoing basis continuously collect evidence of competence against the standards ready for presentation to assessors. Candidates should not be encouraged to spend endless amounts of time preparing their portfolio at the expense of everything else but rather to do this over time. Indeed, part of the process is to ensure consistent competent performance.

Although not a training process, standards, which have been agreed by the community, will be available to inform training providers in their preparation of effective training programmes. In fact it is difficult to see how effective training can be developed until the standards of performance are known.

Phase 1 the development of occupational standards is complete. A bid will be prepared shortly for the trial of an assessment process in maybe 4 European countries and this work will be carried out and guided by a working group as before. If anyone is interested in playing some part in this please let us know.