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# Supporting the Criminal Justice System



UKAS is the sole national accreditation body of the UK, recognised by the Government to assess and declare the competence of an organisation against internationally agreed standards such as ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO/IEC 17020.

The Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) has set their expectations for the standards to be met by forensic units providing evidence into the Criminal Justice System, these are detailed in the FSR Codes of Practice and Conduct (CoPC); for the majority of forensic activities the expectation is that the forensic unit hold accreditation.

UKAS, on behalf of the FSR undertakes the assessment of forensic units against the additional requirements of the FSR CoPC.



### Accreditation requires forensic units to demonstrate the following:

- Impartiality in relation to the performance of testing / inspection
- Methods that are appropriately validated and demonstrated as fit for purpose
- Equipment that is calibrated, checked and maintained to ensure that it operates effectively
- Staff that are demonstrably competent and mechanisms to maintain this on an on-going basis
- Samples are handled and stored to maintain integrity

Therefore, accreditation benefits both the forensic units, and the commissioners of forensic science, as it demonstrates compliance with defined standards and best practice.

Areas already benefiting from accreditation include the examination or analysis of:

- + Drugs, Accelerants, Glass, Paint
- + Toolmarks, Footwear, Vehicles
- + Fingerprints
- + Body Fluids, Fibres, Blood Patterns
- + DNA
- + Questioned Documents
- + Computer, Mobile Phones
- + Firearms, Firearms Discharge Residue, Explosives





# New developments in the accreditation of Forensic Science

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## Fingerprints and DNA

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The Accreditation of [Forensic Service Providers Regulations 2018](#) (SI1276/2018) introduced a requirement for competent law enforcement authorities to use providers accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 for any laboratory activity relating to fingerprints and DNA. Whilst a number of organisations have held accreditation for DNA and fingerprint enhancement activities for some time, this requirement proved to be a catalyst for forensic units undertaking fingerprint comparison to gain accreditation.

## Collision Investigation

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UKAS will be undertaking a Pilot Assessment Programme for the accreditation of collision investigation activities.

The objective of the collision investigation pilot programme is to confirm the applicability of the relevant standards, identify any areas which need further guidance and finally to establish a proportionate and robust assessment approach. Details of the scope and timescales for the Pilot can be found [here](#).

## Digital Forensics

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As the role of digital evidence increases in the cases investigated by law enforcement, forensic units have seen a corresponding increase in the requests for examination and analysis of digital devices and data.

As a fast-moving area reliant of developing technology digital forensics poses a challenge to forensic units to keep pace with the changes in technology whilst maintaining confidence in the results produced. Accreditation can help to demonstrate that this challenge is being met on a continuing basis.



# New developments in the accreditation of Forensic Science

## Scene of Crime Examination

Accreditation of laboratory based forensic science has been available for more than 30 years; however, the expansion of this assurance to include the activities undertaken at the scene of crime has been a more recent addition. UKAS assessments include not only a review of any testing performed at the scene, but also the manner in which scene strategies are set, anti-contamination measures are employed and how the integrity of items collected can be assured. Accreditation of the scene related activities provides additional confidence to the forensic units undertaking the subsequent testing of the items collected at the scene and therefore adds strength to the whole chain of evidence.



## Fire Scene Investigation

In order to assist the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) to confirm the appropriate quality framework and timeframes for fire investigation activities, and for UKAS to determine an assessment approach, UKAS undertook a Dry Run Exercise of a Fire Investigation Unit in October 2019. An evaluation of the outcomes of the Dry Run exercise has been undertaken and a report produced which identifies areas which Fire Investigation Units will need to consider to be compliant with the requirements of ISO/IEC17020 and ILAC G19. In addition, the report also provides some recommendation for the Fire Community (e.g. NFCC/UK-AFI) and the FSR to assist in progressing accreditation in this area. A copy of the report can be found [here](#).

### How to apply for accreditation

If you are interested in applying to become an accredited forensic unit please [follow this link](#) to find a review of the process and the key stages.

### How to find an accredited organisation

If you would like to find an accredited forensic unit to undertake your testing / examination then please [visit our website](#).

## Get in touch:

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