

# Technical Bulletin: Forensic Science Regulator Code of Practice - Further update with respect to the transition from the non-statutory Codes to the statutory Code

02 March 2023

## Introduction

This Technical Bulletin provides further information on the UKAS process for the transition from the non-statutory Forensic Science Regulators Codes of Practice and Conduct (the Codes) to the statutory Forensic Science Regulator Code of Practice (the Code).

It has been agreed with the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) that UKAS will assess all qualifying conformity assessment bodies (forensic units), i.e., those who currently have the non-statutory Codes on their UKAS schedule of accreditation, prior to the statutory Code coming into effect on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023. This will allow forensic units to demonstrate compliance with the Code for their scope of accreditation as detailed on their UKAS Schedule of Accreditation at the time the Code comes into effect.

## Transition process

To facilitate the transition (from Codes to Code) UKAS has developed a Transition Template which identifies the clauses defined in the 'Standards of Practice' section of the statutory Code, that in the opinion of UKAS, have changed sufficiently to require assessment to facilitate transition from the non-statutory Codes. However, these are not the only changes, therefore, forensic units must complete a full review of the statutory Code to ensure that they have identified all changes relevant to the forensic services that they provide to ensure they are compliant with these requirements.

The Transition Template provides a mechanism for qualifying forensic units to document the actions that they have taken to review their systems for compliance with the identified clauses of the Code and to provide evidence to demonstrate this to UKAS, for example, the provision of updated documents within their management system that demonstrate compliance with the requirements. The completed Transition Template will be reviewed by UKAS as a desktop assessment.

The Transition Template will be provided, along with instructions for its completion and submission, to qualifying organisations via the UKAS Customer Portal on **the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**.

Completion of the Transition Template detailing the actions taken together with provision of evidence to demonstrate compliance should be submitted to UKAS via the UKAS Customer Portal by the **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023**. Any documentation provided after this date will not necessarily be reviewed prior to the Code coming into effect on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023.

Where, as part of the desktop assessment, compliance has not been demonstrated, UKAS will raise findings and will provide these to the organisation for progression in the usual manner. Where full and timely action to address any findings is not received this will impact on the ability of UKAS to complete the transition by the date the Code will come into effect.

## Assessment efforts

The assessment effort required to undertake the desktop assessment for transition to the Code will vary depending on the complexity and size of the scope of accreditation. UKAS have determined that this will fall into three levels as follows:

KEY to Levels		Total Effort
Level 1	Single Site; Single Standard; Small scope.	1.5 days
Level 2	Single or multi-site for larger scope, Single Standard; niche activities.	2.0 days
Level 3	Single or multi-site for large more diverse scope; Single or Multi-standard.	2.75 days

The efforts required for a specific organisation will be confirmed on the receipt of the Transition Template and communicated to the forensic unit at that time.

## Schedule of accreditation

As part of the transition to the statutory Code the UKAS Schedule of Accreditation will be updated, not only with revised wording to reflect compliance with the statutory Code, but also with respect to some of the high-level references to activity used on the schedule. This change in wording is to better reflect the overarching Forensic Science Activity (FSA) to which the detailed entries on the schedule relate. For example, the reference to Relationship Analysis will be updated to Human Kinship Analysis.

As the update to the schedule will take place as an output of a successful transition it should be noted that the wording used on the UKAS schedules of organisations that have completed the transition as part of this initial undertaking will be updated as part of the transition and will therefore vary from those that have either not yet completed the transition from the non-statutory Codes or do not have compliance with the non-statutory Codes on their schedule. The schedules for these organisations will be updated either when their transition is completed, compliance to the statutory Code has been granted as an extension to scope or following the next routine UKAS assessment after the Code has come into effect, whichever is soonest.

## Grant of transition

The outcome of the desktop assessment will be independently reviewed by a UKAS decision maker to ensure an appropriate and robust assessment has been conducted. UKAS will inform the forensic unit, at this point, if compliance to the Code has been demonstrated or if this is subject to the review of evidence required to support any findings that may have been raised.

It has been agreed with the Forensic Science Regulator that the grant of accreditation for qualifying organisations that have demonstrated compliance and successfully transitioned to the statutory Code will be made between the **20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023**. Any forensic units that have not successfully completed the transition at that time will continue to be progressed and their grant of transition will be completed once their compliance is demonstrated.

## MoU and new waiver

As part of the change in role of the FSR the agreement between the FSR and UKAS will be reviewed and amended. As a result of this a revised confidentiality waiver will be generated and this will be required to be signed by all forensic units (see FSR Code 44.1.4). The revised waiver will be provided to forensic units as soon as possible and will be required to be signed by the Senior Accountable Individual and returned to UKAS.

### **Inclusion of Code in assessments post submission of Transition Template**

Any UKAS assessments (surveillance, reassessment, or extension to scope) that are completed following the submission of the Transition Template by a forensic unit may review the implementation of the documentation provided for the transition and will include assessment with the relevant aspects of the Code (including FSA specific requirements) for the activities listed on the forensic units UKAS Schedule of Accreditation.

### **Forensic organisations that do not currently have the FSR non-statutory Codes on their schedule**

Forensic organisations that have yet to include the FSR non-statutory Codes on their scope and therefore have not qualified to take part in this transition can apply for an extension to scope to include the statutory Code by submitting (as applicable) an AC2 or AC4 application form (available from [UKAS Application Forms](#)) from the **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023**. If you have any queries in relation to the above, please contact your Assessment Manager or Katherine Monnery (Accreditation Specialist Forensics) at [katherine.monnery@ukas.com](mailto:katherine.monnery@ukas.com).