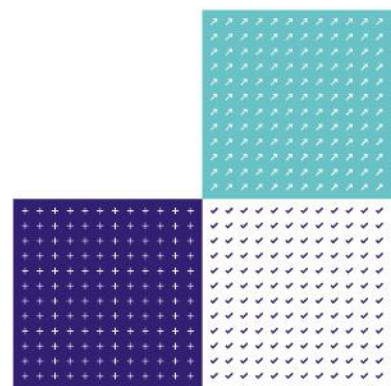


RG 201

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Accreditation of Bodies Carrying out Scene of Crime Examination



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Changes since last edition

- Removal of the reference to EA 5/03 Guidance for the implementation of ISO/IEC 17020 in the field of crime scene investigation.
- Inclusion of the reference to ILAC-G19:08/2014 Modules in a Forensic Science Process.
- Clarification around the expectation that corrective action shall include a review of the potential impact on work previously completed by the unit.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this publication RG 201 is to give guidance on the application of certain clauses of ISO/IEC 17020:2012 – *Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection*. Accredited Inspection Bodies are required to comply with all the requirements of ISO/IEC 17020.
- 1.2 RG 201 should be read in conjunction with ISO/IEC 17020, and ILAC-G19:08/2014 Modules in a Forensic Science Process.
- 1.3 RG 201 has been produced by UKAS in conjunction with the UKAS Scene of Crime Steering Committee and relevant Technical Assessors.
- 1.4 Accreditation of an inspection body to ISO/IEC 17020 should not be confused with personnel certification, where a certification body issues a certificate of competence to an individual to undertake specified tasks.
- 1.5 RG 201 shall be used for accreditation of bodies carrying out scene of crime examinations. It is intended to provide guidance to forensic organisations (Inspection Bodies) that will be providing input in to the Criminal Justice System.
- 1.6 The term ‘organisation’ has sometimes been used in this document rather than Inspection Body to aid clarity.
- 1.7 The assessment of an organisation carrying out scene of crime examination shall utilise some or all of the following techniques:
 - Witnessing of the examination of a live scene
 - Witnessing of the examination of a mock-up scene
 - Review of completed casework
 - Interviewing of staff
 - Witnessing of individual techniques in a controlled environment e.g. a laboratory or at the Head Office

2. Inspection Services

- 2.1 The scope of inspection for organisations undertaking the examination of scenes of crime will be defined initially as either Major Crime or Volume Crime depending on the type of incidents that the organisation attend; and then additionally by the types of evidence that may be examined or recovered from those scenes. For example:

Volume Crime:

- Incident Type - for example, burglary, vehicle crime, criminal damage, vandalism. robbery.
- Evidence Type - body fluids, marks (fingermarks, footwear marks, toolmarks), glass, paint, hair, fibres, photography.

Major Crime:

- Incident Type - for example, murder, rape, kidnapping, serious assault, organised crime, clandestine labs, arson.
- Evidence types (in addition to those indicated for Volume Crime) - firearms, digital, explosives, blood pattern analysis, accelerants, fire debris, entomology, archaeology.

- 2.2 UKAS will review all applications for accreditation and determine, in discussion with the applicant body, which crime type and incident types are relevant and how these will be reflected on the schedule.
- 2.3 The UKAS accreditation schedule will state the scope of activity for which the organisation has demonstrated competence and for which accreditation is granted. This scope will indicate if the organisation has gained accreditation for the examination of volume crime or major crime scenes and additionally the specific evidence types related to those scenes.
- 2.4 Any screening or presumptive testing shall be carried out according to documented procedures and ISO/IEC 17020 is intended to cover these procedures provided that the relevant clauses of ISO/IEC 17025 are met. However, when analytical techniques are used for analysis of items then ISO/IEC 17020 should not be used and ISO/IEC 17025 should be implemented for this part of a procedure irrespective of whether it is done on site or in monitored laboratory conditions.
- 2.5 For an organisation covering more than one aspect of the forensic process the quality system can cover all normative requirements without needing additional systems for each aspect. For example an organisation can have one single quality system meeting the requirements of both ISO/IEC 17020 and ISO/IEC 17025.
- 2.6 Laboratories that hold UKAS accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025, *General Requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*, for the laboratory analysis of forensic items, may obtain accreditation to ISO/IEC 17020 by seeking an extension to its scope to include the scene of crime activities.

3. Using this Publication

- 3.1 The format of this publication has been aligned with ISO/IEC 17020:2012, and consequently the following main clauses correspond to those of the standard.
- 3.2 However, the sub-clauses do not necessarily follow the numbering within ISO/IEC 17020:2012 and therefore the detail within the sub-clauses in this publication does not always relate directly back to the same sub-clause in the standard.
- 3.3 Where no specific additional guidance has been identified for a clause this has been indicated in this publication.

4. General Requirements

4.1 Impartiality and independence

- 4.1.1 Due to the importance of the demonstration of independence by organisations undertaking the examination of scenes of crime, UKAS policy is that all Inspection Bodies undertaking Scene of Crime Examination will be designated as Type C. Consequently, as a Type C inspection body the organisation shall be required to have demonstrable 'safeguards' (see Annex A: A.3 of ISO/IEC 17020) in place to ensure adequate segregation of responsibilities and accountabilities through appropriate reporting structures and/or documented procedures.
- 4.1.2 The importance of the demonstration of independence is particularly significant where the scene of crime unit is within the same organisation as the investigative unit, or where the scene of crime unit has a number of different customers.
- 4.1.3 Some examples of mechanisms that can be used to demonstrate independence are, the use of Case Assessment and Strategy (with regular review), organisational structures and reporting lines, the implementation of a Code of Conduct (for example, as detailed in the Forensic Science Regulator's Codes of Conduct and Practice), the use of confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements.

4.2 Confidentiality

- 4.2.1 The organisation should ensure that staff are aware of the potential threats to confidentiality and what action to take to preserve confidentiality, particularly whilst attending scenes of crime. This could be documented in a scene attendance policy. This policy should emphasise that the gathering of information relevant to the scene activity is to be encouraged, however, the dissemination of information shall be restricted only to those with prior agreed and legitimate access to the information. Any information gathered at the scene that may be relevant to the investigation should be shared with the investigating authorities.
- 4.2.2 These requirements also relate to any sub-contractors.

5. Structural Requirements

5.1 Administrative requirements

- 5.1.1 If, in order to meet their liabilities, the organisation opt to hold insurance then this should include Employers Liability, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance. Inspection bodies shall ensure that cover for 'bodily injury' and 'property damage' is included within the Professional Indemnity insurance policy.

5.2 Organisation and management

- 5.2.1 The Inspection Body (scene of crime unit) shall be clearly defined, particularly if it is part of a larger organisation or if the staff have multi-functional roles within the organisation. This could be through an organisational chart and associated role descriptions.

6. Resource Requirements

6.1 Personnel

- 6.1.1 The competence of staff shall be documented such that their competence to undertake different levels/types of scenes or evidence types is clear. For example, major incident, volume crime, blood pattern analysis, fingerprints etc.
- 6.1.2 The organisation shall have a clearly defined set of criteria for the demonstration of initial competence of staff which may include, but not be limited to, theoretical tests, examination of mock-up scenes, interviews.
- 6.1.3 The organisation shall have a clearly defined policy and process for the demonstration of the ongoing competence of staff which may include, but not be limited to, re-examination of completed scenes, review of completed case records, witness of the examination of mock-up scenes, witness of live scenes, monitoring of performance figures, maintenance of caselogs.
- 6.1.4 The organisation should demonstrate how it ensures that staff are kept up to date with the latest developments in technology relevant to the scene of crime service.
- 6.1.5 Staff undertaking the examination of scenes of crime should be monitored at least annually. However, the organisation may want to increase this frequency for newly trained or less experienced staff.
- 6.1.6 The monitoring of the performance of staff undertaking examination of scenes of crime shall include on-site witnessing. On-site witnessing should be carried out by suitably trained staff that are technically competent and are sufficiently independent to carry out the witnessed activity objectively. The organisations programme for witnessing should be designed so that each scene-going member of staff is witnessed at a live scene at least once in an accreditation cycle. This should include an assessment of both the technical aspects and the interactions with customers / staff at scenes.
- 6.1.7 If all technical aspects, for which the examiner is competent, cannot be witnessed at the planned monitoring at a live scene then the organisation should employ other mechanisms to ensure the demonstration of on-going competence of all technical activities relevant to that individual.
- 6.1.8 If an organisation also undertakes laboratory work and has a competence monitoring system to review laboratory activities then the competence monitoring system for scene attendance does not need to duplicate this aspect.
- 6.1.9 The monitoring of staff should also include the review of completed case records.
- 6.1.10 The requirement to act impartially may be included in a Code of Conduct. A suitable Code of Conduct can be found in the Forensic Science Regulator's Codes of Conduct and Practice.
- 6.1.11 The organisation should have determined the appropriate level of vetting/clearance required by their customers and ensure that staff demonstrably meet these expectations.

6.2 Facilities and equipment

- 6.2.1 The security of any facilities used shall be appropriate to ensure that unauthorised personnel would not have access to items, records, equipment, and consumables.
- 6.2.2 Any reagents or kits used at scenes shall be demonstrated as fit for purpose through initial validation and on-going batch testing. Each reagent or kit shall be labelled indicating shelf life, storage conditions, and, where relevant, preparation information.
- 6.2.3 The organisation shall undertake and document a risk assessment of the issues surrounding potential contamination of equipment. This should include a consideration of the required cleaning regime and subsequent monitoring system to demonstrate the effectiveness of the cleaning performed. In addition, an assessment of each individual scene should be undertaken and recorded to ensure that suitable anti-contamination is in place given the circumstances of the case.
- 6.2.4 Vehicles should be treated as equipment and should therefore have appropriate records of maintenance demonstrating fitness for purpose.
- 6.2.5 Procedures shall be documented for the use of equipment at scenes e.g. Crimelite, ESLA, cameras.
- 6.2.6 An equipment list should be available for vehicles and scene kits which includes all equipment necessary for attendance at scenes. In addition, the levels of consumables should be monitored to ensure suitable levels are available.
- 6.2.7 A documented schedule for the checking of relevant equipment shall be defined to demonstrate continuing fitness for purpose.
- 6.2.8 Specifications for supplies used at scenes shall be documented to ensure that they are fit for purpose at scenes e.g. PPE.
- 6.2.9 The suitability of consumables and packaging should be demonstrated, for example, through initial commissioning and on-going batch testing.
- 6.2.10 Policies surrounding the use of electronic recording devices, for example, laptops, voice recorders, PDA's, shall be documented including security, access, contamination avoidance, maintenance etc.

6.3 Subcontracting

- 6.3.1 No specific guidance to this clause.

7. Process Requirements

7.1 Inspection methods and procedures

- 7.1.1 The organisation shall validate any techniques that it uses at scenes to demonstrate fitness for purpose. Where the validation of techniques has previously been conducted in a laboratory environment further validation shall be undertaken of the additional aspects that may impact on the tests e.g. temperature, humidity, surfaces, cross reactivity, lighting etc.

- 7.1.2 The organisation shall also have collated data to demonstrate the suitability of the whole process of scene examination including scene evaluation, strategy setting, search, sequential process, and recording. In addition to the analysis of completed cases, this shall include circumstances with a known output, for example, the repeated examination by different staff of a mock-up scene, reviewing of 360 enhanced images, interviews / discussions of generated scenarios with staff.
- 7.1.3 Validation data shall be reviewed and, if necessary, updated if there have been any significant changes.
- 7.1.4 Methods shall be available to examiners at the scenes, either in electronic format or hard copy.
- 7.1.5 The detail required in methods should be sufficient to allow consistent application.
- 7.1.6 There is a need to document an appropriate scene strategy. In some instances this may be a generic strategy that can be referenced in the scene attendance records. However, even in these circumstances a review of the appropriateness of a generic strategy should be made. Where the scene does not meet the requirements of this generic strategy a more detailed specific strategy should be recorded. Any changes to this should be indicated in records.
- 7.1.7 The precise scope of activity that the scene of crime service is able to provide shall be detailed in a contract, Service Level Agreement or other formal agreement with the customer. If any of the services offered by the organisation are not covered by UKAS accreditation, then this shall be made clear to the customer.
- 7.1.8 Procedures for the review of requests for services should indicate the different levels where this review is undertaken and detail the specific authorities required and records that should be maintained. For example, the overarching contract or Service Level Agreement, ad hoc requests, and specific individual scene requirements.
- 7.1.9 A documented risk assessment should be completed for each scene attended. For attendance at standard scenes this could be in the form of a generic risk assessment. However, this should be reviewed at the start of each scene to ensure it is appropriate. If other hazards are identified, or the scene is non-routine, the specific hazards should be recorded and risk assessed prior to any work being carried out. Where appropriate, the organisation should additionally consider the welfare of staff.

7.2 Handling inspection items and samples

- 7.2.1 The requirements for labelling of items shall be documented in a procedure agreed between all relevant organisations involved.
- 7.2.2 Records shall be available to indicate who has responsibility for each item, and its location, whilst in the care of the organisation. In addition, these records shall indicate when the item leaves the inspection body's responsibility, for example, if items are handed over to police force exhibits officers, subcontractors, or forensic providers.
- 7.2.3 The documented chain of custody shall include any onward transfer to laboratory facilities.
- 7.2.4 The packaging used at scenes should be appropriate and agreed with the customer. Any deviation with respect to this shall be noted, along with the reason for the departure.

- 7.2.5 Items should be sealed at the point of seizure, if this is not done the reason shall be documented. In any case the integrity of the item and other related items shall be ensured.
- 7.2.6 The assessment of potential contamination should also include the possibility of cross contamination between items. Policies and procedures shall be documented relating to, for example, segregation of items relating to suspect / victim, petrol and fire debris.
- 7.2.7 If items are to be temporarily stored e.g. in vehicles, then the suitability of the store should be assessed to ensure that the integrity and security of the item is not compromised.

7.3 Inspection records

- 7.3.1 The detail of the records of the scene examination shall be sufficient that in the absence of the examiner another competent examiner could evaluate/determine what has been undertaken at the scene, including the strategy, the anti-contamination measures adopted, the activities undertaken, and the items recovered.
- 7.3.2 The scene records shall clearly describe what information relating to the case scenario has been received prior to scene attendance and which has been obtained at the scene, and the source of this information.

7.4 Inspection reports and inspection certificates

- 7.4.1 Scene of crime units may not be able to include all of the items in their reports to customers that are detailed in ISO/IEC 17020. Therefore, these organisations may elect to adopt one or more of the following means of meeting these requirements:-
- the preparation of reports which include all of the information required by ISO/IEC 17020
 - the preparation of an annex to the report that includes any additional information required by ISO/IEC 17020
 - ensuring that the case records relating to a specific scene contains all the relevant information required by ISO/IEC 17020
- 7.4.2 Copies of any reports provided to customers shall be maintained, including any handwritten reports left with customers at scenes.
- 7.4.3 If provisional reports are provided to customers, for example those which have yet to undergo the required peer review, then these shall clearly indicate this status and include appropriate caveats regarding the nature of the report and the reliability of the information.
- 7.4.4 It is a requirement of ISO/IEC 17020 that results are reported to the customer correctly, accurately and clearly. Simplified reports may be provided if agreed with the customer, however it is important that the extent of the simplification does not itself lead to ambiguity in reporting.
- 7.4.5 Records of scene attendance shall still be generated and maintained even if no further action is requested from the customer.
- 7.4.6 The organisation should document a policy and process for the peer/supervisory review of reports. The frequency of these reviews may take into account the crime type and experience of the examiner.

- 7.4.7 The effectiveness of the peer review process should be periodically assessed to ensure it remains adequate. This assessment should include trend analysis of any issues identified during reviews and customer feedback etc.

7.5 Complaints and appeals

- 7.5.1 The documented procedures for dealing with feedback shall ensure that all feedback relevant to the scene examination service is appropriately managed and therefore should link with any corporate systems in place, for example, Professional Standards Units.
- 7.5.2 Complaints may be received from many sources including customers, victims of crime, police forces, the Forensic Science Regulator, other departments within the same organisation (e.g. laboratory, investigation unit, Professional Standards Unit), the Independent Police Complaints Commission and the judiciary.
- 7.5.3 In addition, when a court decision is successfully challenged and this reflects on any work performed by the scene of crime unit this should be handled through the complaints process or other improvement processes.

7.6 Complaints and appeals process

- 7.6.1 Responses to any complaints shall include examination of the potential impact on any work that has been undertaken by the scene of crime unit.

8. Management System Requirements

8.1 Options

- 8.1.1 When implementing the quality system the organisation should consider the guidance given in this RG 201 and ILAC-G19:08/2014 Modules in a Forensic Science Process.

8.2 Management system documentation (Option A)

- 8.2.1 No specific guidance to this clause.

8.3 Control of documents

- 8.3.1 The document control system employed by the organisation shall ensure that relevant documents are available at the point of use, for example, in hard copy or electronic format in the scene going vehicle.

8.4 Control of records

- 8.4.1 The retention of records shall be in accordance with customer expectations, for example, ACPO guidelines relating to crime type (3yrs, 7yrs, 30yrs etc.).

8.5 Management review

- 8.5.1 No specific guidance to this clause.

8.6 Internal audits

- 8.6.1 The internal auditing system shall verify the compliance of the scene attendance service with the requirements of the organisations own management system and also the requirements of RG 201 and ILAC-G19:08/2014 Modules in a Forensic Science Process.

8.7 Corrective actions

- 8.7.1 Corrective actions taken in response to the identification of any non-conformity shall include examination of the potential impact on any work that has been undertaken by the scene of crime unit.

8.8 Preventive actions

- 8.8.1 No specific guidance to this clause.

9. References

ISO/IEC 17020:2012 Conformity assessment - Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection

ILAC-G19:08/2014 Modules in a Forensic Science Process