

A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS

THE FORENSIC SCIENCE REGULATOR'S (FSR) STATUTORY CODE

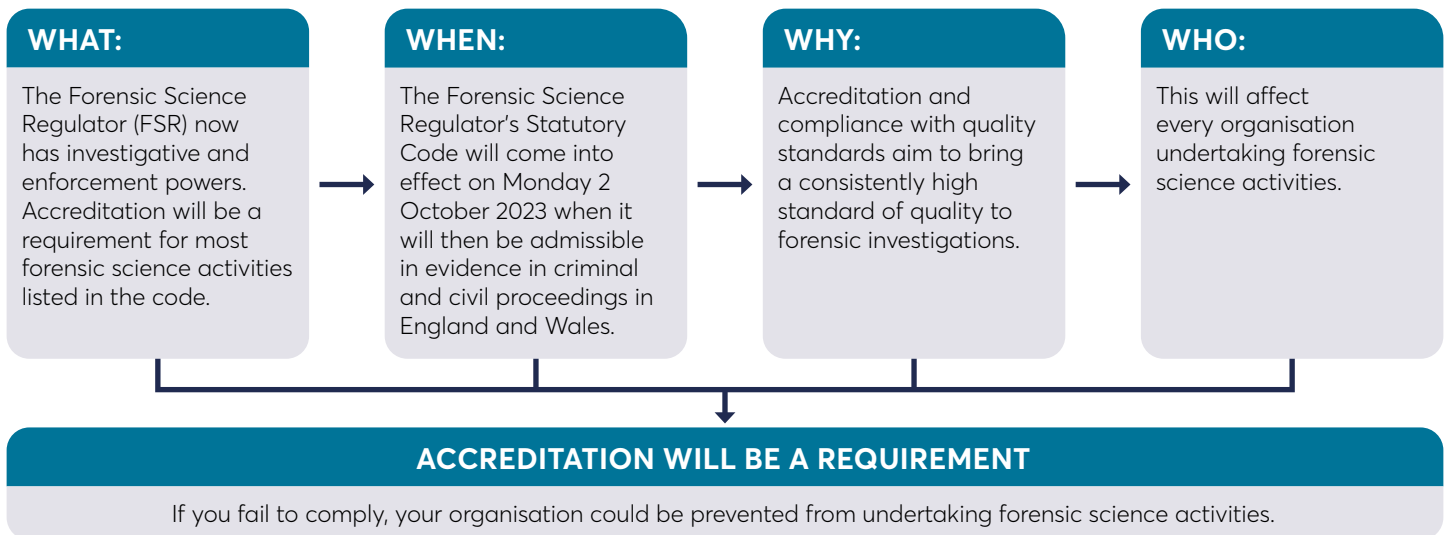
Forensics is a key part of the criminal justice system in England and Wales so it's vital that the forensic science activities we provide are suitable. The best way for us to achieve this is through accreditation and compliance with quality standards, and through meeting the requirements of the FSR Code.

Due to a recent act of parliament, the **Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021**, the FSR now has investigative and enforcement powers. The act also required a **Statutory Code** to be produced, which will come into effect on Monday 2 October 2023. Ultimately, this means that accreditation will be a requirement for most forensic science activities listed in the code.

For accreditation to be successful, everyone within your organisation needs to work together. These videos and supporting guide aim to explain the changes to the code and to show how you can play your part in achieving accreditation for your organisation.



WHAT'S CHANGING?



WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is provided by UKAS, the national accreditation body for the United Kingdom. UKAS is appointed by the government to assess and accredit organisations.

UKAS will visit your organisation to gather evidence of your compliance which your organisation is responsible for demonstrating. It's important to remember that building an open and transparent relationship with UKAS will help to maximise your chance of success.

Read more about UKAS: www.ukas.com

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation and compliance with quality standards aim to bring a consistently high standard of quality to forensic investigations. Complying with the code may require changes to your organisation's working practices, but there are a multitude of benefits:



Helping the public and victims of crime trust in what we do



Giving forensic professionals confidence in processes and results



Increasing confidence when presenting evidence in court



Promoting training to support compliance



Driving innovation through continuous improvement

SO, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

As forensic practitioners, working to Standard Operating Procedures, undertaking competence assessments, carrying out validation, and being assessed by UKAS may all be new to you. You will also be required to declare compliance or non-compliance with the code in all your reports. This may be challenging, however it is important to remember that accreditation and compliance with quality standards, including the code, will benefit you and your organisation.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE GIVES YOU CONFIDENCE...



...that you will receive the knowledge, training and support to undertake your role.



...that the results you provide are accurate and reliable through the use of validated methods.



...to present evidence in court.

WHAT TO DO NEXT...

1.

Familiarise yourself with your Quality Management System, Standard Operating Procedures and the code. Identify areas of non-compliance and assist with implementing solutions.

2.

Reach out to your Quality Team or Quality Manager and, where possible, speak to peers outside your organisation for support and guidance.

3.

Familiarise yourself with the UKAS assessment process.

4.

Remember, accreditation and compliance with quality standards is an ongoing process. UKAS assessments are undertaken annually and individual UKAS assessments are required if you want to extend your scope of accreditation.

TIPS FOR UKAS ASSESSMENTS...

DO:

Be confident in explaining your processes and refer to them where necessary. Challenge where appropriate if you believe you are compliant.

Try to agree improvement actions at the earliest opportunity rather than leaving it to the final day.

Refer to validation; it's a key part of accreditation and underpins the methods you undertake.

DON'T:

Panic if you get asked a question you don't know the answer to, try to navigate your Quality Management System for information instead.

Feel that you can't direct your assessor to someone else for an answer.

Be afraid to ask your assessor for clarification.

Together, we all need to play our part in the vital work of keeping communities safe. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as forensics undergoes its biggest change in decades.

ABOUT US: FORENSIC CAPABILITY NETWORK

The Forensic Capability Network (FCN) is a membership organisation for the forensic science community. Following investment by the Home Office, FCN is operated by the policing community on behalf of police forces and law enforcement organisations in England and Wales. Amongst other things, the FCN provides a knowledge base, development programmes and support to forensics practitioners.

www.fcn.police.uk | www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator | To find out more, just visit the FCN and FSR websites.