

# Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC)

Why should my program become accredited?



**FEPAC**

FORENSIC SCIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
ACCREDITATION COMMISSION



# Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC)

- Mission
- Function
- Standards
- Process
- Benefits



# FEPAC – Mission & Purpose



- The mission of the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) is to maintain and to enhance the quality of forensic science education through a formal evaluation and recognition of college-level academic programs.
- FEPAC traces its foundation back to the *National Institute of Justice Technical Working Group for Education and Training in Forensic Science* (TWGED) curriculum guidelines
  - Assess the **needs of the forensic science community**
  - **consensus educational standards**
- Implement a set of well-defined **procedures for the evaluation of forensic science programs** against these standards; and
- **Encourage self evaluation** and **continual improvement** of forensic science education programs through the accreditation process.



# FEPAC – Commission & Function



## • The Commission

- ✓ 11 commissioners
  - ✓ 5 Academicians, 5 Practitioners, 1 public member
  - ✓ Range of backgrounds: Toxicology, Serology and DNA analysis, Latent Print analysis, Crime Scene analysis, Controlled Substance analysis, Digital & Multimedia Sciences, Education, Law, etc.
- The primary function of the Commission is to develop and to **maintain standards** and to **administer an accreditation program** that recognizes and distinguishes high-quality undergraduate and graduate forensic science programs

### Undergraduate accreditation

Forensic Science/Criminalistics  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Digital Evidence  
Crime Scene Investigation

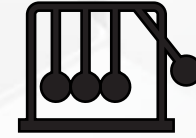


### Graduate accreditation

Biology and/or Chemistry  
Digital Evidence



# FEPAC – Standards Development



- **1948** | AAFS established
- **1999** | NIJ reviewed the state of Forensic Science and its needs
- **2001** | NIJ established a Technical Working Group (TWGED)
- **2002** | AAFS acknowledged the need – formed FEPAC ad hoc committee
- **2003** | TWGED published Guidelines for FS Education & Training
- **2004** | FEPAC became official and published Accreditation Standards and System in place --> Begins accreditation
- FEPAC developed three categories of standards:
  - General (applies to all programs)
  - Undergraduate program standards
  - Graduate program standards



# FEPAC – General Standards

All FEPAC-Accredited Programs must have...

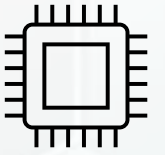
- ✓ **Mission, Goals, & Objectives**
- ✓ **Planning & Evaluation Process** – Curriculum, goals/objectives, continuous improvement
- ✓ **Institutional Support** – financial, facilities, instructional, and academic
- ✓ **Faculty** – appropriate qualifications, experience, research
- ✓ **Recruiting & Admission Practices, Academic Publications, Grading**
- ✓ **Student Support Services**
- ✓ **Process for Students Complaints**
- ✓ **Distance Learning and Other Alternative Delivery Mechanisms**
- ✓ **Professional Involvement** – Interaction with the forensic science community
  - Operational forensic science laboratories
  - Forensic science professional organizations



# FEPAC – Undergraduate Standards

## FEPAC-Accredited Undergraduate Programs must have...

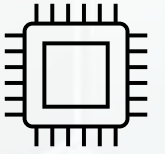
- General Science & Math courses: Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math
- Professional practice topics
- Forensic Science Courses – introduction to forensic science disciplines and methods, instrumentation, and concepts
- Capstone Experience: Project, Internship, or Independent research
- Specific emphasis requirements – forensic science/criminalistics, biology, chemistry, digital evidence, and crime scene investigation
  - ✓ Course type – advanced or specialized
  - ✓ Laboratory requirements – practical application
  - ✓ Discipline-specific courses (i.e., digital forensics: exploitation of mobile devices, hardware structures)
  - ✓ Discipline-specific topics/skill requirements (i.e., crime scene investigation: crime scene safety, search warrants, evidence photography)



# FEPAC – Graduate Standards

## FEPAC-Accredited Graduate Programs must have...

- Application of forensic science methods, instrumentation, and concepts
- Professional values & ethics
- Knowledge Base for Effective Testimony & Expert Witness Practical Experience
- Professional Practice Topics – forensic disciplines, methods, standards
- Specific-emphasis requirements – forensic science, biology and/or chemistry, digital evidence
  - ✓ Course type – graduate level
  - ✓ Discipline-specific courses (i.e., digital forensics: network forensics, mobile device forensics)
  - ✓ Discipline-specific requirements (i.e., materials analysis, microscopy, instrumental methods of analysis)
  - ✓ Graduate Seminar
- Capstone Project or Independent research





# FEPAC – Measuring Application & Success

- **Site Visits** are performed as a measure to promote reliability in the application of the standards
- Monitored through **Annual Reports** to ensure continuous compliance throughout the 5-year accreditation term

Constant Improvement - **Standards Review** for relevancy

- Program Director feedback is part of this process



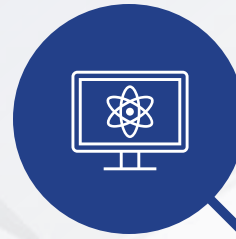
# FEPAC – Eligibility



- FEPAC accredits forensic science education programs that lead to a **bachelor's** or **master's degree** in **forensic science** or in a **natural** or **computer science** with a forensic science concentration
- **Pre-requisites for application:** **1.** the forensic science program must be in a regionally accredited institution of higher education that requires state, province, or equivalent approval and **2.** the forensic science program has graduated at least two classes before applying.
  - FEPAC accredits international programs if they do not have an established forensic science education accreditation system in their jurisdiction



# FEPAC – Process



1. Application – takes ~ 1 year  
Application period December 1 - March 1



2. Self-Study (July 15)



3. Site Visit (September/October)



4. Reviewed/voted for accreditation status  
at the AAFS Annual Scientific Conference  
in February



For more info about the timeline and fee  
schedule, see [aafs.org/FEPAC](https://aafs.org/FEPAC)



# FEPAC – Advantages



According to a recent survey\*, the majority of hiring managers at accredited forensic laboratories believe it is important for a university forensic science program to be FEPAC-accredited beyond their traditional institutional accreditation.

- **FEPAC promotes** academic quality to help students prepare for the forensic workforce with rigorous, consensus educational standards for undergraduate and graduate programs:
  - ✓ **Faculty with forensically relevant experience**
  - ✓ Interactions with operational forensic science laboratories
  - ✓ **Interaction with professional forensic science organizations (student membership AAFS)**
  - ✓ Coursework exposing students to career-specific topics (i.e., courtroom testimony, quality assurance, ethics, ethics, report writing & case review, etc.)
  - ✓ Foundational SCIENCE coursework with a focus on development of laboratory skills
  - ✓ **Specialized coursework to introduce forensic application of discipline specific instrumentation, methods, techniques**
  - ✓ Capstone, Internship or independent research – research can be collaborative

\* Survey of Crime Laboratory Directors – November 2023



# FEPAC – Employer Benefits

According to a recent survey\*, **employers look for applicants** with a strong foundation in science coursework, laboratory skills, and an understanding of operational crime lab work.

- “...advantage of a strong blend of natural science coursework mixed with criminal law, criminal justice, and forensic science courses. It is that blend that is important and is what distinguishes FEPAC programs from non-FEPAC programs.”
- “... these employees are typically very versed in evidence handling and technical knowledge.”
- “Most FEPAC students I have encountered have a good science foundation.”

\*Quotes from Crime Lab Directors: Surveyed – November 2023



# Benefits of FEPAC Accreditation

- ✓ FEPAC Accredited Programs provide a solid curriculum that is relevant to the needs of forensic science employers
- ✓ Collaborate with other faculty at the FEPAC Program Director's Meeting that occurs during the AAFS annual conference
- ✓ Opportunity to obtain program-specific feedback from participation in on-site visits
- ✓ Market your Program at the University Fair at the AAFS Annual Scientific Conference
- ✓ Institution and Program Information Posted on AAFS website
- ✓ Student Affiliate Membership scholarship opportunities
- ✓ Social media presence – AAFS Newsfeed and Newsletter
- ✓ Enhance recruitment – attract high quality high school and college graduates



# Want to learn even more?

- Schedule a virtual appointment with the Accreditation and Outreach Manager, Nicole Zevotek, at [nzevotek@aafs.org](mailto:nzevotek@aafs.org)
- Register for the AAFS 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Conference February 17-22, 2025, and attend the FEPAC Session
  - **FREE HALF-DAY WORKSHOP!**
- Become eligible to be a FEPAC On-Site Evaluator



# Join our community!



# QR Codes – FEPAC Applications

- FEPAC Undergraduate Application



- FEPAC Graduate Application

