# Instructions on Standards Checklist Use

In late 2021 the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) entered into a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to develop tools, training and resources to assist with standards implementation efforts. As part of this agreement, AAFS standards checklists have been developed for use by forensic science service providers (FSSPs). These checklists, which will be available at no cost, can be used to document objective evidence of implementation or compliance with a standard, identify gaps or impediments to implementation, or track progress towards implementation. Checklists can be accessed from the main Standards Resources and Training page, or accessed directly from the Standards Checklist page using the QR code above.

This document provides information on the following:
- resources for checklist implementation (i.e., the "Checklist Toolkit")
- how to subscribe to checklist updates
- how to provide feedback to AAFS on a checklist
- instructions for checklist use
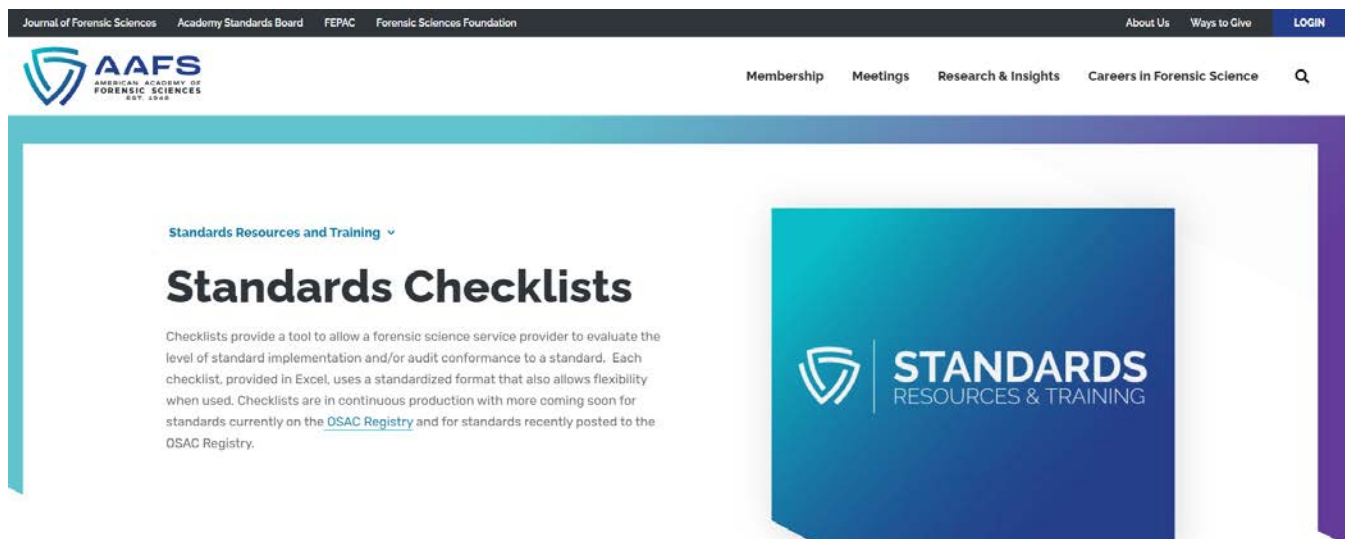
Checklist Toolkit

The "Checklist Toolkit" houses **downloadable instructions** and an **on-demand training** video on checklist use. **Instructions have also been added directly into the checklists as comments** (see Row 6; Columns C - Q). Users can access the Checklist Toolkit via the checklist landing page using the QR code above.

Subscribe to Checklist Updates

Users may access and download checklists directly from the website. New checklists are expected monthly. **Subscribing to standard checklist updates will ensure that you receive updates on new versions of checklists as they become available.** A new version of a checklist will be published if an error is identified and corrected in a checklist and when a standard is revised by a standards developing organization (SDO). Click on "Receive Standards Checklist Updates" to benefit from this feature. You can access this using the QR code above.

Send Feedback on Checklists

Users can also **send feedback on standards checklists** using the QR code above. When doing so, please indicate the name of the checklist that you are referring to (*e.g.*, ASTM E2917-24a), your name, and contact information so that we can respond to your inquiry. Alternatively, you can also submit feedback anonymously using this link.

Checklist Use

Each checklist is specific to a version of a standard, which is hyperlinked in the checklist. Not all sections of a standard are included in a checklist. A checklist is a supplementary tool and should not be used independently. To properly use a checklist, reference the complete standard. Go here for information on how to access published standards.

A checklist does not provide interpretation guidance. If you have questions related to interpretation, please contact the standard developing organization (SDO). The SDO may have standard specific training available.

A checklist can be used for one or both of the following purposes:
- to evaluate the implementation of a standard, or
- to audit (internal or external) conformance with requirements in the standard and an FSSP's management system

If an FSSP offers services from more than one location, they will need to determine if one checklist will be completed for all locations based on operation of a single management system, or if more than one checklist will be completed based on need due to management system differences or by choice of the FSSP.

Some rows, columns, tabs, or cells are protected from editing as they provide essential functionality or information inherent to the use of the checklist. Other elements have been left unprotected to allow the user some level of flexibility to make this tool applicable to their specific needs.

Checklist Specifics

The Standard

Columns A-D (protected): Applicable sections of the Standard, related Tables and Normative/Mandatory Annexes
- Column C: Clause Type
  - Section Title - Light Gray Fill
  - Requirement (e.g., "shall") – No Fill
  - Recommendation (e.g., "should") – Light Blue Fill
  - Informational Text (e.g., "can") – Light Gray Fill
  - If a clause, table, or annex contains multiple categories of wording, the "highest rank" is chosen to determine the cell fill color.
- Column D: Clause Wording
  - Cell fill color the same as Column C

- o The entire clause is entered into a single cell. *Each user may need to adjust a column's width or height based on their computer monitor. Verify that all clause wording is visible by comparing it to the standard.*
  - Exceptions will be made for extremely long clauses. When necessary, an additional row or rows will be used. The Clause Number will indicate "cont'd".
- o If a clause contains multiple sentences that are requirements or recommendations, they are separated by a blank line in the cell.
- o Tables: Will be entered as a Group with the ability to collapse into a single row in the checklist showing the Table Number and Title. The number of sub-groups and rows will be determined based on the structure of the table. On a case-by-case basis, a Table may be provided on a separate tab in the workbook and linked to the applicable row in the checklist.

FSSP Objective Evidence
- Column E: List applicable management system documents and records that show implementation of/conformance to the standard.
  - o A clause, or sub-clause, may not be applicable to the work performed by an FSSP. In this situation, no entry is necessary in Column E.

Implementation
Implementation Status is entered by clause. The overall implementation status for the standard would be the lowest implementation status of any single clause.
- Columns G - J are set up as a Group that can collapse into a single column F. Click on the +/- to expand/collapse the group.
- Column F: Column F will be automatically color coded (cell fill) to match the Implementation Status chosen in Column G to provide a quick visual overview of Implementation.
- Column G: Implementation Status - Single choice; Standardized drop-down list; Cell fill color for visual & data filtering
  - Example: Not Applicable is one choice in the standardized drop-down list.
  - o If a clause is multi-part, then the status entered is for the lowest level of implementation
    - Example: The clause has four sub-parts a) – d); a) – c) are fully implemented; d) is in progress. The Implementation Status for the clause would be Partial Implementation.
- Column H: Reason for Less than Full Implementation - Single choice; Standardized drop-down list that is dependent on the Implementation Status selected.
  - Example: Three choices are provided to explain an Implementation Status of Not Applicable: Not within the scope of accreditation, Method/Equipment not used, and Clause involves options; this option was not chosen
- Column I: Implementation Plan/Other Notes - Open text field; Use to document an implementation plan or other notes (e.g., the reasons for no further implementation of only partial implementation or a conflicting law that will not allow implementation).
- Column J: Date Implemented or Implementation Timeline Date - Format = MM/DD/YY

Auditing
- Columns L - Q are set up as a Group that can collapse into a single column K. Click on the +/- to expand/collapse the group.
- Column K: Column K will be automatically color coded (cell fill) to match the Audit Status chosen in Column N to provide a quick visual overview of Auditing.

- Column L: Auditor Objective Evidence - Open Text field for the auditor to list the management system documents and records reviewed, examinations witnessed, or interviews conducted during the audit that support the Audit Status chosen.
- Column M: Auditor Notes - Open text field for the auditor to enter information related to their review of the documents and records listed in column K as well as information obtained during witnessing or interviews.
- Column N: Audit Status – Single choice; Standardized drop-down list; Cell fill color for visual & data filtering
  - Status Choices:
    - Not Applicable: The requirement is not applicable to the scope of work being audited
    - Document Review: A review of management system documents for conformance to requirements
    - Conforming: Conforms with the requirement
    - Opportunity for Improvement: Opportunity exists to improve a conforming practice (Note: This may also be referred to as Conforming with Comment, Risks and Opportunities, etc.)
    - Nonconforming: Does not conform to the requirement
    - Resolved Nonconformity: Steps taken have resulted in conforming to the requirement
  - If a clause is multi-part, then the status entered is for the lowest level of conformance (example: The clause has four sub-parts a) – d); a) – c) are found to be Conforming; d) found to be Nonconforming. The Audit Status for the clause would be Nonconforming).
- Column O: Audit - Opportunity for Improvement - Open text field; Cell fill color is dependent on Audit Status choice in Column N: Only used when Audit Status = Opportunity for Improvement; Enter the wording of the Opportunity
- Column P: Audit - Nonconformance - Open text field; Cell fill color is dependent on Audit Status choice in Column N; Only used when Audit Status = Nonconforming; Enter the wording of the Nonconformance
- Column Q: Resolved Nonconformity – Open text field; Cell fill color is dependent on Audit Status choice in Column N; Only used when original Audit Status = Nonconforming; Auditor enters information related to how the nonconformance was brought into conformance and changes the Audit Status to Resolved Nonconformity.

Columns R and after
An FSSP can use these columns for additional data fields that they want to be able to pull into a data extract.