United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) – Supplementary written evidence (FRS0102)

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) was grateful for the opportunity to give Oral Evidence to the House of Lords’ Select Committee on Science and Technology for its review on forensic science. Following our session on 11th December, our Witnesses Lorraine Turner and Katherine Monnery undertook to provide some additional information which is now included in this supplementary memorandum.

Confidentiality Waiver

F446 Confidentiality Waiver – this is the waiver UKAS asks organisations to sign which enables UKAS to discuss certain aspects of its assessments with the Forensic Science Regulator.

Commercial in Confidence

For the attention of

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THE ACCREDITATION OF PROVIDERS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE SERVICES TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM – Confidentiality Waiver

It is acknowledged that in accordance with the terms of the agreement between the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) and United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) it will be necessary for UKAS to reveal the following information to the FSR:-

a) details of any application for accreditation;
b) details of progress towards gaining accreditation; and
c) details of progress towards extension to scope of accreditation.

In addition UKAS will, in every instance, provide the FSR with:

a) details of any suspension, or withdrawal of accreditation, whether voluntary or imposed; and
b) details of any nonconformity with the Standards (ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/IEC 17020 and/or ISO15189) or the Regulator’s Standards which in the opinion of UKAS has the potential to lead to suspension or withdrawal of accreditation, or could result in any miscarriage of justice, media interest or damage to the integrity of forensic science.
Therefore, to comply with the terms of the agreement, and in this instance only, UKAS is authorised to reveal such information as meets the terms and conditions of the agreement.

It is to be understood that UKAS will in all other respects comply with the confidentiality clauses in the agreement signed between this provider and UKAS.

Also, it is to be understood that the FSR will comply with Section 4 of their agreement with UKAS using any information supplied by UKAS only as necessary for the discharge of their regulatory duties. All other information will be treated in confidence and not be released to third parties.

Signature ______________________________

Name ______________________________

Position ______________________________

Date ______________________________

For and on behalf of: -

Provider ______________________________

UKAS Accreditation Number _______________

UKAS undertook to provide the extract from the FSR Codes of Practice that relates to Complaints and Non-conforming Work:

**Forensic Science Regulator Codes of Practice and Conduct Issue 4 October 2017**

**13. Complaints (ISO 17025:2005 ref. 4.8)**

13.1.1. The forensic unit shall have policies and procedures for dealing with complaints. These procedures shall define what constitutes a complaint in relation to the work undertaken by the forensic unit and shall ensure that appropriately thorough investigations are instigated on receipt of any complaints.

13.1.2. The Forensic Science Regulator shall be informed at the earliest opportunity about any complaint if it has significantly disaffected the customer such that it could attract adverse public interest or lead to a miscarriage of justice. The policies and procedures relating to complaints shall also indicate the escalation criteria and the individual/role holder responsible for notifying the Regulator.
13.1.3. Complaint investigations shall include examination of the potential impact on any work that has already been undertaken by the forensic unit. In the event that it is shown that there could have been an impact on any work this should be dealt with through the non-conforming work process (see Control of non-conforming testing).

13.1.4. Records shall be retained of all complaints and of the subsequent investigations and outcomes. Where the complaint has been referred to the Regulator, a copy of the investigation report shall be provided to the Regulator when requested.

13.1.5. Complaints may be received from many sources including customers, victims of crime, police forces, and other departments within the same forensic unit (e.g. laboratory, scene of crime unit, investigation unit) and the judicial system (including adverse court decisions pertinent to the work).

14. Control of non-conforming testing (ISO 17025:2005 ref. 4.9)
14.1.1. Examples of non-conforming testing that after investigation could require escalation to the Forensic Science Regulator could include, but are not limited to, significant instances of:

   a) unexpected performance in proficiency testing/inter-laboratory comparison;
   b) unauthorised access to restricted areas or information;
   c) missing or compromised items/case files;
   d) equipment failing to receive timely calibration or maintenance;
   e) staff failing to follow procedures or norms of integrity that impact on quality;
   f) contamination incidents;
   g) technical method found to be producing erroneous results;
   h) removal/suspension of accreditation; or
   i) any standards/reference materials, equipment or reagents found to have defects or deficiencies.

14.1.2. The Forensic Science Regulator shall be informed about any non-conforming test if it has potential to significantly disaffect the customer such that it could attract adverse public interest or lead to a miscarriage of justice and shall be provided with an investigation report when requested.

14.1.3. The forensic unit shall maintain a record of the nature of non-conformities capable of being used to identify trends, any concessions obtained to use non-conforming work, and any corrective and/or preventive actions taken.

The UKAS Customer Agreement

3.3 is the section relating to notification of changes.
Percentage of accreditations in public and private sector

The Committee also asked about the percentage of forensic science assessments/accreditations for public sector and private sector organisations. The figures we have are as follows:

Public Sector (including Police) = 74%
- Commercial / Private = 26%

Complaints and Appeals

Links to the sections of the UKAS website which explains how to make a complaint about an accredited organisation and the requisite forms to complete are found here:
https://www.ukas.com/services/complaints-and-appeals/

Whistleblowing

A guide to raising a concern/whistleblowing to UKAS can be found on the UKAS website at

19 December 2018