



OUTLINE OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Memorandum

To: All Diplomates
From: Bonnie Beal, Secretary, ABFDE
Date: August 5, 2014
Re: Changes to the Rules and Procedures Guide (RPG)

Recent Changes:

Via email, Vice President recommended the following changes to the RPG. A majority vote was achieved and recorded.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.2.1

Action: Changed the words “Vice President” to “Testing Committee Chair”.

Reason: It is the Testing Committee Chair who oversees the testing of all Candidates.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.3

Action: Changed the word “Required” to “Essential Findings” and the word “Important criteria” to “Other Elements”, plus added the words “/or cover the” so this area read “...meet the Essential Findings and/or cover the Other Elements specified...”

Reason: To help make the evaluation of the practical examinations more consistent and precise.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.3.1

Action: Changed the words “Required criteria and all Important criteria” to “Essential Findings”.

Reason: To be consistent with the changes in 3.3.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.3.2

Action: Changed the words “Required criteria” to “Essential Findings”.

Reason: To be consistent with the changes in 3.3.



Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.3.3

Action: Deleted the sentence regarding “Rework” and replaced with “*Other Elements*: If all *Essential Findings* are satisfied but the *Other Elements* are not, in the practical report and/or case notes, the candidate must be questioned on the missing *Other Elements* during the Oral Board Examinations. (Note: The Candidate must be able to cover the information and/or theory listed as missing under the *Other Elements* as part of the Practical Evaluation, during his/her Oral Panel. If the Candidate is unable to fulfill this requirement, then the Candidate fails his/her Oral Board.)”

Reason: To simplify the practical examination phase and it was determined that the Candidate could be questioned on the “Other Elements” during the Oral Board.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.4.2 and 3.4.3

Action: These two sentences were deleted because reworks are no longer part of the evaluation.

Reason: To simplify the practical examination phase and it was determined that the Candidate could be questioned on the “Other Elements” during the Oral Board.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 3. Practical Test Phase, 3.4.4

Action: The designation 3.4.4 was changed to 3.4.2

Reason: The designation was changed due to the deletion of 3.4.2 and 3.4.3

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 4. Oral Board Phase, 4.3

Action: (The yellow highlighted areas are additions to this section.)

4.3 The panel for the Oral Boards shall be composed of three Directors, **if they are available**. Whenever possible, a member of the Testing Committee shall sit on all panels. **If three Directors are not available at an Oral Board destination, Diplomate(s) may be chosen to conduct the Oral Board examination(s). Whenever possible, a Director shall sit on all panels. The Testing Committee Chair may also choose instead to pay for the necessary number of Directors to attend the Oral Boards.**

Reason: Due to the influx of Candidates requiring Oral Boards, this change will provide the Testing Committee Chair the opportunity to fill the Oral Board panel when three Directors are not able to conduct the examination.

Section G. Testing Guidelines, 4. Oral Board Phase, 4.5

Action: Added the words “or Diplomate” after the word “Director”

Reason: To be consistent with the change to 4.3



At the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, the following changes were approved by the Board. The updated RPG will be posted on the ABFDE website for you to copy and use as a reference.

Article IX Elections and Terms of Office; 1. Election of Officers, page 7

Action: The second sentence which reads, “The elections **shall** be by ballot, and a majority of votes cast shall be required to elect an officer.”

Was changed to: “Such election **may** be conducted by ballot, and a majority of votes cast shall be required to elect an officer.”

Reason: As written it appears a paper ballot had to be used. Changing the word “shall” to “may” provides the election to be held via other means (e.g., voice, electronic).

Article IX Elections and Terms of Office; 5. Terms of Office of Directors, page 8

Action: The sentence “Each Directors’ term of office shall commence on **the first Monday** following the annual Board of Director’s meeting and shall end on June 30 of his/her final year in that office, or when his/her successor has been duly elected and qualified.”

Was changed to: “Each Director’s term of office shall commence on **July 1st** following the annual Board of Director’s meeting and shall end on June 30 of his/her final year in that office, or when his/her successor has been duly elected and qualified.

Reason: To be consistent with other portions of the RPG where it is stated the Director’s term starts on July 1st.

B. Duties of Committees, 5. Public Relations, 5.5, page 27

Action: This line “This Committee maintains custody of the seal of the Board.” was deleted.

Reason: The dry seals are no longer in use, so the custody has been moved to the Historian.

Section E. Qualifications and Requirements for Certification, 3. Professional Experience Qualifications, 3.1, 3.1.1, page 32

Action: Removed the ASTM reference and changed to the SWGDOC reference.

Reason: Update the reference since the creation and publishing of guidelines for the Forensic Document Examination profession is being accomplished through SWGDOC.

Same section, 4. Examinations, 4. 4.1, page 33

Action: Changed the first sentence, “In addition to meeting the requirements in paragraphs I, II, and III above, applicants...” to “In addition to meeting the requirements in paragraphs 3.4.1, 3.4.2, and 3.4.3 above, applicants...”

Reason: To refer to the correct paragraph numbers.



Same section, **5. Appeals Process, 5.3** changed the colon to a comma and made the capital “T” to a lower case “t” in the word “the” right after the comma.

Section H. Recertification Requirements, 3.1

Action: Added “webinars” to the sentence

Reason: In order to stay up with the times of how training may be received, webinar training has been added as suitable continuing education as long as the webinars are relevant to the field and are taught by an instructor.

Section H. Recertification Requirements, 3.1.2, second note, page 44

Action: Change “under paragraph II.B” to “under paragraph 3.2.1”

Reason: To refer to the correct paragraph number.

Section H. Recertification Requirements, 3.2.1, Note, page 44

Action: Added the word “are” and changed the paragraph designation “A.2” to “3.1.2”

Reason: So the sentence reads easier and to refer to the correct paragraph number.

Previous Changes:

At the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, the following changes were approved by the Board. The updated RPG will be posted on the ABFDE website for you to copy and use as a reference.

Section IV, E. Qualifications and Requirements for Certification, 3.2 (page 32)

Action: changes “board” to “ABFDE” and adds “ABFDE-certified” in front of “forensic document examiner.”

Justification: clarifies that references are requested from ABFDE-certified forensic document examiners, and that references from non-Diplomates will be considered on an individual basis.

Section IV, F. Procedures for Application and Certification, 2 (page 34)

Action: clarification of application fee for US and Canadian applicants and for Australian and New Zealand applicants.

Justification: clarifies application fees.

Section IV, G. Testing Guidelines, 6.1 (page 42)

Action: addition of “The candidate’s original two and one-half (2½) years termination date will remain in effect.”

Justification: clarifies that the 2½ year certification process period is still in effect for applicants who participate in the mentorship program.

On May 4 and 5, 2012, at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, the following changes



were approved by the Board.

Section I, Background, Functions, and Purposes of the ABFDE

Action: addition of Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists to list of organizations that recognize ABFDE.

Justification: MAFS voted to recognize ABFDE as a certifying organization for forensic document examiners.

Section II, Article IX, Elections And Terms Of Office, 4.1 and 4.2

Action: removal of the phrase “whenever a vacancy exists.”

Justification: eliminates confusion about how many members of the Board shall be elected by Diplomates and how many by members of the Board of Directors. Change also needed for compliance with FSAB.

Section II, ARTICLE XI., Meetings And Operations, 5. Territory

Action: clarifies that the operations of the Board are to be conducted in the United States and other places which may be authorized, from time to time, by the Board of Directors.

Justification: with certification opening up to examiners outside North America, clarification was necessary to assure that operations remain in the United States which will contain costs.

Section IV, A. Duties of Officers, 4. Treasurer

Action: the descriptions of the duties of Treasurer were updated.

Justification: without altering the substance of the Treasurer’s responsibilities, this section was updated to reflect the modern practices of the office.

Section IV, B. Duties of Committees, 10. Financial Planning Committee

Action: a new committee was added.

Justification: allows the Treasurer to assemble a committee on an “as needed” basis to address extraordinary financial situations.

Section IV, E.1. General Qualifications, 1.2

Action: adds Australia and New Zealand and removes Mexico and the US territories and possessions from the list of countries whose permanent residents can apply for certification.

Justification: certification was extended to FDEs in Australia and New Zealand because of the correlations in their training, their use of ASTM standards, their commitment to the field, and because English is their first language. This same rationale led the Board to discontinue offering certification to Mexico and the territories and possessions of the United States.

Section IV, E.3. Professional Experience Qualifications, 3.1.1



Action: clarification that key requirements for qualification are outlined in this section and that full details can be found in ASTM Standard E-2388.

Justification: clarifies that key training requirements of E-2388 are outlined in RPG so that potential applicants aren't forced to purchase ASTM standard to determine if they qualify. Changes made to comply with FSAB for reaccreditation.

Section IV, E. Qualifications and Requirements for Certification, 3.1.2 and 3.1.2.1

Action: changes “determine” to “consider” in paragraph 3.1.2, and changes “cannot” to “should not” in paragraph 3.1.2.1.

Justification: allows Credentialing Committee some discretion in determining if applicant meets the minimum criteria. One example would be a training period running longer than 4 years due to forces outside of applicant's control such as changes in laboratory management or policy.

In preparation for FSAB reaccreditation, the following changes were voted on and approved by the Board electronically January 31 and February 6, 2012.

RPG, Tab 1, General Information

1. Qualifications and Requirements for Certification in Forensic Document Examination, Section III A

Action: addition of basic requirements considered by Credentials Committee when reviewing an applicant's training curriculum.

Justification: allows applicant to generally determine if s/he meets minimum requirements without purchasing ASTM E-2388 (Standard Guide for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners).

RPG, Tab 2, By-Laws

1. Sponsors, Article III. 4.

Action: clarification that ABFDE sponsors shall not have influence over Board operations or activities.

Justification: FSAB standard 4.2.2 requires that the certification body be independent and not “subject to undue influence or approval by another body.”

2. Board of Directors, Article VI.4.e.

Action: clarification that subcontractors shall have no vested interest in ABFDE, shall not serve on the Board, shall not participate in certification or re-certification of individuals, and shall perform duties in accordance with ABFDE policies.

Justification: compliance with FSAB standards regarding subcontractors.

RPG, Tab 5, Duties of Officers and Committees



1. *President, Section I. A.*

Action: clarification that the management of the ABFDE is the responsibility of the President of the Board.

Justification: FSAB standards require an individual be designated as responsible for management of the certifying body.

RPG, Tab 6, Code of Conduct

1. *Security of Documents and Records, Section III.*

Action: text was added to define how Board documents and records are to be maintained in a “secure manner.”

Justification: defining “secure manner” establishes a minimum standard for the storage of both physical and electronic documents and records.

2. *Review of Records, new section*

Action: addition of an annual review of records for Officers, Directors, Committee Members and Others Acting in an Official Capacity to ensure that documents and records are complete, secure, and organized, and that confidential documents and records have been destroyed if or as required by ABFDE Rules and Procedures.

Justification: FSAB requires an annual review of records to ensure that they are current and complete. The annual review will also enhance continuity as Officers, Directors, Committee Members or Others Acting in an Official Capacity complete their terms or assignments.

RPG, Tabs 1 - 6

Action: the RPG was reformatted. Tabs were eliminated, material was reorganized as needed into a logical sequence, a consistent numbering format was applied throughout the document, and a Table of Contents and cover sheet were added.

Justification: reformatting and reorganizing the RPG makes it significantly easier to access specific Rules and Procedures.

The following changes were voted on by the Board electronically in June of 2011.

RPG, Tab 1, General Information (changes made 6/2011)

1. *Testing Guidelines Section III B 1.*

Action: provision for alternate Practical Test Evaluators from either the Board of Directors or the Diplomate body.

Justification: the allowance of the use of experienced diplomates in the practical testing phase will allow the Board more flexibility in the number and dates of practical tests.

2. *Recertification Requirements, Section III.*



Action: clarification of activity credits and maximum points per 5 year recertification period.

Justification: eliminate confusion about activity credits and maximum points for recertification.

The ABFDE's Rules and Procedures Guide was updated at the 2011 Board of Directors meeting. The substantive changes that were made and their rationale are summarized below:

RPG, Tab 1, General Information (changes made 5/2011)

1. *Testing Guidelines, Section VI.*

Action: an offer of a mentorship is being added to the appeals section whereby an applicant who fails the Practical Test Phase a second time may opt to be mentored for a period of at least 80 hours followed by retesting in six months. This allows the candidate additional training and insight from an experienced Diplomate and shortens the retesting period.

Justification: rather than giving the candidate a two year period of possibly unstructured improvement, a mentorship will allow additional training specifically focused on the areas of need.

RPG, Tab 1, General Information (changes made 3/2011)

1. *Qualifications and Requirements for Certification, Section III. A.*

Action: definition provided for the word "recognized" -- the applicant's training program met the basic requirements for a training program described in ASTM E-2388 (Standard Guide for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners).

Justification: this addition provides clarification for use of the word "recognized" with regard to laboratories accepted by ABFDE.

2. *Qualifications and Requirements for Certification, Section IV. D.*

Action: a terminated candidate who re-applies to testing program will begin process at Credentials Phase.

Justification: rather than allow a terminated candidate to re-apply to testing program and continue at phase where s/he left, requiring candidate to start process at beginning ensures continuity in testing and FSAB certification compliance.

3. *Testing Guidelines, Section V. B.*

Action: option of written or oral appeal provided at outset, replacing written appeal followed by oral appeal.

Justification: extra step of second appeal (oral) was not necessary to comply with FSAB.

RPG, Tab 2, Bylaws (changes made 3/2011)

1. *ARTICLE XIII, CERTIFICATION, Section 5.f.*



Action: the addition of subsection f. reinforces each Diplomate's responsibility with regard to submitting complaints and states that a complaint made by another Diplomate should be one filed for the sole purpose of maintaining the integrity of the discipline.

Justification: text was added to deter superfluous complaints and remind Diplomates to adhere to the established Professional Review Procedures, as well as conditions of certification and membership in the annual Statement of Affirmation and Agreement letter.

Based on a request from FSAB to clarify the board's appeal process and to update our Rules and Procedures, there will be posted on our website the newly approved version for you to copy and use as a reference. The substantive changes that were made and their rationale are summarized below:

RPG, Tab 1, General Information (changes made 10/2010)

1. Recertification Requirements, Section III. D.

Action: removal of subsections 1 and 2 regarding points earned for membership on committees.

Justification: this removal is based on the minutes from the Summer 2009 ABFDE newsletter that state, "Points will no longer be earned for being a committee member of any professional QD organization." Per FSAB, these points cannot be credited toward the required 40 points for continuing Professional Development. Credits on a case by case basis may be reinstated at a later time pending discussion and approval by the Board.

2. Recertification Requirements, Section III. E.

Action: removal of subsection 2 regarding LaTrobe proficiency testing.

Justification: LaTrobe testing has been discontinued for now.

3. Testing Guidelines, Section I Credentials Phase

Action: reinsertion of the appeals process from the 2006 RPG

Justification: the appeals process was removed between 2009 and 2010 in violation of FSAB requirements, section 4.5.1.6.

Action: addition of written instructions provided by Testing Committee Chairman (per Vice President's SOPs) to Credentials Committee members for evaluation of certification applicants, entitled **ABFDE Credentials Committee Guidelines for Credentials Evaluators**.

Justification: per FSAB requirements, section 7.1.1, "Competency evaluation personnel should be responsible individuals who have received training appropriate for the tasks they perform."

4. Testing Guidelines, Sections I, II, III, and IV



Action: relocation of and additions to the appeals process from Section I Credentials Phase as a separate section (Section V.). New appeals section is referenced in Section I.D Credentials Phase, Section II.E. Written Test Phase, Section III.I Practical Test Phase, and Section IV.R. Oral Boards Phase.

Justification: new FSAB requirements that allows an appellant to come before the Board.

Action: addition of written instructions provided by Testing Committee Chairman (per Vice President's SOPs) to written test proctor/evaluator for evaluation of certification candidates, entitled **ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Written Test Proctors / Evaluators.**

Justification: per FSAB requirements, section 7.1.1, "Competency evaluation personnel should be responsible individuals who have received training appropriate for the tasks they perform."

Action: addition of written instructions provided by Testing Committee Chairman (per Vice President's SOPs) to Oral Boards members for evaluation of certification candidates, entitled **ABFDE Testing Committee Guidelines for Oral Boards Evaluators.**

Justification: per FSAB requirements, section 7.1.1, "Competency evaluation personnel should be responsible individuals who have received training appropriate for the tasks they perform."

5. Testing Guidelines, Section III Practical Test Phase

Action: the addition of subsection E which provides for an ad hoc committee to review tests and evaluator forms when there is a discrepancy and unanimity is not found among the evaluators in their review of practical test results. The committee would be charged with providing a final solution to the test(s) in dispute.

Justification: ensure consistency between test evaluators.

Action: addition of written instructions provided by Testing Committee Chairman (per Vice President's SOPs) to Testing Committee members for evaluation of certification candidates, entitled **ABFDE Testing Committee Training Guidelines for Test Evaluators.**

Justification: per FSAB requirements, section 7.1.1, "Competency evaluation personnel should be responsible individuals who have received training appropriate for the tasks they perform."

Historical Changes:

Updates / Changes to Criteria Used to Evaluate Candidates for Certification:

1997-1998

- FDEs are eligible to apply for certification immediately following completion of training.

Substantive Changes to Standards Used for Recertification:

August 1997

- Annual recertification updates will be submitted on a voluntary basis.

August 1999



- Annual recertification updates are mandatory.

July 2009

- Regardless of certification date, all annual and anniversary recertification points will be calculated following a July 1 through June 30 calendar year.
- Recertification managers are permitted to use telephone, email, and/or regular mail for correspondence when notifying Diplomates about mandatory update deadlines, the activation of grace periods, to advise of the expiration of grace periods, and to provide a NOPA for the current and to-date credits.
- Points will no longer be earned for being a committee member of any professional QD organization.
- Points earned for presenting a QD-related paper at a QD organization professional conference can only be earned once for that specific paper.
- Points earned for presenting a QD-related poster at a QD organization professional conference can only be earned once for that specific poster.
- Points earned for publishing article(s) relating to QD in a non-QD magazine(s) or publication can only be earned once for that specific article.
- Two points will be earned by any Diplomate who participates in the ST²ARS testing program.
- One point will be earned by a Diplomate who prepares an ABFDE written test question accepted for use in its testing program.
- Renewal forms will contain an affirmation that Diplomate agrees to adhere to the ethical and professional standards identified by the ABFDE.
- Commencing with the 2009 dues statements, Diplomates were required to sign a Statement of Affirmation and Agreement which required practitioners to comply and abide by the ABFDE Code of Ethics and Standard Practices and to agree to dispute resolution through arbitration hearings.