

Requirements for Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification (08/2017)

A. General Requirements

1. An applicant for certification must possess a high ethical and professional standing.
2. All applicants shall submit two letters of endorsement; one endorsement must be from an individual actively working in the area of photography and/or digital imaging, and one endorsement must be from an employer or supervisor, and/or persons who have knowledge of the applicant's experience working in the area of photography and/or digital imaging. These should be addressed to the Secretary of the Certification Board and attached to your application.

B. Technical Training Required

1. A minimum of eighty (80) hours of classroom training, or equivalent, in photography-related subjects as follows:
 - a. 40-hours of basic or advanced hands-on photography courses, no time limit
 - b. 40-hours of forensic-specific hands-on photography courses within the previous 5 years
 - (1) Up to 8-hours of training in the discipline of forensic-specific image processing can make up a portion of the 40-hours required in this subsection
2. Training listed by an applicant when applying for certification will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis. It is the applicants' responsibility to demonstrate the training received was substantive; proper documentation of all training is required. The following are examples of training that is acceptable and training that is not acceptable:
 - a. A training program that is structured as recommended by the SWGIT document: ["Guidelines and Recommendations for Training in Imaging Technologies in the Criminal Justice System"](#) is acceptable.
 - b. Attending a hands-on course that has a structured curriculum is acceptable.
 - c. Attending a college-level class that results in college credits is acceptable.
 - d. Attending workshops at a professional conference specific to photography is acceptable
 - e. Sitting through a presentation or series of presentations at a local camera club or conference is not acceptable.
 - f. In-service training in the basic use of a point and shoot camera is not acceptable.
3. It should be noted that for initial certification, "hours" are used to calculate required training, and "credits" are used to calculate required recertification training.

C. Basic Experience Required

1. An applicant for certification must be actively engaged as an examiner, analyst, practitioner or supervisor in the discipline of forensic science¹ whose duties include the discipline of photography, and must have a minimum of two (2) years of experience in photography within this discipline.
 - a. As used in this requirement, being "engaged in the discipline of forensic science" includes anyone that is active through the course of their employment in

documenting, collecting, analyzing, or otherwise engaged in the preservation of evidence that can be used in either a criminal or civil proceeding.

- b. For purposes of meeting this requirement, a person employed in an academic setting that provides instruction on forensic photography-related subjects, and has a minimum of two years of actual hands-on experience in photography, is considered an examiner, analyst, or practitioner.

D. Education Requirements

Applicants must possess a minimum of a high school diploma or equivalent.

E. Processing of Applications

1. All applications will be processed and maintained by the secretary of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board.
2. Once an applicant has been approved to take the written test, the applicant will have within 90 days from the date of the approval to do so, after which they will be required to resubmit an updated application and appropriate fees.

F. Examinations

1. Prior to taking the written exam, the applicant shall sign a nondisclosure agreement indicating their commitment to not release confidential examination materials or participate in fraudulent test-taking practices on all required tests.
2. Written examination
 - a. The first portion of the certification process shall be determined by written testing. The certification test is developed and is maintained by the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board.
 - b. The written test shall consist of questions, including, but not limited to, the history of photography, basic photography principals, digital imaging basics, advanced camera controls, proper use of lenses, exposure theory, depth of field, light theory, lighting techniques, filters and color control, and close-up photography. A minimum passing score of 75% is required.
 - (1) The test provided to the applicant shall be selected at random from no less than three (3) variations of the written test.
 - c. The secretary will make arrangements for the written exam to be given under the supervision of an approved proctor.
 - (1) The proctor of the exam cannot be an immediate supervisor, or a person that is an acquaintance or might otherwise have a vested interest in the success of the candidate.
 - (2) Applicants have three (3) hours to complete the written examination.
 - d. The test questions are derived from textbooks and other materials approved by the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board. All approved textbooks and materials are listed on the Forensic Photography Certification page on the IAI website, under the link: [Certification Requirements](#).
 - e. The written test will be graded by the secretary or other designated board member of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board.

- (1) For validation purposes, the secretary of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board shall statistically analyze the results of all written examinations.
 - (2) A report of these statistics shall be provided to the certification board on an annual basis, accompanied by recommendations for possible modifications to ensure all test questions are consistent with the most recent best practices and guidelines established by the appropriate standards-setting bodies, and that the questions accurately reflect the knowledge level of the applicants.
- f. If the applicant passes the written examination, the secretary will provide the practical examination to the applicant.
 - g. If the applicant fails the written examination, the secretary shall notify the applicant in writing, and advise that they can reapply after 6 months from the date of the fail-notification to retake the examination.
 - h. To reapply the applicant must submit a new application along with the current application fee as listed on the IAI website.
3. Practical Examination
- a. After successfully passing the written exam, the applicant will be provided with a practical exam, which must be completed and submitted within 45 days of receiving the practical exam.
 - b. The practical exam will require the applicant to demonstrate proficiency in the photography of crime scenes, latent fingerprints, footwear impressions, injury/assaults, night-time scenes, evidence, vehicle scenes, 1:1 image sizing, and a choice of 3 out of 8 additional photography specialties.
 - c. Each applicant must complete a total of ten (10) practical assignments. Each individual assignment is graded separately and on a pass/fail basis; all 10 assignments must be completed successfully in order to pass. Assignments are graded on the following criteria:
 - (1) Correctly followed instructions
 - (2) Technical aspects of the photography, which includes, but is not limited to, proper composition, good lighting, correct exposure, and sharp focus.
 - (3) Application of proper techniques, which includes, but is not limited to, how well an assignment is documented, demonstration of an organized approach, providing an adequate number of images for the subject matter, etc.
 - (4) Images are properly processed and sized
 - d. The first seven (7) practical assignments are required assignments that all applicants must complete, as they represent core skills that all Certified Forensic Photographers must be able to demonstrate. Recognizing that other required skills may vary from department to department, each applicant must select and complete three (3) additional assignments from a second list of eight (8) assignments.
 - e. All assignments must be submitted digitally on a CD, DVD, USB drive, or in another manner as directed by the certification board secretary. Specific instructions detailing submission requirements will accompany the practical exam.

- f. Upon receipt of an applicant's practical submission, a preliminary review will be conducted by the secretary or another member of the board, at which time the submission will be either accepted or rejected.
 - (1) The preliminary review is not a review of the quality or accuracy of the applicant's work, and is limited to that portion of a practical submission that does not measure an applicant's knowledge or skill to obtain certification.
 - (2) The preliminary review is limited to instructions that the applicant may have overlooked or misinterpreted, or portions of an assignment not submitted by apparent oversight.
 - (3) The preliminary review provides an opportunity for an applicant to make corrections to their submissions, in a timely manner, that are not a measure of their knowledge or skills required for certification.
 - (4) A rejection is only an indication that some portion of the practical exam is lacking, and might otherwise have resulted in a failure.
 - (5) An applicant will have 14 calendar days from the time they are notified to make corrections; not doing so within that time will result in an automatic failure.
- g. Accepted practical examinations will be independently reviewed and scored by three (3) members of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board.
 - (1) Any board member asked to review an exam that believes they have knowledge of the identity of the applicant, either by personal or professional association, shall recuse themselves from that process for that applicant, and immediately advise the secretary. The secretary will then reassign the exam to a different board member to ensure impartiality to the applicant.
 - (2) When all reviews have been completed, those board members doing the review, in addition to the board secretary and chair, will conduct a joint final review of the results to validate pass or fail recommendations, after which a final determination shall be made.
 - (3) Written feedback as provided by each member of the board that reviewed the practical will be provided to each applicant, pass or fail.
- h. If the applicant is unsuccessful in passing the practical examination, the secretary shall prepare a notification letter that provides the following information:
 - (1) That the applicant was unsuccessful in passing their practical examination, with the specific assignments listed that were not passed.
 - (2) That the applicant has 30 calendar days from receipt of this notification in which to appeal, in writing, the failing grade to the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board.
 - (3) That if the appeal is not received within 30 calendar days, the applicant can reapply after 6 months, and is required to complete only the practical assignments listed as failed in the notification letter.
 - (4) A copy of the appeals process shall be included with the letter to the applicant

4. Appeals

- a. An appeal shall be in the form of a letter, and may be submitted electronically. Reasons for the appeal must be clearly stated, and must be submitted within 30 calendar days of the fail notification.
 - (1) The secretary shall immediately acknowledge receipt of the appeal via electronic means.
 - (2) The secretary shall provide the appellant with progress reports.
- b. The appeal will be reviewed by both the board secretary and certification board chair, after which a determination will be made as to the validity of the appeal.
- c. If it is determined that the reason for the appeal has merit, the practical examination shall be reassigned to two (2) board members that were not involved in the original decision.
 - (1) No indication shall be made to the newly assigned reviewers that they are scoring an exam as the result of an appeal.
- d. Following the independent grading of the exam, those two (2) board members, in addition to the board secretary and chair, will conduct a joint review to validate fail or pass recommendations, after which a final determination shall be made by the chair.
 - (1) During this joint review, the chair may determine it necessary to disclose the previous failure, and may also involve those involved in the original decision.
- e. If a final decision is not unanimous, the board will vote on passing or failing the applicant. A majority vote will determine the final outcome.
 - (1) A board member(s) that has personal knowledge of the applicant shall abstain from participating in this process.
 - (2) A vote requires a quorum, which is defined as the majority of members serving on the board at the time of the decision.
 - (3) A vote can be cast via a conference call or by an electronic forum. The members voting and the result of the vote shall be documented.
 - (4) The decision of the Certification Board on this vote shall be final.
- f. The certification body shall give formal notice to the appellant of the final decision via regular mail or electronic means.

5. Complaints

- a. All complaints shall be handled and processed in a constructive, impartial, and timely manner.
- b. A complaint shall be in the form of a letter, and may be submitted electronically. Reasons for the complaint must be clearly stated.
- c. The secretary shall immediately acknowledge receipt of the complaint, and shall forward the complaint to the board chair.
- d. Upon receipt of a complaint, the certification board chair or designee shall confirm whether the complaint relates to certification activities for which it is responsible and, if so, shall respond accordingly.
 - (1) If the complaint relates to another certification body, it shall be referred to the chair of that certification body.

- (2) The complaint shall be notified of the referral, and provided with contact information for the certification body responsible.
 - e. The certification board chair or designee shall provide the complainant with progress reports, either verbal or written, if possible.
 - (1) Each step of this process, including progress reports, shall be documented. This documentation, as well as any other materials relevant to the investigation of this complaint, shall be maintained by the certification body pursuant to IAI retention guidelines.
 - f. The certification board chair or designee shall be responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to evaluate the complaint.
 - g. Any substantiated complaint about a certified person shall also be referred by the certification body to the certified person in question at an appropriate time.
 - h. The complaints-handling process shall be subject to requirements for confidentiality, as it relates to the complainant and to the subject of the complaint.
 - i. The decision to be communicated to the complainant shall be made by, or reviewed and approved by, personnel not previously involved in the subject of the complaint.
6. Reapplication
- a. Six (6) months following the initial notice that an applicant has failed the practical examination, the applicant can reapply to take the certification test by submitting a new application and application fee as posted on the IAI website.
 - b. The retest shall be limited only to the specific assignments listed as failed in the failure notice received by the applicant.
 - c. The applicant is encouraged to submit the required practical exercises at the same time the reapplication is submitted.
- G. Recertification
- 1. Recertification requirements shall be adequate to ensure there is impartial assessment to confirm the continuing competence of the certified person.
 - 2. Recertification shall be required every five years in order to ensure the continued competence of the certified person, and ongoing compliance with current certification requirements by the certified person.
 - a. All applicants for recertification shall be required to demonstrate professional development:
 - (1) Applicants must accumulate 80 Continuing Education/Professional Development Credits since their initial certification or last recertification as described in Section 9.6 of the FCMB Certification Operations Manual.
 - (a) Up to 60 credits (30 hours) may be earned by attendance at or participation in a course or workshop or in-service training approved by the board. For purposes of recertification, this can include up to 4 credits (8 hours) earned by participating in forensic-specific image processing.
 - b. Applicants may be subjected to any, or all, of the following:
 - (1) on-site assessment
 - (2) a structured interview

- (3) show demonstrated physical ability to perform the required competencies for certification
- c. Applicants for recertification will be required to take an examination or otherwise demonstrate continued proficiency in the area of Forensic Photography.
3. Applications for recertification shall be submitted in conformance with the general provisions of this manual, and will be reviewed and approved by the secretary of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board. If the secretary does not believe the person has attained the required recertification credits as posted on the IAI website, the secretary shall first contact the applicant and determine if there are any additional supporting documents that the applicant can send to show that the applicant is qualified.
 4. Prior to either accepting or rejecting an applicant, the secretary shall provide the board chair with a recommendation, along with all documents pertaining to the recommendation.
 5. If the applicant is determined not to be qualified for recertification, the secretary shall notify the applicant why the applicant is not qualified, and shall advise that the applicant has 30-days to appeal this decision to the chair of the Forensic Photography & Imaging Certification Board. The decision of the chair in this matter shall be final.
 6. If an applicant is rejected, the certification board shall retain all funds remitted by the applicant.

Test questions are taken from the following publications:

- *A Short Course in Digital Photography (2nd Edition)* By Barbara London and Jim Stone
- *Crime Scene Photography, Second Edition* [Hardcover] By Edward M. Robinson
- All forensic photography appropriate SWIG Guideline

¹ *Wiki: Forensic science is the application of science to criminal and civil laws. Forensic scientists collect, preserve, and analyze scientific evidence during the course of an investigation. Webster: the application of scientific principles and techniques to matters of criminal justice especially as relating to the collection, examination, and analysis of physical evidence*