

ISO 17025:2017 STANDARD FOR FORENSIC PROFESSIONALS: A COURSE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Forensic science is critical in providing an impartial, robust and reproducible scientific report to judiciary systems. Accreditation of the forensic science laboratories ensures that the service provided is robust, reliable and reproducible. Continuous training of professionals in relation to ISO standards and quality systems is an essential pillar to accreditation processes.

AIM

To develop a training course with a focus on ISO17025:2017 *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories* as a case example for forensic laboratory professionals.

METHOD

A preliminary meeting was held with the quality manager of the forensic science laboratory to explore the gaps in knowledge and practice with respect to ISO 17025:2017 which required to be addressed. Subsequently the course programme consisting of learning objectives, outcomes, description of the content, method of delivery, and choice of tutors was designed. The course programme was validated by a 7-member expert panel. The training course was scheduled over 14 hours delivered in a classroom mode to a total of 22 forensic laboratory professionals. The training course which adopted an interactive participant-tutor approach was evaluated by the participants using a validated questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale questions (1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree).

RESULTS

- The expert panel (n=7) strongly agreed that the course topics covered the individual requirements of the ISO 17025:2017, quality management systems principles, and the practical aspects of the standard as applicable to forensic sciences.
- The panel agreed that the designed course met the set learning objectives and outcomes and that the course was practical and encouraged participant interaction.
- The panel strongly agreed that the tutors the majority of whom were pharmacists were well versed in good quality management systems and ISO standards.
- Out of a total of 22 forensic professionals who participated in the course, 18 completed the online course evaluation.
- The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the subject (n=11), content (n=12), tutors' knowledge (n=14), and logistics (n=12) met their expectations.
- All respondents(n=18) strongly agreed that the tutors reinforced theoretical aspects with the use of practical scenarios and that the course was well delivered and designed to assist them in their daily practice.

CONCLUSION

The developed course provided an academic interprofessional interactive platform for sharing the expertise and daily challenges between the forensic professionals and the experts with the aim to improve laboratory quality systems. The course highlighted the need for the delivery of interprofessional courses on scientific processes such as the provision of courses on quality management systems, risk management and auditing processes specifically tailor made to forensic science professionals.

Acknowledgements: Malta Police Forensic Science Laboratory within the Malta Police Force